



NAME

Eli Martinez

CAMPUS

UC Berkeley

YEARS PELL RECEIVED

2018-Present

Community College: Riverside City College

**How did receiving the Pell grant benefit your educational experience and make higher education more accessible to you?**

If it wasn't for the Pell Grant, I don't think that I would be here, point blank. Coming from a low-income family and having to support my elderly parents, college would not have been an option if it were not for the financial support I received through the Pell Grant. Granted, it was not the most comprehensive financial support, but it was something that made the difference between being stuck in a cycle of poverty and violent neighborhoods, and taking the chance to go to college and get an education.

**What would have been different about your educational experience if you knew that there was additional Pell Grant support available?**

I've used the resources that I have and compiled all my creativity to be able to fund my own education through scholarships and additional grants. This has only been possible because I have made it an intentional goal of mine to treat the scholarship application cycle as a part-time job. I dedicate a substantial amount of time to track down and compile scholarship lists that I qualify for and apply to as many as I can, sometimes even if I know I might not necessarily qualify for them. The time and additional resources that I have spent on this endeavor, I think would have been better suited to focusing on my academics. If there was additional Pell Grant support available, it would've been possible for me to dedicate some of that time spent on scholarship application hunting and applying on academics. I have also had to take on part time jobs to be able to supplement my living expenses while in community college.

**Why do we need Congress to #DoublePell?**

Congress needs to double the Pell Grant now because our unique needs as students in the 21st century are dynamic and continue to evolve, and I fear that the consequences of inaction could only lead to our most socio-economically vulnerable being left behind.



NAME

Mark Hanin

CAMPUS

UC Riverside

YEARS PELL RECEIVED

2018-2021

**How did receiving the Pell grant benefit your educational experience and make higher education more accessible to you?**

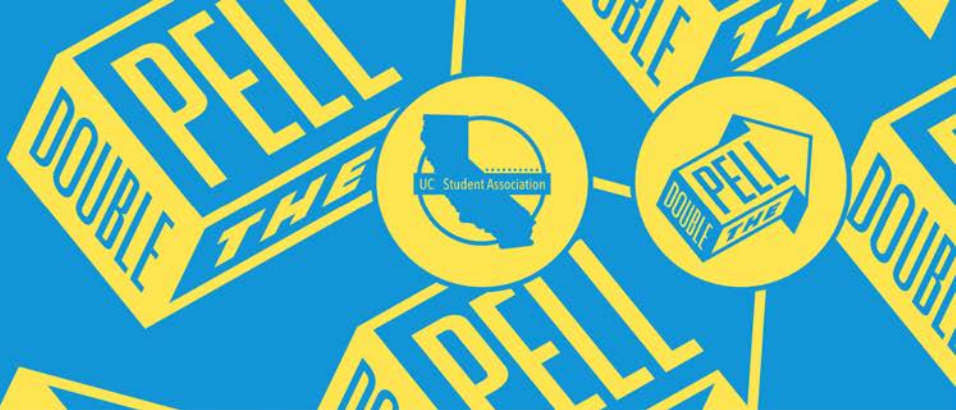
Receiving the Pell Grant allowed me to have the opportunity to pursue higher education. As a first-generation immigrant to the United States from Egypt, I always had the hesitation as to whether or not I would be able to enroll into a university given the financial costs of going to college in a new country. Having the Pell Grant reassured me that it was the right decision for me to go to college knowing that I had the financial support needed for me to succeed. Not only that, but the Pell Grant has always assured me that I can benefit from my education as an undergraduate by opening up the doors for me to seek mentor figures who would guide me along the way. More than that, the Pell Grant has made it easier for me to access the resources I needed in order to feel included at my university and to value my education. From having access to the library all the way to having access to the various support centers found at my university, I never felt that I was left behind and that I can keep pushing myself, knowing that I had a fair chance at succeeding.

**What would have been different about your educational experience if you knew that there was additional Pell Grant support available?**

If I knew that there was additional Pell Grant support available, it would have eased the burden of me having to work multiple jobs to fund my education. As an undergraduate, I had to work as an ambassador for the honors program on campus as well as take on different mentoring jobs to ensure that I stayed on track with my financial obligations while going to college. It was definitely challenging and an experience that I hope to never have to go through again, which is why I know that my undergraduate career would have been that much easier had I been able to know about and receive additional Pell Grant support. I would have been able to have more time to focus on my academics and not have to go through so many difficulties with trying to adapt my work schedule with my academic schedule. It would have also allowed me to not have to spread myself too thin or to justify to myself that I needed to do more than what was expected of me to make ends meet. With that in mind, I am optimistic that no prospective students will ever have to feel that way knowing that they can receive and learn about the additional Pell Grant support that exists.

**Why do we need Congress to #DoublePell?**

The Pell Grant guarantees that students like myself are afforded the opportunity to pursue their passions through higher education without having to worry much about the financial challenges that come our way. Coming in as a first-generation immigrant to the United States, I knew that my challenges growing up in my native country of Egypt inspired me to develop an interest in public health and public policy. Seeing how communities around me, either in the United States or Egypt, were always impacted by policy making decisions pushed me to take action in meaningful ways to help serve others in life by allowing me to look forward to serving in government from a young age. Because of that, I knew that I wanted to go to college because of the opportunities that it would provide me with afterwards. The connections I formed while in college and the experiences I had pushed me from one step to the next as I worked towards my career goals. Without the Pell Grant helping subsidize my education, I would have never gone to college nor had the opportunity to pursue the interests that help shape my cultural identity as a first-generation immigrant to the United States. The Pell Grant does not simply make going to college that much more affordable, it changes lives for the better and provides individuals like myself with the directions they need at such a critical stage of growth. Doubling the Pell Grant will go a long way to making sure that students of all backgrounds have the option to reap the benefits of higher education as they see fit.



NAME  
**Iris Hinh**

CAMPUS  
**UCLA**

YEARS PELL RECEIVED  
**2016-2020**

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**How did receiving the Pell grant benefit your educational experience and make higher education more accessible to you?**

As a low-income, first-generation college student, the Pell Grant helped cover some of the costs associated with attending UCLA. The culmination of housing, a meal plan, health insurance, fees and tuition costs made me hesitant to attend a four-year university after high school. I also received the Pell Grant during two summer terms to take courses while interning in Washington, D.C. The financial support allowed me to work towards my undergraduate degree and develop professional experience. With a mixture of working, financial aid and scholarships, I was able to graduate without any debt, which played a role in my decision to pursue my master's degree immediately after.

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**What would have been different about your educational experience if you knew that there was additional Pell Grant support available?**

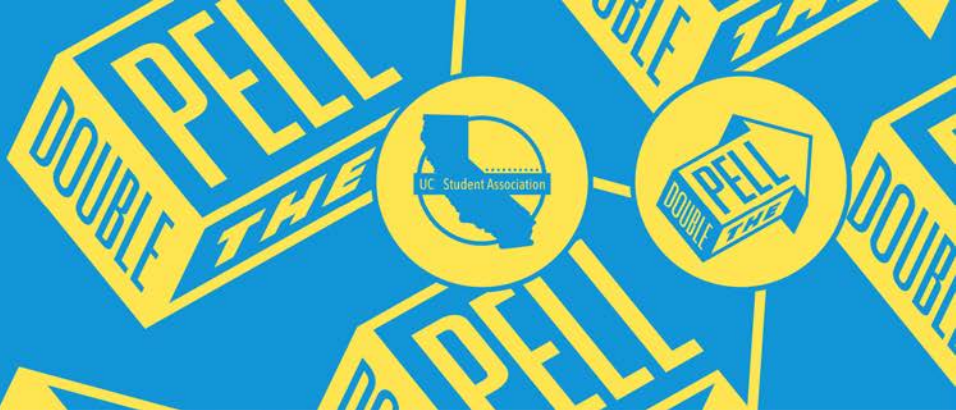
I constantly felt a great burden to work and utilize financial resources to cover all the costs of higher education. If the Pell Grant amount had been increased, there would have been more flexibility in my course loads and hours worked to focus on academics or professional opportunities.

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**Why do we need Congress to #DoublePell?**

The U.S. Constitution might not guarantee a federal right to education, but Congress could play a larger role in expanding access and feasibility for students to attend higher education. As research continues to prove, the investments in students are economically efficient and drastically expand life opportunities for those with postsecondary degrees.

A large, stylized graphic of the words "DOUBLE THE PELL" in a bold, sans-serif font, tilted at an angle. The text is white with a yellow outline, set against a blue background that matches the top of the page.



NAME  
**Millie  
Hernandez**

CAMPUS  
**UC Berkeley**

YEARS PELL RECEIVED  
**2017-2021**

**How did receiving the Pell grant benefit your educational experience and make higher education more accessible to you?**

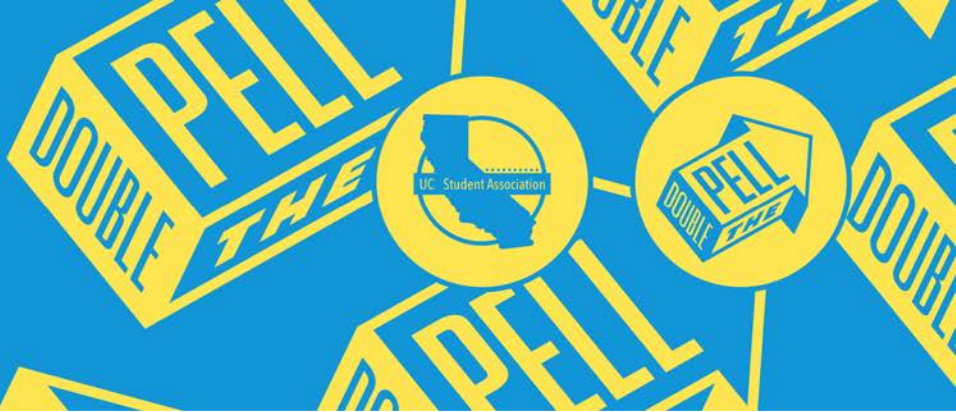
As a first generation, low-come student of color, the Pell Grant was a big blessing and a determining factor in my decision to pursue higher education. It allowed me to explore my options and not be limited to the universities close to home. It also reduced the fear and knowledge gap of what it meant to take out loans and the fear of debt, which none of my peers ever knew about.

**What would have been different about your educational experience if you knew that there was additional Pell Grant support available?**

If I knew there was additional Pell Grant support available, I would not have stressed so much about working three jobs during my undergraduate experience. I could have focused more on my studies and GPA instead of worrying about clocking in more hours. I should have never had to worry scheduling my work shift around my midterms but instead had enough time to study in the library and go to office hours.

**Why do we need Congress to #DoublePell?**

Congress needs to double the Pell Grant maximum award in order to support and retain more low-income, first generation, under represented students of color who rely on government aid in order to pursue higher education. The Pell Grant opens the door for opportunities that we had never imagined before as none of our parents ever attended a higher institution. Many of us worked hard in high school and continue to work in college in order to support ourselves, but we must explore more ways in which we can continue to support our peers and future scholars. No one should have to limit their college selection due to financial circumstance, especially those who do not have the means and opportunities like their other peers may have.



NAME

Carl Welliver

CAMPUS

UC San Diego

YEARS PELL RECEIVED

2009-2013

**How did receiving the Pell grant benefit your educational experience and make higher education more accessible to you?**

Without Pell Grant funding, attending UC San Diego—and staying in school when one of my parents was out of work for an extended period of time—would have been entirely impossible. Having financial support from the federal government, in combination with the state and university aid I received—as well as the on-campus work I did with federal work-study dollars—allowed me to focus on pursuing my degree and the professional internships that would set me up for a career in public service. Had I not had the additional funding provided by the Pell Grant, I would likely have foregone experiences like UCDC, which set me on the professional path I am on today.

**What would have been different about your educational experience if you knew that there was additional Pell Grant support available?**

In the back of my mind, I was always stressed about the growing pile of student debt that would need to be repaid, even though I qualified for grant aid from the federal and state government as well as university support. Those stresses are real, and follow you into your employment. The six-month grace period before repayment flies by, and knowing that I would have an additional monthly bill payment due shortly after graduating was not something I could take lightly, and also forced me to make tough decisions about the kinds of job opportunities I should pursue and accept. I made conscious decisions to cut expenses as much as possible each year at UC San Diego, including making an Excel spreadsheet to figure out how best to use my dining dollars to get the most calories per dollar (even when those calories were not the most healthy ones). I also couch-surfed during summer to avoid needing permanent housing between academic years, and even temporarily stayed with the (extremely gracious) professor I worked for to cut costs. I decided to unenroll from some classes because I couldn't risk having to stay on for more quarters if I didn't succeed in the course, and skipped others because they didn't fit with my academic schedule.

**Why do we need Congress to #DoublePell?**

Congress needs to double the Pell Grant maximum award to make good on its promise to ensure higher education is attainable and affordable for any student—regardless of their family's income. Students can accomplish so much more when they are confident they can afford their next meal and month of rent; making good on this commitment will ensure future generations of students never have to worry about those concerns again.



NAME  
**Sindy  
De La Rosa**

CAMPUS  
**UC Riverside**

YEARS PELL RECEIVED  
**2017-2021**

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**How did receiving the Pell grant benefit your educational experience and make higher education more accessible to you?**

Receiving the Pell grant is what actually allowed me to receive a higher education. The Pell Grant benefitted me because it covered most of my tuition. As a first-generation student, tuition can be a determining factor of attending a college/university. The Pell Grant makes receiving a higher education more accessible for ALL students.

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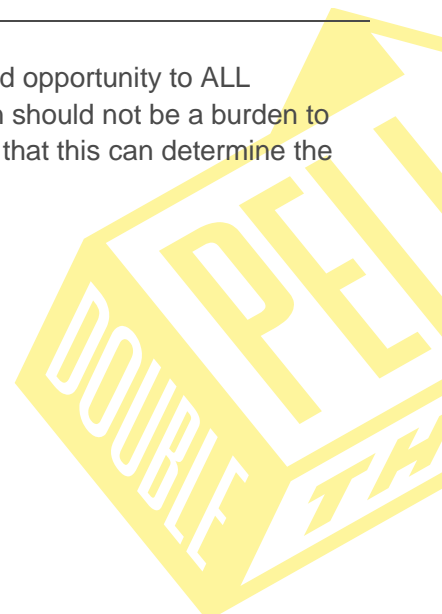
**What would have been different about your educational experience if you knew that there was additional Pell Grant support available?**

I would have possibly developed more of my interpersonal skills and development in other areas by becoming more independent. I would have lived off campus and paid for housing. This would have enhanced my educational experience by giving me more opportunity to engage in resources.

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**Why do we need Congress to #DoublePell?**

Doubling the Pell Grant will grant more access and opportunity to ALL students. The cost of receiving a higher education should not be a burden to prospective students. Congress must understand that this can determine the lives and change the trajectory of many students.





NAME  
**Melanie  
Archipley**

CAMPUS  
**UC Berkeley**

YEARS PELL RECEIVED  
**2013-2017**

**How did receiving the Pell grant benefit your educational experience and make higher education more accessible to you?**

As a student with an EFC of 0, I struggled greatly to obtain all the necessary funds for my education. In addition to loans, I worked every year of school, and up to three jobs at once to pay for my expenses. The Pell Grant lightened this great burden to a level that was manageable enough.

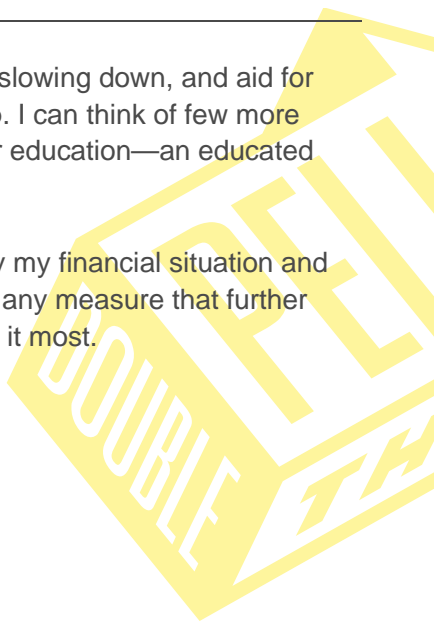
**What would have been different about your educational experience if you knew that there was additional Pell Grant support available?**

Had there been additional Pell support, there were many paths I would have approached differently. I would not have had to work so many jobs just to pay rent. In fact, I received EBT benefits for some time because finances were so tight. A little support goes such a long way when life is on the margins as much as mine was during college.

**Why do we need Congress to #DoublePell?**

Education costs are rapidly rising with no signs of slowing down, and aid for low-income students has not been able to keep up. I can think of few more worthy investments of taxpayer dollars than higher education—an educated youth secures a brighter future for all of us.

My college experience was marked significantly by my financial situation and Pell lessened those worries. I vehemently support any measure that further reduces financial barriers for the people who need it most.





NAME

Festus Ohan

CAMPUS

UC Riverside

YEARS PELL RECEIVED

2010-2014

**How did receiving the Pell grant benefit your educational experience and make higher education more accessible to you?**

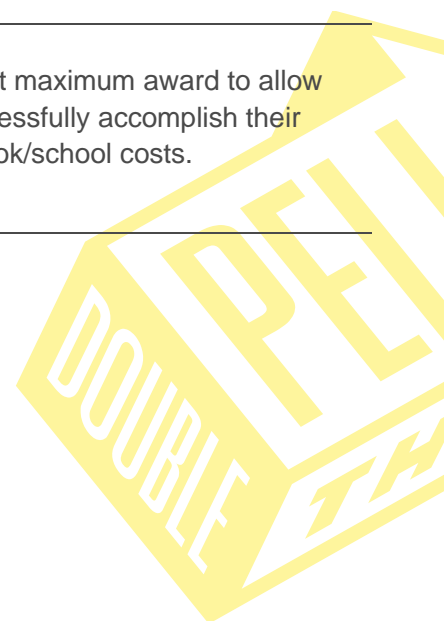
As a former foster youth, the Pell Grant has made a huge difference in my educational experience. It allowed me to afford housing and books without the need to work multiple jobs throughout my undergraduate experience.

**What would have been different about your educational experience if you knew that there was additional Pell Grant support available?**

I believe if I had additional Pell Grant support I would have been able to afford paying for supplemental materials to progress through my pre-medical years, such as MCAT courses/books.

**Why do we need Congress to #DoublePell?**

I believe Congress needs to double the Pell Grant maximum award to allow students from disadvantaged upbringings to successfully accomplish their future endeavors without the strain of housing/book/school costs.







NAME

Wendy  
Hunter  
Barker

CAMPUS

UCLA Alum,  
UC San Diego  
Staff Member

YEARS PELL RECEIVED

1992-1996

**How did receiving the Pell grant benefit your educational experience and make higher education more accessible to you?**

We had no money for college and I had to cobble together a variety of scholarships and grants, in addition to work study and loans, to afford my UCLA education. It was worth it, but it was challenging.

**What would have been different about your educational experience if you knew that there was additional Pell Grant support available?**

If there had been additional Pell Grant support available, I could have worked less, allowing me to spend more time on my studies, and/or borrowed less. Since I went on to graduate school, having less debt after undergrad would have been very helpful.

**Why do we need Congress to #DoublePell?**

Congress should double the Pell Grant maximum award because even doubled, it won't meet all the needs of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Further, in order to assure the continuation of our global leadership, the United States must increase its investment in post-secondary education.





NAME  
**Janice Le**

CAMPUS  
**UC Berkeley**

YEARS PELL RECEIVED  
**2013-2018**

**How did receiving the Pell grant benefit your educational experience and make higher education more accessible to you?**

As a first-generation and low-income student, funding played a huge role in my ability to attend college and complete my degree. Higher education is already a large investment for low-income families considering that financial aid doesn't cover all the costs. However, the Pell Grant made college a bit more affordable than if I did not receive it. It helped reduce the amount of loans I utilized and fostered my retention at the university.

**What would have been different about your educational experience if you knew that there was additional Pell Grant support available?**

I would not have worked so many jobs in undergrad. I would have been able to pursue my personal interests, which included research opportunities, professional development programs and building stronger communities/networks. I often spent my weekends and free time working to help cover the additional cost of living that came from attending a university in the Bay Area – one of the most expensive cities in the U.S.

**Why do we need Congress to #DoublePell?**

The cost of higher education is more expensive and not affordable for students today. Low-income students are often utilizing loans to cover the cost of living on campus and for me has impacted my ability to build wealth for me and my family. Doubling the Pell Grant can help close the inequities that exist for low-income students in higher education. I know that if I had double the Pell Grant, it would have changed my life and my ability to support my family after graduating college.

