

CLASP Announces Benefits Access for College Completion Initiative

The Center for Law and Social Policy ([CLASP](#)) has recently announced a new initiative, [Benefits Access for College Completion \(BACC\)](#). With recent sharp increases in costs, college has become less accessible for many students. The ability of students to pay these costs often determines whether they can attend and complete college. In addition to tuition costs, students may face other financial hurdles, including the costs of living and child care for students with families. Handling these expenses often leads students to work and/or attend school part-time and, according to BACC, there is research to show that both factors have a negative effect on college completion. To address this problem, the BACC initiative will test innovative approaches designed to help more students earn postsecondary credentials at seven community and technical colleges nationwide.

Through 2014, BACC will help these colleges “develop and institutionalize scalable, sustainable organizational and funding policies and practices that connect low-income students to public benefits, such as food assistance and health insurance.” There will be evaluation to determine if the students who receive these resources can, in fact, make up the difference between their financial aid and the cost of college.

The participating colleges are: Cuyahoga Community College (Ohio), Gateway Community and Technical College (Ky.), LaGuardia Community College (N.Y.), Lake Michigan College and Macomb Community College (Mich.), Northampton Community College (Pa.), and Skyline College (Calif.). They have created individual plans to integrate the services and supports they already provide, such as financial aid counseling and registration, with screening and application assistance for public benefits. All are partnering with local and state human services agencies to better integrate these services.

Some of the strategies are to open new campus centers and expand existing ones to better help students receive the financial resources they need to complete college; increase awareness among faculty, staff and students of these supports; and help counselors and other direct service staff deliver technical support to students.

For more information, interested parties may contact CLASP and the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) [staff](#) managing the project, and may [sign up to receive updates on the BACC initiative as it moves forward](#).

Join our Webinar on OVAE’s new Advancing CTE in State and Local Career Pathways Systems initiative!

When: 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. EST, Wednesday, Nov. 14. Go to:
<https://jff.webex.com/jffj.php?ED=181511962&UID=0&RT=MIMxMQ%3D%3D>.

Meeting Number: 798 975 958.

SMART Competition for High School Students

The [SMART Competition](#) invites high school students to design real-world solutions to real-world design challenges that confront design and engineering professionals by asking student teams to redesign a school building to make it function more efficiently in terms of energy use and materials’ sustainability. The competition is open to all high school students who attend public, private, parochial, charter, and home-based schools or who participate in non-school-based or other informal education programs. This includes students of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) as well those in CTE programs. Teams consist of 3-4 students and an education sponsor. Registration opened last month and closes on **Jan. 18, 2013**.

Energy conservation and energy production are two substantial issues facing our world in the 21st century. Through the SMART Competition, students are encouraged to apply their knowledge of science, technology and mathematics to the redesign of the same building—a gymnasium on an existing high school campus—incorporating the use of sustainable materials and renewable technology in a design that is both functional and affordable. Additionally, students must include in their design a localized power generation system as a campus energy source and component of the smart grid of the community in which the school is located.

The competition is designed to have a significant career and technology focus. From a CTE perspective, the competition can provide students an opportunity that may not only lead to a job but also to a STEM-related career as well as postsecondary studies. Student teams will be mentored by design and engineering professionals and able to draw on techniques and tools used by top design firms. The computer design and simulations skills acquired during the competition will help students develop the capability to work for engineering and design firms. With many companies, organizations, universities and individuals as sponsors, the competition will promote linkages among the high schools, universities, employers, and industry partners.

As part of the competition, students will use commercial software design tools and have available a global technical support infrastructure. The competition, by promoting intellectual investigation, will emphasize academic achievement, career preparation, teamwork, and other 21st century skills essential for in-demand occupations in high-growth industry sectors. The computer design and simulations skills acquired during the competition will help students develop the capability to work for engineering and design firms.

Project deliverables include a computer-generated animation of a fly-around of the campus and gymnasium, a written design, innovation and impact report, and a verbal team presentation. The students also must present actionable suggestions to school officials that they can use to impact power use, power generation, or the application of sustainable technologies.

The program is regionally based with the top team from each area moving on to compete in a national competition. The ultimate goal of the program is to create student interest in pursuing STEM-related careers, higher education, and university studies in any of a variety of technical disciplines.

For additional information on the SMART Competition, please contact Michael Andrews at m.andrews@smartcompetition.org.

Hurricane Sandy

The Department sent out the following letter by email on Wednesday, Nov. 7 from Martha Kanter, Under Secretary; David Bergeron, Acting Assistant Secretary, Office of Postsecondary Education; Brenda Dann-Messier, Assistant Secretary, Office of Vocational and Adult Education; and James Runcie, Chief Operating Officer, Federal Student Aid. Some of you may have received this communication, but we want all of our OVAE Connection readers to see it.

Dear Colleagues:

We hope that you and your loved ones are safe and recovering from the devastating aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. We know that the storm may have damaged some of your buildings and other facilities and some of you are still without electricity and other utilities. As you and your community begin to rebuild in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, please know that the Department of Education is committed to working with you during this difficult time.

Recognizing the short- and long-term relief efforts communities on the East Coast are facing, we encourage your institution to consider extending any early admissions application deadlines that you may have. This will allow students whose lives were disrupted by Hurricane Sandy flexibility in completing their college applications.

Education Secretary Arne Duncan emphasized the importance of this issue, by issuing a statement on October 31st, saying, “Many colleges and universities have recognized the unanticipated difficulties that students are facing in completing their college applications, and some institutions have already extended their deadlines. We encourage other institutions to consider being as flexible as possible in the coming weeks to accommodate students whose lives were disrupted by Hurricane Sandy.”

Regarding your institution’s participation in the Federal student aid programs, we direct you to Dear Colleague Letter GEN-10-16 for information and waivers that are appropriate when a natural disaster such as a hurricane impacts an institution or its students. The letter can be accessed on our Information for Financial Aid Professionals (IFAP) website at <http://ifap.ed.gov/dpeletters/GEN1016.html>.

Also, institutions located in the Department’s Regions I and II, which includes institutions in New England, New York, and New Jersey may contact our New York/Boston School Participation Division at [617-289-0133](tel:617-289-0133) or [202-377-3640](tel:202-377-3640), or via email at CaseTeams@ed.gov. The Department will take all appropriate steps to assist institutions and students impacted by Hurricane Sandy.

As FEMA and local governments work to restore power and other needed services and institutions begin to repair the damage from Hurricane Sandy, the Department of Education has developed resources for you in this time of need. Please visit our dedicated website for information for institutions and others affected by the storm, <http://www.ed.gov/sandy>. The Department has also established a special email address and toll-free phone number where you can submit questions and comments concerning Department of Education programs impacted by the storm. Please contact them at EdSchoolInfo@ed.gov or at [1-855-385-9985](tel:1-855-385-9985).

We appreciate all of the help that you are offering to your communities including providing shelters for those still displaced and offering other resources to those impacted by Hurricane Sandy. Please contact us if you need any assistance as we work to get students back into their classrooms and to restore normalcy across the region.

Best regards,

Martha Kanter, Under Secretary; David Bergeron, Acting Assistant Secretary for Office of Postsecondary Education; Brenda Dann-Messier, Assistant Secretary for Office of Vocational and Adult Education and James Runcie, Chief Operating Officer for Federal Student Aid