**MSI Sample Op-Ed**

As the president of [**NAME OF INSTITUTION**], a Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), I am proud to be part of a community of institutions nationally that serve a critical role in leveling the playing field by providing quality postsecondary education to millions of minority students nationwide. A college degree has long stood as the key to economic mobility in America, which is why it is essential to ensure that low-income, first generation, and minority students can afford to attend. Pell Grants have proven to be the most effective and equitable investment in college affordability, which is why we must increase the purchasing power of the grant.

Today, nearly [7 million students](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.ncan.org/resource/resmgr/policyadvocacy/ncanfederalpriorities2021.pdf) receive crucial support from the Pell Grant program, which helps students in all states and territories, in all corners of the country, whether rural, urban or in between. Students of all backgrounds receive Pell Grants, with nearly 60% of Black students; half of American Indian or American Native Students; nearly half of Latino students; and 30% of White students using Pell Grants to help pay for college.

However, the impact of this government program is diminishing. Forty years ago, Pell Grants covered more than three quarters of the cost of tuition, while today that number stands at around 30 percent. According to [studies done by the American Council on Education](https://www.higheredtoday.org/2018/07/23/msis-viable-path-economic-ladder/), on average, over a quarter of all students attending MSIs are from families in the lowest income quintile. Pell Grants are a proven bipartisan program and the fairest and most efficient way to help low-income and first-generation students access and complete college. Additional grant aid helps keep low-income students in college and on track to graduation. Doubling Pell from its current maximum of $6,495 to $13,000 will put more money in the hands of students first, and allow them to use it at the institution that best fits their educational needs.

If the Pell Grant is doubled, not only will current students receive increased grants, but the pool of eligible students will grow, providing more working-class students access to aid.

By doubling the maximum Pell Grant, the Biden Administration and Congress would restore the purchasing power of the grant.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and exacerbated the overlapping health, economic, and racial justice disparities in our country. The pandemic has pulled the rug out from under low-income students. Since the pandemic began, college enrollment is down 13% across all of higher education, and financial aid applications are down 6% for low-income students. We are on the cusp of losing a generation of students. Doubling Pell as part of the post-pandemic recovery will ensure this generation of Americans get the education and training they need to both move up the economic ladder and get the economy working again, while helping America compete in a global economy that demands high skills.

President Biden’s campaign platform emphasized the need for us to “build back better.”

From the perspective of MSIs there is no more effective way to build a better future for our students than to double the Pell Grant, which has been assisting first-generation, low-income, minority students in attaining college degrees for decades.

This investment will pay off not just for Pell Grant recipients but for our nation as well. Indeed, studies have shown that the income levels for bachelor’s degree recipients are 40% above the levels for individuals who completed a high school degree. And the additional revenue paid in taxes by these individuals means the money spent to increase the Pell Grant maximum is returned to government coffers within a decade - a stunning indicator that this wise investment works both for individuals and for tax payers.

Doubling Pell is a simple and commonsense move that would quickly and fairly alleviate the college affordability crisis. There is no better time to invest in higher education than in the aftermath of a recession. A [study by Georgetown University](https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/americas-divided-recovery/) found that coming out of the Great Recession, “Graduate degree holders gained 3.8 million jobs, Bachelor’s degree holders gained 4.7 million jobs, and Associate’s degree holders gained 3.1 million jobs, compared to workers with a high school diploma or less, who added only 80,000 jobs.” Individuals with college degrees are also [far less likely](https://www.forbes.com/sites/wesleywhistle/2020/04/17/college-graduates-are-less-likely-to-become-unemployed-due-to-the-coronavirus/?sh=7009b86361e4) to be laid off during an economic downturn than those with a high school diploma.

Students from low-and moderate-income families are in critical need of additional grant aid to pay for college. Doubling the maximum Pell Grant—and permanently indexing it to inflation to ensure its value doesn’t diminish again over time—will honor the history and value of these grants as the keystone federal investment in college affordability and help more students attend college, earn a degree, get a good-paying job, and ensure them a brighter future.