

HIGHER EDUCATION ACT REAUTHORIZATION CONFERENCE
NAICU PRIORITIES—16 “asks”
February 2008

College Cost: We understand that Congress is deeply concerned about college prices, but find it hard to understand how the multitude of overlapping and inconsistent requirements included in the House and Senate bills will remedy the situation. Several provisions are particularly confusing and redundant and should not be included in the final bill. Specifically:

1. Ensure that the effective date of cost provisions be set prospectively, as intended by the House bill. All colleges have already had to set their 2008-09 tuition and fess, so it is too late to change them. If the intent is to change the behavior of institutions, then we should be given the change to do that by making the provisions completely prospective.
2. Eliminate all the cost provisions included in Title VIII of the House bill – particularly the redundant provisions relating to reporting by institutions whose net price exceeds the postsecondary education price index (PEPI) in any year.
3. Eliminate the instructional expenditures per student line on the Higher Education Price Information Summary in House bill. This information is misleading.
4. Eliminate the provisions of the Senate bill requiring net price by income quartile to be provided with admissions materials. This would require institutions to collect income information from unaided students.
5. Eliminate the additional reporting requirements imposed by the Murphy-Myrick amendments added on the House floor. The legislation already assures that students and their families will have access to an institution’s past pricing history. Trying to predict the future as well is likely to lead to confusion and misinformation.

Reporting Requirements: At the same time that colleges are being asked to operate more efficiently and to reduce prices, we are also being required to comply with numerous new mandates and reporting requirements. Many of these mandates are confusing and redundant—making it highly unlikely that they will produce useful information for students and their families. At a minimum, we ask that you pare down the requirements that are included in the final bill. Specifically--

6. Get rid of all the data items on the House College Navigator/Senate U-CAN consumer information lists which would require colleges to submit additional information to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). In particular, drop the requirement in the House bill that graduation rates be broken down by income category—as this would require colleges to collect income data from all their students.
7. Drop the provisions of the Senate bill calling for the collection of income and post-graduation data.
8. Drop the provisions of the Senate bill calling for even more complicated reporting of graduation rates.
9. Drop the provisions of the House bill requiring complex reporting information related to textbooks.

10. Drop the provisions of the House bill requiring institutions to notify the campus community within 30 minutes of a “significant emergency or dangerous situation.”
11. Drop the redundant endowment reporting requirements added to the House bill by the Welch amendment. A study of this matter is already included elsewhere in the legislation, and an additional study is currently being conducted by the Senate Finance Committee.

Accreditation: Thank you for assuring that accreditation will not be used as a tool for dictating institutional academic decisions. Please preserve these features in the final bill, in particular—

12. Maintain the provisions in both bills that restrict the ability of the Secretary to regulate on student achievement standards.
13. Maintain the revisions, also in both bills, that include congressional appointees to the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI).

Teacher Education: We strongly oppose federal mandates on curriculum elements and program outcomes.

14. Drop the provisions of the Senate bill that include quantifiable goals in the production of teachers in certain fields and in the program of study used by the college. We regard this mandate on the curriculum and outcomes of all teacher preparation programs as an inappropriate federal control and an extremely troubling precedent. *(As an alternative, the final bill could remove the direct federal curriculum mandate, but provide public awareness of how colleges are addressing teacher shortage needs in their localities, by providing additional information in the existing Institutional Report Card.)*

Academic Bill of Rights: Independence and diversity of mission are the hallmarks of private nonprofit education in the United States. Both would be jeopardized if the federal government gets into the business of trying to define and regulation “balance” in opinions expressed at all levels of the college experience.

15. Drop the provisions of the Senate bill dealing with student speech and association.

Student Loan Sunshine: Thank you for finding a reasonable, balanced approach to this situation that will go a long way towards restoring the public trust.

16. The Senate should recede to the House as it contains the most recent version of this continually improved legislation.