



American Council on Education
Office of the President

March 2, 2011

United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the higher education associations listed below, I write regarding the short-term continuing resolution for FY 2011. We applaud you for coming to a bipartisan agreement to avoid a government shutdown, which would have delayed the delivery of federal student aid to millions of low-income college students who rely on it to pursue their higher education goals and become more productive members of our society. However, we are concerned that the deal includes the elimination of the Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnerships (LEAP) Program, which will have devastating implications for students and states.

At a time when the federal government is seeking to do more with less, eliminating the LEAP Program is particularly short-sighted. A federal allocation of \$64 million generates more than \$1 billion in student aid for over one million American students. This represents an average award of \$1,700, which can be the difference between earning a degree and dropping out of college for the over 80 percent of LEAP families earning less than \$40,000 a year. In many states, the federal investment keeps state dollars going to need-based grants rather than just merit-based grants. LEAP also requires states to treat students at public and private institutions equally for state need-based grant aid.

All available data shows the benefits of producing an educated and skilled workforce. College graduates are far more likely to be employed, and they earn substantially more than non-college graduates. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in January the unemployment rate for those with a bachelor's degree or higher was 4.5 percent, compared to 12 percent for those with a high school diploma or less. Employees with a bachelor's degree out-earn employees with only a high school diploma by \$20,748 annually.

If our economy is to recover and thrive again, we need precisely the kind of skilled workers that the LEAP Program has produced. If the elimination of LEAP is enacted, in combination with other cuts proposed to Pell Grants, the Supplementary Educational Opportunity (SEOG) and other student aid programs, these reductions will have both immediate and long-term negative effects on our country's economic competitiveness.

Sincerely,



Molly Corbett Broad
President

MCB/lw

On behalf of:

ACPA - College Student Educators International
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of Presidents of Independent Colleges and Universities
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Association of University Professors
American Council on Education
American Indian Higher Education Consortium
APPA, "Leadership in Educational Facilities"
Appalachian College Association
Arkansas' Independent Colleges & Universities
Association for Biblical Higher Education
Association of American Universities
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
Association of Community College Trustees
Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges
Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts
Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in New Jersey
Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Nebraska
Association of Independent Colleges of Art & Design
Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges & Universities
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Association of Research Libraries

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Association of Vermont Independent Colleges
Conference for Mercy Higher Education
Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges
Council for Opportunity Education
Educational Testing Service
Georgia Independent College Association, Inc.
Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas
Independent Colleges of Washington
Kansas Independent College Association
Maryland Independent College and University Association
Minnesota Private College Council, Fund and Research Foundation
NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association of College and University Business Officers
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
National Collegiate Athletic Association
North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities
Oregon Independent Colleges Association
South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities
Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association
The Education Agency of Mennonite Church
UNCF
Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
Women's College Coalition
Work Colleges Consortium