

November 13, 2015

Honorable Harold Rogers  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
H-305, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Thad Cochran  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Room S128, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Nita Lowey  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
H-305, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Barbara Mikulski  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Room S128, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Rogers and Cochran and Ranking Members Lowey and Mikulski:

As your committees consider appropriate funding levels for the programs within the Fiscal Year 2016 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we write on behalf of the undersigned organizations to ask that you prioritize higher education in your allocations.

The recent passage of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 provides meaningful increases to the discretionary funding available within this bill. This increased flexibility allows appropriators to reverse the erosion of spending on federal student aid, scientific research and academic and institutional support programs under your jurisdiction.

We know that higher education and our economy are inextricably interlinked. An educated workforce is critical to competing in a demanding global environment, and the technological innovations produced through research performed on college campuses drives the economy, resulting in countless improvements in the quality of life for millions of Americans. Your committees have already recognized the critical role these programs play.

Both chambers' bills included an increase for the National Institutes of Health (NIH). This recognizes both the vital role NIH plays in expanding our knowledge of the health sciences and as a gateway for medical innovation. The increased allocation will help to compensate

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for lowered levels of investment in previous years and we ask that the larger Senate number prevails in any final agreement.

Similarly, the House had approved higher funding levels for the TRIO and GEAR UP programs. These programs help low-income students prepare for and succeed in college, and the higher levels would allow these programs to serve tens of thousands of qualified students, and we ask that the final agreement reflect those levels. In addition, the House also provided increased institutional support for minority-serving institutions (including historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and others) to advance their important work educating historically underserved populations. We would ask that the new bill meet or exceed these funding levels.

Beyond maintaining increases already approved, an increased allocation should be used to preserve and expand the programs that American students depend on to access and succeed in postsecondary education. The most important of these are Pell Grants. For over forty years, Pell Grants have been the primary support for low- and middle-income families to afford college. Earlier bills provided sufficient funding for the maximum Pell award to increase by \$140, to \$5,915, but did so in part by reducing the available surplus, posing a real threat to the financial health of the program going forward. Having concluded the broader budget deal, we would strongly encourage your committees to prioritize the restoration of that funding.

While we welcome your recognition of the valuable role campus-based aid programs play in promoting access to higher education, flat-funding or reducing the programs will limit their effectiveness. These programs, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG) and the Federal Work-Study (FWS) program, provide flexibility at the campus level to meet individual student needs and require matching investments by the participating institutions, leveraging federal dollars into even greater student aid. Since the recession, these programs have seen steady declines in support, even as need has substantially increased. We encourage the committee to make an immediate impact on college affordability by expanding funding for the campus-based aid programs.

Unfortunately, a number of programs were targeted for unwelcome cuts or elimination in the earlier bills. These include the First in the World program, which supports the creation and implementation of innovative approaches to student learning and completion, among other issues. We oppose the elimination of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), and request the restoration of this program's funding. We would also urge the Committee to restore funding for the Institute of Education Sciences and the International Education and Foreign Language Studies programs, which have seen steady decreases in previous years.

In addition, we would like to see the restoration of the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grants and increased funding for the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) program, as well as important training programs authorized by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. TQP grants provide the only federal funds dedicated to reforming teacher preparation, and GAANN is one of the few remaining federal programs

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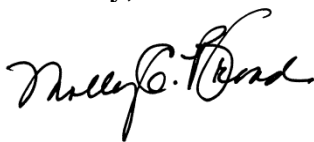
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that assists graduate students after years of cuts and eliminations. The training programs authorized under WIOA strengthen the ability of the nation's postsecondary institutions to close the skills gap that is of such great concern to the private sector. We strongly urge your committees to restore or expand the funding for these valuable programs.

Finally, the Perkins Loan program recently expired when Congress failed to act on an extension in time. This program partners colleges with the federal government to make low-cost loans available to low-income students. Existing legislation, which passed the House with unanimous consent, would extend the authorization of the program for an additional year, to allow consideration of the program within the framework of the ongoing reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. This legislation fully offsets the cost of the extension from changes within the program, meaning both students and taxpayers benefit. We strongly request that the committee include the Perkins loan extension in your bills.

As you consider programmatic funding levels for FY16 appropriations, we encourage you to reaffirm Congress's historic, bipartisan commitment to postsecondary education and scientific research. We look forward to working with you to advance programmatic funding that meets the needs of America's students, and our nation as a whole.

Sincerely,



Molly Corbett Broad  
President

MCB/ldw

On behalf of:

American Association of Colleges of Nursing  
American Association of Community Colleges  
American Association of State Colleges and Universities  
American Council on Education  
American Dental Education Association  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of American Universities  
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities  
Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges  
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities  
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities  
Association of Research Libraries  
Council of Graduate Schools  
Council of Independent Colleges  
Educational Testing Service

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EDUCAUSE

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities

National Association for College Admission Counseling

National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities

National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

National Association of Student Personnel Administration

University Professional and Continuing Education Association