President Obama’s College Proposal

On a historic trip to upstate New York, President Obama made his third and fourth SUNY campus visit to University of Buffalo and Binghamton University. He announced an effort called “Making College More Affordable” by releasing an ambitious plan for higher education to combat rising college costs and make college affordable for students and their families. The plan focuses on three primary components:

- Paying for Performance
- Promoting Innovation and Competition
- Ensuring Student Debt Remains Affordable

Attached is a brief summary of the proposal prepared by the Office of Federal Relations.

FY14 Appropriations/Sequestration

Congress faces two major fiscal deadlines in the coming weeks. The continuing resolution (CR) must pass by September 30 to keep the government running into FY14 and the debt ceiling will need to be raised by mid-October, according to Treasury Department reports.

With the national focus on Syria, prospects for completing a CR by September 30 are improving. The House is expected to begin moving a stopgap funding measure during the week of September 16, with Senate action following the week of September 23. House Republicans are pushing for a short-term CR at the FY13 level of $988B for several months. This measure could garner bipartisan support as long as demands for an amendment to bar funding for the Affordable Care Act are not included.

Unfortunately, a short-term funding bill would likely not address sequestration, capping federal discretionary spending at $967 billion beginning in January. The Syria debate has awakened new calls among defense hawks to fix the automatic cuts for the Pentagon, with a recent New York Times article highlighting sequestration on science research. However, a possible compromise to replace sequestration collapsed between a group of Republican senators and the White House. Although talks could resume, the focus in fiscal negotiations stopped at the familiar impasse of taxes.

Sequestration works very differently in 2014. Instead of across-the-board cuts after the appropriations bills are passed, the law requires sequestration of discretionary programs be implemented up front through reductions in the defense and non-defense caps themselves. Essentially, after 2013, there are no automatic, proportional cuts of affected discretionary programs; instead, the Appropriations Committees decide how to fund discretionary defense and non-defense programs within the newly reduced funding caps. From 2014 through 2021: The $109B sequestration amount is divided evenly between defense and non-defense: $54.7B billion for each category.
Because defense and non-defense discretionary cuts will occur through the normal appropriations process, Pell Grants, SSI administrative costs, veterans’ medical care, and military personnel will have no special status; the normal appropriations process will determine how the President and Congress adhere to the newly reduced caps.

**National Science Foundation/Political Science Research**

At the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association (ASPA), there was particular focus on National Science Foundation (NSF) support for the political science research. As part of the March FY13 CR, Congress adopted an amendment that limits NSF political-science research to projects that promote national security or American economic interests.

The NSF’s budget for political science is a relatively small amount of money, about $10-million a year. However, the amendment impacts the principles that govern academic support for research across all disciplines. The APSA is encouraging more grassroots lobbying by members, releasing a "tool kit" on how to contact members of Congress, talking points on the NSF funding issue and tips on how to reach lawmakers for personal visits.

Unfortunately, the continued Congressional gridlock means FY14 appropriations will begin as a CR with very little chance of reversing the NSF provision.

**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. This half-day briefing will begin with breakfast and networking followed by a welcome and perspectives from the House Education and the Workforce Committee and the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee. Campus representatives are invited to participate in the event. To register visit [http://www.cicu.org/registration/briefing130917](http://www.cicu.org/registration/briefing130917)

*If you have any questions please feel free to contact Alex at 202-220-1315 or alex.krigstein@suny.edu*