

FEDERAL ROLE IN COLLEGE ACCESS AND COMPLETION

AASCU POLICY STATEMENTS

Institutional Support

- ◆ Advocate for direct support to public institutions of higher education that enroll a high percentage of low-income individuals.

K-12 and Postsecondary Education Alignment

- ◆ Support funding directed toward states in their efforts to align P-12 and higher education curricula, standards and assessments to ensure that students are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in postsecondary education and the workforce.
- Support state efforts in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English language arts.

Diversity and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs)

- Support higher education policies that ensure equal access to educational opportunities for all students.
- ◆ Support continued 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, Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions; and Native American Serving Institutions.
- Advocate for sustained funding for 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.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), between 2008-2019, college enrollment is expected to increase 7 percent for white students, 30 percent for black non-Hispanic students, 45 percent for Hispanic students, 30 percent for Asian/Pacific Islander students, and 5 percent for Native American/Alaskan Native students.

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

- Protect funding for TRIO and GEAR UP, and oppose any proposal to scale back or eliminate any significant component of the programs.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, in FY 2010 there were 2,962 TRIO projects, 840,863 total participants (not including TRIO Training participants), and a total funding allocation of \$904,285,427 for TRIO. The FY 2011 appropriation for the Federal TRIO Programs was cut by approximately 3.1 percent for a total appropriation of \$826,521,644. According to other data, two-thirds of TRIO participants come from households where neither parent graduated from college and where family income is under \$30,975.

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

- ◆ Support continued legislative changes and/or technical corrections to the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 in order to make procedures simpler and more transparent, as well as standardize benefit processing in accordance with accepted higher education practices.

The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 or "Post-9/11 GI Bill" also has a Yellow Ribbon component, where institutions whose tuition and fees are higher than the base Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit (in-state tuition and fees at the most expensive public college or university in that veteran's state) can sign agreements with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to contribute up to 50 percent of tuition and fees toward the remaining cost. The VA will match up to 50 percent of the school's Yellow Ribbon contribution. According to September 2010 VA testimony, in the 2009-2010 academic year VA paid out \$41.7 million under the Yellow Ribbon Program.

- ◆ Assure that veteran students receive their full education benefit entitlement for military service, irrespective of other forms of financial assistance. Continue collaborating with appropriate stakeholders to attempt to mitigate the confusion for veteran students and increased administrative burden for institutions created by the "payer of last resort" and other amendments to the Post-9/11 GI Bill.
- ◆ Oppose unfunded mandates imposed by the VA or Congress on institutions without regard to established higher education processes and funding streams. Tuition and fees paid by the VA defray the cost of veteran students' classroom education—as all other students' tuition and fee payments defray the cost of their classroom education. These monies cannot be diverted to other veteran support services, such as psychological counseling or veterans' centers, without jeopardizing the academic enterprise.
- Support efforts to have school certifying officials given appropriate, secured access to VA data systems that will contain timely information on veteran students' remaining education benefit eligibility. Institutions need appropriately limited access to this data in order to better serve veteran students.

- Support efforts by the VA and Department of Defense (DoD) to collect, publish and make available data on enrollment, year-to-year retention and graduation of military and veteran students. Collecting data will assist higher education, the VA and DoD in determining better ways to serve these students, as well as aid in program accountability.
- 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.
- Benchmark Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) benefits (pre-9/11 GI Bill) to the cost of attendance at public four-year institutions for those servicemembers who served prior to September 11, 2001. Servicemembers eligible under the current MGIB who 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.
- Advocate for more advantageous tuition rates for MGIB Selected Reserve (Chapter 1606) benefits; also advocate for portability equity for MGIB-SR benefits earned during mobilization for a period of 10 years after leaving service (equal to MGIB Active Duty portability rates).
- 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.
- Discourage attempts to federally mandate institutional refund policies for veteran and active-duty military students; national survey data indicate that nearly 80 percent of responding campuses had already established refund policies for military activations and deployments.

MGIB-SR benefits effective October 1, 2011 for members of the Selected Reserve attending college range from \$86.25/month for less than half-time study to \$345/month for full-time study; reservists who voluntarily separate from the Selective Reserve lose their educational benefits immediately upon separation.

Undocumented Students

- ◆ Support clarification of existing federal immigration law to allow states to determine the tuition status of qualified undocumented students, as espoused in previous iterations of the proposed Development, Relief and Education of Alien Minors (DREAM) Act.

AASCU believes that states' authority over tuition policy must be preserved and respected.

- ◆ Support access to federal loan and work study programs for qualified undocumented students, as espoused in previous iterations of the DREAM Act. Student qualifications may include those who were brought to the United States under the age of 16, have resided in the U.S. for five or more years, have graduated from a U.S. high school, and are individuals of good moral character who are pursuing postsecondary education to qualify for permanent residency status.

Since 2001, 13 states have passed legislation allowing undocumented students to receive in-state tuition, and this issue continues to be hotly debated in many states. In 2011, the U.S. Supreme Court provided support for the argument that in-state tuition laws do not violate federal immigration laws when it let stand a decision by the California Supreme Court that high school attendance can legally replace the residency requirement for receiving in-state tuition. Another issue for states is whether undocumented students should have access to enroll in public postsecondary institutions, and three states currently deny enrollment for such students at some or all of their public institutions.

Funding for Advanced Degree Programs

- Support federal scholarship and fellowship programs, such as the Javits Fellowship and GAANN programs, as important means of building a pipeline for historically underrepresented groups into academia and advanced graduate studies.
- Advocate for 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.