



Capitol Hill Day – June 11, 2015

Access, Affordability, and Protections for College Students

Student loan burdens have grown dramatically as states have reduced funding for public higher education, and the costs of higher education themselves have grown. Several measures before Congress would provide relief to students struggling to complete degrees and would assure future generations of access to federal financial aid.

Re-Authorization of the Higher Education Act

The AAUP believes that the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965 should include provisions that increase students' access to high-quality education. Growing tuition costs, largely a result of decreases in state appropriations for higher education, have created obstacles for student success. We encourage legislators to create incentives for states to reinvest in public higher education.

Protecting Student Aid

Pell Grants and Perkins loans remain as some of the most important tools available to allow low-income students to attend college and we support legislation that would increase the availability of these programs. We support the Year-Round Pell Grant Restoration **HR 1958** (Rep. Hinojosa - Texas), **S 1062** (Hirono – Hawai'i), which would allow students to use Pell grant funding to take classes during the summer—a practice that was discontinued in 2012. Furthermore, we support maintaining funding for Perkins loans, a program which has bipartisan support (**H.Res 294**).

Education as a Public Good

“AAUP President Rudy Fichtenbaum has repeatedly emphasized that higher education must be treated as a public good. Two proposals under consideration could make progress toward that goal. President Obama’s call for the America’s College Promise that would provide students with two years of free community college and Sen. Sanders’ (Vermont) bill (**S 1373**) to eliminate tuition at public institutions could make higher education more accessible than ever. Though we support programs that increase the availability of education and lower debt burden to students, caution must be exercised in the creation of such legislation to ensure that the quality of education is not diluted. We believe that faculty are the best suited to evaluate student progress, and that curricular standards with faculty involvement must be maintained throughout the academic process.

Oversight of For-Profit Higher Education

The AAUP joined 45 organizations in a letter to Arne Duncan calling for prompt action against predatory and unstable for-profit colleges, such as the now closed *Corinthian College*. We call on Congress to implement greater protections for students that are victims of predatory practices at these schools.

We are opposed to the “Supporting Academic Freedom through Regulatory Relief Act,” **HR 970** (Rep. Foxx – North Carolina) which would remove the federal definitions of “gainful employment,” and “credit hours,” and would allow incentive compensation for third party services to recruit and enroll students. The definitions and prohibitions currently in place protect students from misleading and low-quality programs.

The AAUP opposes legislation that removes student and taxpayer safeguards against predatory practices.