Reminder Higher Education Act Briefing for New York Delegation Staff – September 17

On Tuesday, September 17, SUNY, clcu and CUNY will host a Higher Education Act Briefing for New York Delegation Staff. The sessions will be held from 9 a.m. until noon in the Capitol Visitor Center SVC 201. If you have any questions please feel free to contact Alex at 202-220-1315 or alex.krigstein@suny.edu

FY14 Appropriations

Both houses of Congress returned this week to Washington, facing critical votes on Syria and government funding. The fate of military action hinges on diplomatic talks and the two parties continue to spar over the looming budget crisis. However, the Senate did not pass any legislation and the only vote in the House was to repeal parts of the Affordable Care Act.

The House was expected to vote on a continuing resolution (CR) for Fiscal Year 2014. The terms of the CR would extend funding until December 15 at $986.3B – slightly below the current, post-sequestration level of $988B. If enacted, the CR unveiled this week would trigger automatic, across-the-board cuts of $20B to mostly defense programs because spending levels exceed the $967B ($498B for defense) FY14 spending cap. Spending on other federal programs would be left largely alone, as it would be running $1B below its FY14 cap.

However, House leadership pulled the bill from the floor indefinitely. Republican leaders are now looking for a new strategy after conservative members demanded tying the CR to a resolution withholding funds for the Affordable Care Act. Disputes over the health care law may send Speaker Boehner looking for Democratic votes, a bid that may cost him votes in his own caucus. Democratic leaders in both houses are pushing for a budget compromise that includes both new revenue and alternative spending cuts to replace the sequester, a non-starter for Republicans.

With two weeks left before the October 1st deadline, House leadership may have to cancel a planned recess for the week of September 23 to pass the CR. The push for a stopgap measure effectively ends any chance of sending stand-alone FY14 spending bills to the President’s desk. The best hope for individual spending bills is bundling them in a year-end omnibus.

Gainful Employment Regulations

The Department of Education (ED) held the first of two Gainful Employment negotiated rulemaking meetings this week. Last week, ED introduced draft language for negotiators to consider. The draft regulations would affect more programs but are also somewhat simplified, with fewer rules. The negotiators divided up into 6 different working groups that will submit proposals to the ED by the end of the September. The 14 negotiators include both aggressive critics of for-profit higher education and representatives from that industry. They are tasked with reaching unanimous consensus on rules that
would measure the employment outcomes of vocational programs at for-profits institutions and community colleges, to ensure they are helping students find "gainful employment." A second meeting is scheduled for October 21-23.