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A Damaging Budget Proposal

The Trump administration’s budget proposal for the 2018 fiscal year would make drastic cuts to education, slashing federal student aid and research funding. The proposal, released May 22, fleshes out the “skinny budget” released by the administration in March.

The plan proposes deep cuts in the following areas:

- **Student aid:** The public-service loan-forgiveness program, subsidized Stafford Loans, and Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants would be eliminated. Graduate students using income-based loan repayment would see their costs rise dramatically. The Perkins Loan Program would be allowed to expire. Funding for the Federal Work-Study Program would be halved.
- **Arts and humanities:** The National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities would be phased out.
- **Science:** The budget of the National Institutes of Health would be cut by close to 20 percent, and the National Science Foundation budget would be cut by more than 10 percent. Research funding at other agencies would be significantly reduced.
- **International education:** The proposal would eliminate programs that foster foreign-language study and reduce funding for international-education programs and exchanges, such as the Fulbright Scholar Program, by 55 percent.

This budget proposal, if enacted, would damage teaching, research, and student access to higher education, especially access for low-income students and students of color. At the same time, it would give big tax breaks to the rich. We believe that colleges and universities are a public good and that learning and the search for truth are vital for a functioning democracy. Cutting education funding as proposed to pay for tax cuts for millionaires, billionaires, and corporations is grotesque.

Fortunately, the Trump administration cannot unilaterally impose these cuts; the final 2018 budget will be the product of what are likely to be prolonged negotiations with the House and Senate, and many legislators have already taken issue with different aspects of the proposal. However, it is also the case that some of the Trump budget proposals are similar to past proposals made by the Republicans who control Congress; it is imperative that higher education supporters work together to mitigate the damage as the budget process unfolds. We are heartened that organizations as diverse as the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, the American Council on Education, and the American Federation of Teachers have come out against the proposed budget cuts, as have many disciplinary associations. We will continue to work in coalition with these groups and others to protect our higher education system.