

## 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 failed 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.

NASPA priorities for reauthorization of HEA:

***Maintain in-school loan interest subsidies.*** Six million low-income student borrowers benefit from the in-school subsidy for undergraduate Stafford loans; removal of the subsidy, as done in the PROSPER Act, would increase the cost of student loans by thousands of dollars. Analysis completed by ACE<sup>1</sup> 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.

***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.

***Support graduate education.*** As a profession reliant on the skills developed during graduate studies to support future students in completing their educations, NASPA is especially concerned by proposals raised in the PROSPER Act that would limit the ability of students to pursue graduate education. In addition to the costs changes to SEOG and in-school loan subsidies would impose on them as undergraduates, the removal of graduate student eligibility for Federal Work Study (FWS) and limitations on the amounts they can borrow through federal loan programs would force graduate students to borrow more in the more expensive private market.

***Expand Pell access.*** NASPA supports expanding access to federal Pell funds to more students, including incarcerated individuals through the Second-chance Pell Pilot Program and to those pursuing short-term certificate programs.

***Continue the gainful employment and borrower defense regulations.*** Expanding pathways to successful completion of postsecondary credentials will only be in the nation's best interest, however, if the programs eligible for these funds have demonstrated that they provide value to students. NASPA supports continuing the gainful employment and borrower defense regulations both for the protection of students and the responsible stewardship of federal student aid resources.

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<sup>1</sup> 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>



**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 Education<sup>2</sup>, four-year minority-serving institutions (MSIs) propel more students from the lowest income quintile to the top income quintile than four-year non-MSIs. NASPA urges Senators to consider the current need of these institutions, in particular the documented growth in the number of future MSIs, and make efforts to increase institutional support through Titles III and V.
- **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.
- **Consider incentives for part-time student completion.** Proposals such as the Pell progression bonus included in HR 4508, the “Promoting Real Opportunity, Success, and Prosperity through Education Reform Act” (PROSPER Act), should be available to students attending part-time but still making progress toward completion of a degree.

**Simplify the FAFSA.** NASPA supports efforts to simplify the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), especially those that would allow individuals to apply from a mobile device, use skip-logic to limit the number of questions asked of those without complicated financial situations, and otherwise make the application more accessible to current and prospective students.

## 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.

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<sup>2</sup> 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>

