



Student Aid Alliance

March 10, 2015

Representative Harold Rogers
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Thad Cochran
Chair
Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Barbara Mikulski
Vice-Chairwoman
Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

As you begin consideration of Fiscal Year 2016 appropriations, we write to request that you make sensible choices to fund the student financial aid programs under your jurisdiction. These programs are critical to ensuring that students can afford to access higher education, and have been repeatedly cut in preceding years.

The value of postsecondary education has never been higher, and a college education is the best investment we can make in our country's future. These programs strengthen our future workforce and spark innovation, increasing employment and stimulating business growth. A real effort to build our economy requires a vigorous postsecondary education component.

Therefore, our members request that Congress provide the following FY2016 appropriation levels for the student aid programs:

- **Sufficient funding is provided to maintain the scheduled maximum Pell Grant award of \$5,915 and reinstate year-round Pell.** Adequate discretionary funding should be made available for the foundational federal student aid program, to support a maximum grant of \$4,860, and the scheduled mandatory add-on of \$1,055 for a total maximum grant of \$5,915. Year-round Pell was eliminated in FY 2011 under severe

budget constraints. There is bipartisan support for reinstating this provision to allow students to persist to completion without losing momentum over the summer months.

- **Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants funding should be restored to \$757 million.** SEOG has been targeted for elimination as a way to “simplify” student aid. Simplification is a worthy policy goal, but not at the expense of need-based grant aid for students. SEOG provides up to \$4,000 in need-based grant aid to the neediest Pell Grant students. Participating colleges match federal dollars to make more than \$1 billion available in grant aid. Simplifying away SEOG will leave 1.6 million students without additional grant aid.
- **The Federal Work Study program should be funded at \$990 million.** Federal and institutional funding for FWS helps more than 700,000 students work part-time to help pay their college costs. Studies show that students who work on campus during have higher rates of persistence to graduation.
- **The Perkins Loan program should be provided \$125 million for loan cancellations.** Institutions participating in the Perkins Loan program have been carrying loan forgiveness cancellations for the last decade. Institutions should be reimbursed for the public service loan forgiveness options provided by law, as this program sunsets.
- **The Federal TRIO programs should be funded at \$905 million.** This funding amount will maintain services for the more than 840,000 students TRIO programs serve from middle school through college, including military veterans and students with disabilities, helping them get into college and complete with strong student support.
- **GEAR UP should be funded at \$323 million.** This increase will help 551,000 students gain program services. GEAR UP has a proven track record of success in preparing students to enter and succeed in college.
- **Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need should be provided \$31 million for graduate education programs.** GANN competitive grants offer support to top students studying in fields directly related to American competitiveness.
- **The Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership program should be reinstated and funded at \$64 million.** Funding for LEAP was eliminated in FY 2011 under severe budget constraints. LEAP helps ensure that states are equal partners with the federal government in providing access to higher education for low-income students.

We appreciate your attention to these requests. Without the strong partnership between the federal government, states, institutions and families, millions of students would not be able to go to college. We call on Congress to continue its bipartisan support of the federal student aid programs – which combine grants, work-study and loan programs – to enable low- and middle-income students to succeed.

Sincerely,



Molly Corbett Broad
Co-Chairman



David Warren
Co-Chairman



2015 Members

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American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

American Association of Colleges of Nursing

American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine

American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy

American Association of Community Colleges

American Association of State Colleges and Universities

American Association of University Professors

American College Personnel Association

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American Student Association of Community Colleges

APPA

Association of American Law Schools

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Association of American Veterinarian Medical Colleges

Association of Community College Trustees

Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges

Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities

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National Association of College and University Business Officers

National Association of College Stores

National Association of Graduate and Professional Students

National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities

National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs

National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

National Association of Student Personnel Administrators

National College Access Network

National Council for Community and Education Partnerships

National Council of Higher Education Loan Resources

National Council of Research Administrators

National Direct Student Loan Coalition

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