



Friday, February 29, 2008

Update on the Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act

The Washington higher education “community” yesterday sent House and Senate education committee leaders recommendations for the upcoming conference on legislation to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA). Fourteen higher education associations signed on to the package, which was organized by the American Council on Education. The extensive set of recommendations includes views and suggestions on key issues—including accreditation, college costs, new reporting requirements, and many others—to be considered during the conference on the House and Senate measures (H.R. 4137 and S. 1642). The letter and recommendations are attached.

Today, Interim Chancellor John Clark sent a letter expressing SUNY’s views on the legislation to Senator Clinton and Representatives McCarthy, Bishop, Clarke and Kuhl. These five New York State members of congress are all members of the committees with jurisdiction over the legislation and it is possible that one or more of them will be named conferees as the House and Senator work on a final conference agreement. I have attached a copy of the letter sent to Senator Clinton (the others letters are similar).

Conferees have not been named. However, preliminary discussions have begun between bipartisan staff of the House Education and Labor and Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions committees. More staff discussions are scheduled for next week.

It has been rumored that Congress may try to finalize their work on this legislation by March 15, 2008. This would be no small task and many Washington insiders are skeptical that a conference on this legislation could be completed by that time, but most with an interest in the bill, including our SUNY, have been working to be prepared for this possibility.

I anticipate that faculty and staff may be contacted in the coming weeks by their respective national associations regarding troublesome provisions in the legislation. Please use the attached documents as guidance as you work to respond to various “calls-to-action” that often emerge at this point in the process. Please also feel free to contact me or Angie Anderson here in the Washington, DC Office should you have any questions or concerns regarding the HEA reauthorization legislation and process.