



Student Affairs Administrators
in Higher Education

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NASPA Priorities for HEA Reauthorization

While there is much to celebrate in our national landscape of colleges and universities, years of state disinvestment and the diminishing purchasing power of federal grant programs have resulted in noticeable signs of wear. Our federal policy has struggled to keep up with today's more diverse student body, including many adults shouldering responsibility for not only their own education, but also that of their children, resulting in a system of financial aid and regulations that are ill-suited to meeting the needs of either today's students or the American taxpayer. The reauthorization of Higher Education Act (HEA) presents an opportunity to correct that course and fulfill both the promise and the responsibility of the federal government to today's students. Given the need to modernize HEA for today's students, NASPA supports a comprehensive reauthorization of HEA, rather than the passage of an omnibus of specific, targeted bills amending parts of HEA independently.

NASPA priorities for reauthorization of HEA:

- **Protect, preserve, and modernize student financial aid to meet the needs of today's now-traditional students.** Post-secondary education is necessary for students from low- and middle-income families to securing a healthy and productive financial future. As our economy continues to rely on skilled workers with some level of college credential, and increasingly on continuing education throughout an individual's career, it is important for our federal financial aid programs to preserve access and ensure flexibility to support tomorrow's students, including adequate resources to meet students' basic food and housing needs.
- **Expand Pell amounts and access.** NASPA supports expanding both the amount of support offered and the numbers of students eligible to access federal Pell funds. The purchasing power of the Pell program must be, at a minimum, maintained, and preferably increased. Additionally, access to Pell Grants should be expanded to more students, including incarcerated individuals and those pursuing high-quality short-term certificate programs.
- **Maintain programs that reduce the burden of student loans, such as in-school loan interest subsidies and borrower defense to repayment.** Federal and state grant programs are no longer sufficient to cover the cost of attending college for the neediest students. Especially for those students, reducing the burden of taking on student loan debt is essential. Removal of in-school loan subsidies would increase the cost of student loans by thousands of dollars for each of the six million borrowers who benefit from it¹. Similarly, NASPA supports maintenance of borrower defense regulations to protect students from bearing the costs of fraudulent behavior.
- **Preserve SEOG & PSLF programs.** Congress should preserve both the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG) program, which serves 1.5 million students annually, and the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program, which encourages graduates to go into nationally important but low-paying fields such as teaching and social work.

¹ Analysis completed by the American Council on Education (ACE) determined that an undergraduate student who borrows \$19,000 over four years and makes all payments on time would see a 44 percent increase in the cost of the loan. Letter from ACE and 37 additional higher education associations to Chairs Foxx and Guthrie and Ranking Members Scott and Davis re the PROSPER Act; available online: <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/Letter-PROSPER-Act-Markup.pdf>

- **Support graduate education.** As a profession reliant on the skills developed during graduate studies to support future students in completing their educations, NASPA opposes policies that would limit the ability of students to pursue graduate education, such as changes to the tax code related to tuition waivers or arbitrary restrictions on the amount graduate student can borrow to complete their education.
- **Simplify the FAFSA.** NASPA supports efforts to simplify the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), especially those that make the application process more accessible to current and prospective students. Removing the burden of FAFSA verification on low-income students and on strengthening the data sharing agreements between the Department of Education and the Internal Revenue Service would make applying for aid easier for those most in need.
- **Close equity gaps.** NASPA encourages legislators to pay specific attention to closing equity gaps.
- **Support minority-serving institutions.** As demonstrated by recent research released by the American Council on Education², four-year minority-serving institutions (MSIs) propel more students from the lowest income quintile to the top income quintile than four-year non-MSIs. Maintaining or increasing institutional support through Titles III and V would help meet the needs of these institutions.
- **Sustain TRIO funding.** TRIO programs have been proven to support low-income students, prepare students in high demand fields such as teaching, and support the strengthening of institutions supporting first-generation, low-income students. NASPA urges policymakers to consider the needs of our growing knowledge-based economy and work to ensure that institutions and programs proven to increase student success and completion are, at a minimum, maintained.
- **Update the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act regulations.** As Congressional attention has focused on the ravages of the opioid epidemic in communities across the country, campus prevention programs should be revisited. NASPA supports language requiring use of evidence-based or evidence-informed programs for campus alcohol and drug prevention programs, including the creation of a cooperative agreement between the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services to classify evidence-based and evidence-informed programs and provide compliance assistance for campus administrators.

About NASPA

NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education is the leading association for the advancement, health, and sustainability of the student affairs profession. Student affairs is a critical component of the higher education experience, collaborating with colleagues across institutions of higher education to offer students valuable learning opportunities, meaningful social engagements, and safe and inclusive environments. NASPA’s Public Policy Agenda is grounded in a commitment to ensuring opportunity for all institutional members’ students and a belief that higher education is a great benefit to both individuals and society.

² Espinosa, L., Kelchen, R., & Taylor, M. 2018. *Minority Serving Institutions as Engines of Upward Mobility*. Washinton, D.C. (ACE). Retrieved 6/13/2018 from <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/MSIs-as-Engines-of-Upward-Mobility.pdf>