

April 7, 2005

Dear Editor,

During this time of agonizing over greatly unbalanced budgets at both the state and federal levels, our legislators must make some difficult choices about which programs to fund and which to close. Deliberations under way in Washington will directly affect Parkland College. One such debate is over Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act reauthorization. The President has called for complete elimination of the Act, which has been funded in recent years at \$1.3 billion annually. Of these funds, about \$400 million has gone to community colleges across the country. Parkland's share has been about \$500,000 per year.

Parkland has used these funds to support students in a variety of ways, including course fees, books, transportation, tutoring, classroom assistants, services for students with disabilities, support of the Illinois Employment and Training Center, professional development for faculty to make them better instructors, instructional equipment, instructional supplies, and improvement of the library collection. Last year, we served 1,193 students over two semesters. Of those students, more than 97% either graduated or continued their education into the next semester. We also used our money very efficiently. Grant expenditures for all categories combined averaged just \$410 per student per semester. This is a very small investment for a very large rate of success.

The Congress appears to be supportive of Perkins. The Senate recently passed their version of Perkins reauthorization 99-0. The House has passed their bill out of committee, but has not yet taken a floor vote. It appears, however, that their bill will also pass by a large margin. Representative Johnson indicated in his recent visit to Parkland that he strongly supports continuation of Perkins.

We continue to monitor this activity because it is so important to Parkland College being able to continue our strong career programs. We ask that residents of District 505 voice their support as well so that Congress and the Administration understand how important this funding really is at the local level.

Sincerely,

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