

## Access

Access to college means ensuring that all students who wish to pursue a higher education have the opportunity to do so, regardless of their socioeconomic, demographic, geographic or academic backgrounds. It includes the opportunity to earn admittance, experience a supportive environment during their studies and graduate from college prepared to succeed in the workplace and participate as a citizen of the world.

State and federal governments—as well as institutions—play a role in ensuring the path to college is as smooth as possible for all students, with the federal government playing an especially important role in ensuring equal access to college. The states and federal government, in partnership with the nation’s pre-K-12 system, have a responsibility to focus the most effective strategies for access and inclusion on the precollege years and work to reduce barriers in the transition from secondary to postsecondary education.

AASCU is pleased that the most recent reauthorization of the Higher Education Act includes provisions that address access issues supported and advocated by AASCU, including extending eligibility requirements in Title III to include the new designation of “Predominantly Black Institution;” adding six new graduate programs to the list of Historically Black Colleges and Universities; creating a new program under Title V to strengthen graduate opportunities for Hispanic students; and allowing for institutional payments to master’s degree-granting institutions that enroll a Graduate Assistant in Areas of National Need (GAANN) fellow.

In addition, during the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, significant adjustments to student veteran benefits were signed into law. In the same measure, veteran education benefit eligibility requirements were improved and equalized among the various active and reserve duty components.

## **Access Priorities**

- ★ Boost appropriation levels for Title III of the Higher Education Act, which supports the development and strengthening of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Predominantly Black Institutions, American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities, Alaska Native and Hawaiian-Serving Institutions, Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions, and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions.
- ★ Boost funding of Title V of the Higher Education Act, which supports the development and strengthening of Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) in order to address the nation's changing demographics and the increasing enrollments at HSIs.
- ★ Benchmark MGIB benefits (pre-9/11 GI Bill) to the cost of attendance at public four-year institutions for those service members who served prior to September 11, 2001.
- ★ Fund Model Programs for Centers of Excellence for Veteran Success authorized under HEA to award competitive grants for model programs that support veteran student success in postsecondary education.
- ★ Support clarification of existing federal immigration laws to allow states to determine the tuition status of qualified dependents of undocumented immigrants.

## Federal Role in College Access— AASCU Policy Statements

### Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs)

- Boost appropriation levels for Title III of the Higher Education Act, which supports the development and strengthening of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Predominantly Black Institutions, American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities, Alaska Native and Hawaiian-Serving Institutions, Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions, and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, underrepresented and disadvantaged populations increased by 15,472,793 between 2000-2007. The Hispanic population increased by 9,855,326; the black, non-Hispanic population rose by 2,943,469; the Asian population increased by 2,673,998.

Diversity is a compelling state interest, as articulated in *Bakke v. Regents of the University of California*, and must inform all executive, legislative and judicial deliberations regarding educational access and inclusion.

In FY 2008, the federal Predominantly Black Institutions (PBI) Program—designed to strengthen predominantly black institutions’ programs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, health education, internationalization/globalization, teacher preparation and improving African American males’ educational outcomes—had estimated available funds of \$15,000,000 to award a projected 25 grants of \$600,000/year.
- Boost funding of Title V of the Higher Education Act, which supports the development and strengthening of Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) in order to address the nation’s changing demographics and increasing enrollments at HSIs.

## **Federal Early Outreach and Student Services Programs: TRIO and GEAR UP**

- Support increased funding for TRIO and GEAR UP through the annual appropriations process.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, in 2007 there were 2,886 TRIO projects, 844,889 total participants, and a total funding allocation of \$882,898,107 for TRIO. However, according to the most recent data, 11 million or more people need TRIO services and less than 7 percent of people eligible for TRIO projects are served. Two-thirds of TRIO participants come from households where neither parent graduated from college and where the income for a family of four is under \$28,000.

- Oppose any proposal to scale back or eliminate any significant component of TRIO and GEAR UP programs.

## **Veteran Students, Students Called to Active Duty and Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) Students**

- Benchmark MGIB benefits (pre-9/11 GI Bill) to the cost of attendance at public four-year institutions for those service

The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 or "New GI Bill" rewards veterans who have served for three years on active duty after September 11, 2001. It provides veterans with funds that cover tuition up to the cost of in-state tuition at the most expensive public college or university in that veteran's state. It also provides an additional \$1,000 stipend for books and supplies and a housing stipend based on the college's location.

- members who served prior to September 11, 2001. Service members eligible under the current MGIB and that served on or after September 11, 2001 will have an irrevocable decision point to choose either set of benefits.
- Ensure that no student-reservist is required to repay any unearned federal student aid received for an academic term in which they are called to active duty.
- Support the U.S. Veterans' Affairs Office in its efforts to develop regulations to implement the new GI Bill and to create a payment system able to make timely and accurate payments to eligible recipients of veterans' benefits. States and institutions

should not suffer adverse financial consequences as a result of federal action.

- Advocate for more advantageous tuition rates and portability equity for MGIB Selected Reserve (Chapter 1606) benefits earned during mobilization for a period of 10 years after leaving the service (equal to current portability for active-duty members).
- Fund Model Programs for Centers of Excellence for Veteran Success authorized under HEA to award competitive grants for model programs that support veteran student success in postsecondary education.
- Boost funding for the Upward Bound TRIO programs that prepare low-income, first-generation military veterans for college.
- Support ROTC programs on campus that allow students to develop both academic and leadership skills in the service of their country.

## **Pipeline to Graduate School**

- Increase investment in federal scholarship and fellowship programs such as the Byrd Honors Scholarship, the Javits Fellowship, and GAANN programs as important means of building a pipeline for historically underrepresented groups into academia and advanced graduate studies.
- Boost funding to the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program through the TRIO programs in order to increase the number of undergraduate students who participate in advanced degree programs. Funding is used to encourage enrollment in advanced degree programs through mentoring, test preparation for the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), tutoring and assistance in applying for graduate school. Students who benefit from this program are tracked and supported as they progress through their advanced degree programs.

## Undocumented Students

- Support clarification of existing federal immigration law to allow states to determine the tuition status of qualified dependents of undocumented immigrants. AASCU believes that states' authority over tuition policy must be preserved and respected.

Between 2001 and 2006, 10 states passed legislation allowing undocumented students to receive in-state tuition. Since then, no additional states have joined them, and there have been legal challenges to existing law. In September 2008, a California appeals court was the first to find that the state's law extending in-state tuition rates to undocumented students conflicts with federal law. Also, several states have sought to prevent undocumented students from attending college at all. Over the past year, South Carolina banned undocumented students from attending any public higher education institution in the state, and North Carolina and Alabama have banned undocumented students from attending two-year colleges.

- Support access to certain federal student financial aid, such as loans and work-study funds, for qualified undocumented students who were brought to the United States under the age of 16, have resided in the United States for five or more years and have graduated from a United States high school.

## Affirmative Action and Diversity of College Campuses

- Oppose federal efforts that prohibit affirmative action policies for colleges and universities, in order to ensure equal educational opportunity and access for all students.

## **State Role in College Access— AASCU Policy Statements**

### **Undocumented Students**

- Encourage states to provide eligibility for in-state tuition rates to qualified undocumented students. Qualifications may include graduation from a state high school, state residency and intent to obtain U.S. citizenship.
- Discourage state efforts to prohibit undocumented students from enrolling in public institutions.

### **Tuition Benefits for Active Military Personnel and Veterans**

- Encourage states to support programs that facilitate veterans' entry into and success in postsecondary education.

### **Affirmative Action and Diversity Referendums**

- Discourage state referendums limiting the ability of public colleges and universities to utilize admissions or other policies that aim to engender a diverse student body.

### **Strengthening and Aligning P-20 Standards**

- Support state efforts to increase the preparedness for, and transition to, postsecondary education through strong P-20 coordination initiatives. Such initiatives may include:
  - Alignment of secondary and postsecondary curriculum, standards and assessments.
  - Clarifying and raising expectations for entering college freshmen by articulating a rigorous statewide high school core course of study that prepares students for college and the world of work.

- Developing policies that promote access to accelerated learning options and that encourage participation of middle- and lower-achieving groups in such programs as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and dual/concurrent enrollment.

### **Seamless Student Transitioning**

- Encourage states to develop effective policies to support the transfer of credit and streamline credit transfer, including statewide articulation agreements, while recognizing that academic matters are most appropriately handled through the collaborative efforts of accreditors and statewide, system and institutional boards.
- Urge adoption of policies that remove undue barriers to baccalaureate programs for students completing associate degree programs.

### **Nontraditional/Adult Learners**

- Urge states to develop policies that facilitate adult learner re-entry into college and toward degree completion, such as assessment of prior learning and initiatives designed to help adults meet the logistical challenges of balancing occupational, parental and college responsibilities.