SUNY DAY DC

SUNY Day DC will be held on April 29 - 30, 2014. This year’s theme will focus on applied learning and include remarks from Senator Schumer, Senator Gillibrand, Rep. Bishop, and members of the Obama Administration. The event will also include a Congressional briefing on SUNY Works and a Capitol Hill reception for members of congress, their staff, and SUNY alumni. Please see the attached Save the Date with information about the J.W. Marriot Hotel.

If you have any questions, please contact Alex at alex.krigstein@suny.edu

The FIRST ACT

On Thursday, the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee – Subcommittee on Research and Technology held a markup of— the Frontiers in Innovation, Research, Science, and Technology (FIRST) Act (H.R. 4186). The legislation reauthorizes the National Science Foundation (NSF), National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), and the Office of Science and Technology Policy for two years. The legislation sets funding targets for each individual directorate within NSF, a direction opposed by many researchers. NSF would be authorized at $7.279B for FY2015 (1.5% increase from President’s FY15 Budget), NIST at $862.75M (1% increase) and the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE) Directorate at NSF authorized at $200M (22% decrease). It would also place new restrictions on NSF research, requiring written justifications for why a research grant is “in the national interest.”

Attached is a Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF) letter, which was signed by SUNY, raising concerns the legislation fails to meet the guiding principles for reauthorization that was endorsed last year by the higher education community.

Gainful Employment Rule

The Department of Education (ED) released proposed regulations known as “gainful employment” that would apply to career training programs at all types of institutions — community colleges, state universities, and for-profit colleges.

The proposal will have 60 day public comment period, with ED releasing a final rule over the summer. Regulations would take effect by July 2015, with institutions subject to sanctions in 2016. According to recent estimates, 13 percent of programs would fail the proposal’s two-part test, while 7 percent more would fall into the zone that would trigger warnings to students. The standards focus on two key metrics: Debt-to-Earnings Measures and Cohort Default Rates.

Degree programs would fall under the debt-to-earnings requirement if more than 30 students complete each year in the appropriate cohort. For a program to classify as failing, graduates' student-loan debt payments would need to exceed 12 percent of their incomes and 30 percent of their discretionary
incomes. Programs whose graduates have debt-to-income ratios of 8 to 12 percent or debt-to-
discretionary-income ratios of 20 to 30 percent would fall into the "zone" category and would have to
warn students they might become ineligible for federal aid. If a program failed both debt-to-earning
measures twice in any three-year period or were in the zone four consecutive years, they would be
ineligible for federal student aid.

Another provision would help community colleges that could be penalized under the rule. Programs
failing or in the zone on the debt-to-earnings could file a “mitigating circumstances” appeal to the
Secretary by showing that the borrowing rate for all completing students (those who received federal
aid and those who did not) is less than 50 percent.

The other metric is the student loan cohort default rate of 30 percent. The standard is the same as the
statutory rate for institutions that Congress established. If a default rate for programs exceeded 30
percent for three consecutive years it would be ineligible for federal student aid.

For more information, please contact the SUNY Office of Federal Relations.