

Access & Persistence



ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE



WINTER 2011

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Since the announcement in February 2009 of the President's 2020 college completion goal, discussion in the higher education community has focused on how to increase the percentage of students who graduate from college. Increasingly, jobs require a college degree, and the President's goal to have the highest percentage of college graduates in the world is pressing as never before to maintain American competitiveness. A consensus is beginning to emerge: nontraditional students are one key to a highly educated American workforce.

While there is no precise definition, a nontraditional student, broadly defined, is anyone who fails to meet the traditional student template, which generally refers to an 18- to 24-year-old full-time college student. Thus, nontraditional students may include not only older students, but also students facing additional challenges and barriers, e.g., foster youth, veterans, men and women on active duty, and first-generation college students. As an aggregate, nontraditional students represent a growing portion of the nation's college students; however, their college completion rate is significantly lower than that of traditional students. Many organizations, including the [Pell Institute](#) and the [Council for Opportunity in Education](#), agree that financial aid is only part of the equation in enabling nontraditional students to complete a college degree. Other factors, such as culture, academic barriers, and lack of information are significant as well.

The Committee's most recent report, *The Rising Price of Inequality*, established the negative effects that rising college prices have on the enrollment and persistence of traditional students. The Committee, as part of its congressionally mandated Condition of Access and Persistence Study, is now working on a report that will examine the multiple barriers to college completion among nontraditional students, utilizing the broadest definition of the nontraditional student in order to consider all possible barriers. The report will result in recommendations to Congress and the Secretary on the steps the government can take to increase completion by the nontraditional population.

The Committee hopes that the report will contribute to both the discussion of and the strategy for meeting the crucial needs of these students. To gather information to inform its nontraditional student report, the Advisory Committee will devote one session to this topic at its March 17, 2011, public hearing. The session promises to be an engaging and lively discussion of the issue, and we hope you will join us.

Allison Jones

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An independent committee created by Congress to advise on higher education and student aid policy

MARCH HEARING PREVIEW

The Advisory Committee will hold a [public hearing](#) in Washington DC on March 17, 2011, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Four Points by Sheraton, 1201 K Street NW. This one-day hearing will consist of three sessions: a structured roundtable discussion among experts about issues associated with the design and use of the institutional net price calculators mandated by Congress in the *Higher Education Opportunity Act* of 2008; a structured panel discussion among experts about the nontraditional student population, in particular, the barriers to access and persistence that they face today; and a public comment session in which five minutes will be allotted to those who request the opportunity to speak on one or more of the hearing topics.

Session I

This session will be a structured roundtable discussion among experts about issues associated with the design and use of the institutional net price calculators mandated by Congress in the *Higher Education Opportunity Act* of 2008. Members of the roundtable will include distinguished practitioners in the fields of financial aid, enrollment management, and institutional research, as well as higher education and financial aid research and policy experts.

In the *Higher Education Opportunity Act* of 2008, Congress included two new requirements aimed at providing students and families with more accurate and useful information regarding the costs of higher education. First, the Department of Education must develop a standardized financial aid award letter. Second, the Secretary of Education must develop a calculator to help students and families estimate the current or prospective net price at a particular institution. The net price is to be calculated in such a manner that the cost of attendance and the amount of need-based and merit-based aid available are calculated for the individual student, as much as practicable. Institutions are required to make the calculator available on their website by fall 2011.

The structured roundtable discussion will seek to establish the plethora of issues that make net price calculators inaccurate and difficult to compare. Although Congress intended for net price calculators to be used by students and families as a helpful tool in the financial aid process, in reality this intent may not be met if net price calculators are developed in disparate and varied forms. Members of the roundtable will be asked to examine the following: the kinds of information students and parents need from colleges and when; the incomparability of financial aid award letters and whether the same factors are at issue with net price calculators; the unique issues associated with the design and use of net price calculators; and the possibility of integration and standardization of these two interrelated tools.

This spring, following the March hearing, the Advisory Committee will deliver a report to Congress and the Secretary of Education that elucidates the issues surrounding the design and use of net price

calculators and provides potential steps that can be taken to ensure that congressional intent is met. A transcript of session one will be used in the final report.

Session II

This session will be a structured panel discussion among experts about the nontraditional student population and the barriers to access and persistence that they face today. The panelists will include distinguished faculty members and researchers, higher education association leaders, and practitioners who exhibit a thorough understanding of the barriers that impede various subgroups within the nontraditional student population.

As bachelor's degree attainment is vital to the country's global competitiveness, meeting President Barack Obama's goal for the United States to once again lead the world in educational degree attainment by 2020 is essential. The Advisory Committee's most recent report, [*The Rising Price of Inequality*](#), addresses the challenge of degree attainment for traditional high school graduates. However, in order to reach the President's target for educational attainment, it is important to address nontraditional students as well, as these students represent a growing portion of all college students and are less likely to persist and complete degree programs than traditional students. Thus, the Advisory Committee has dedicated the second session of the March hearing to discussing nontraditional students.

In addressing the barriers to access and persistence for nontraditional students, the structured panel discussion will also seek to establish who nontraditional students are, and the policy implications of addressing the barriers that they face. In particular, panelists will be asked to discuss: the definition of a nontraditional student; the subgroups that make up the nontraditional student population; the taxonomy of barriers facing nontraditional students; the current policy proposals addressing these barriers, if any; and steps that the federal government can take to better serve the needs of nontraditional students.

This summer, the Advisory Committee will deliver a report to Congress and the Secretary of Education describing the barriers to access and persistence that nontraditional students face today and the potential steps that the federal government can take to alleviate these barriers. A transcript of session two will be used in the final report.

Session III

This session will be devoted to public comment on all topics covered at the hearing. Five minutes will be allotted to those who request, in advance, an opportunity to speak. To participate, send an email to ACSFA@ed.gov noting the topic and requesting speaking time; space will be limited. The Committee also invites the public to submit written comments and recommendations to the same email address: ACSFA@ed.gov.

Details on hearing registration are located on the following page. All members of the higher education community and general public are invited to attend. ♦



ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE



****REGISTRATION FORM****
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: MARCH 9, 2011

Hearing of the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance
The Four Points by Sheraton
1201 K Street NW, Washington DC 20005
March 17, 2011

Tentative Time: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

- TO REGISTER ONLINE:** Click here: <http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/acsfa/registration/edlite-index.html>.
- TO REGISTER BY MAIL OR FAX:** Please complete the registration information below, and mail or fax (202-219-3032) this form to the Advisory Committee staff office.
- Individuals requiring special accommodations for a disability** (i.e., interpreting services, assistive listening devices, and/or materials in alternative format) should contact the Advisory Committee at (202) 219-2099 no later than March 4, 2011.
- Request time for public comment** in the space below. Because time is limited, five minutes will be allotted, in order of registration. Advisory Committee staff will contact presenters *prior to the hearing*.
- To provide written comment**, please email acsfa@ed.gov on or before March 9, 2011.

PLEASE PRINT

NAME:

TITLE:

AFFILIATION:

ADDRESS:.....

CITY:**STATE:**.....

ZIP CODE:.....**E-MAIL ADDRESS:**

PHONE: **FAX:**

ARE YOU REQUESTING TIME FOR PUBLIC COMMENT? Yes: ____ No: ____

IF YES, ON WHAT TOPIC?.....
.....

HERS UPDATE: SECOND REVIEW PANEL

On December 15, 2010, in Washington DC, the Advisory Committee staff convened a work session of the Higher Education Act Review Panel. This is the second of two review panels required by statute for the [Higher Education Regulations Study \(HERS\)](#). The Committee is required to convene at least two review panels of individuals who have experience with federal regulations affecting all sectors of higher education in order to review regulations and make recommendations for streamlining, improvement, or elimination. A work session of the first review panel, which focused on Title IV regulations, was held on April 9, 2009, in Washington DC. Members of both review panels represent a broad spectrum of the higher education community, including community colleges, four-year private institutions, four-year public institutions, graduate and professional schools, and proprietary institutions.

At the December review panel session, participants engaged in a lively discussion that yielded valuable insights on the regulatory relief themes most important to colleges and universities. Four main themes emerged: regulatory burden as expressed through individual burdensome regulations, the structure of the regulatory development framework and the regulatory promulgation process, the system of regulation, and the disconnection from regulatory complexity in higher education that many legislators exhibit. A summary of the discussion on each of these themes follows:

Burden of Individual Regulations: The panelists provided feedback on the [preliminary list of burdensome regulations](#) that the Advisory Committee has already received. In the course of that discussion, panelists identified additional regulations to add to the list, and they agreed to serve as ambassadors for soliciting further suggestions from the higher education community.

Regulatory Development Framework: The panelists debated whether the current regulatory development framework is appropriate and effective for postsecondary students and institutions. The topics included performance-based regulations, regulation differentiation by sector, changes to the negotiated rulemaking process, and potential for expansion of the Experimental Sites program as a means of refining and examining the regulatory structure and its impact on higher education.

The System of Regulation: The panelists offered significant insight on how institutions experience the system of regulation, which encompasses all components of the structure for how higher education is governed at the federal level, including legislation, regulation, and sub-regulatory guidance. Panelists commented on the overall demand of external regulators, including problems such as overlap, duplication, differing timeframes, and the sheer volume of rules. There was additional discussion of how, in some cases, regulatory burden can negatively impact student access and persistence.

The Legislative Disconnect: The panelists discussed the disconnect between the experience of higher education professionals and legislators' understanding of how higher education is regulated. Some panelists called for a report recommendation that legislators and/or legislative staff visit financial aid offices in order to observe how a simple change in the law can have a significant, and often negative, impact on students and institutions. And panelists stressed that complexity decreases access for students as well as undermines the objective of the regulatory structure. Concern was also expressed over the one-size-fits-all approach to regulating the sectors, among which there are significant distinctions. In addition, panelists also suggested that the importance of the Master Calendar be re-affirmed, as legislators do not seem to recognize that regulations and statute must conform to the calendar. Further, the panelists provided examples of negative results that occur for students and institutions when changes to programs are established within short timeframes of deadlines on the Master Calendar, or without sufficient time between passage and required implementation.

The Advisory Committee appreciates the valuable feedback provided by the Higher Education Act Review Panel and the many members of the community who have taken the time to submit regulatory suggestions and feedback. Anyone who wishes to provide additional information for the study can contact Anthony Jones, Director of the Higher Regulations Study, at Anthony.Jones@ed.gov. ♦

112th CONGRESS: THE EDUCATION COMMITTEES

Since the 2010 elections and the swearing-in of the 112th Congress, the composition of the U.S. House and Senate education committees has shifted. The following brief bios of the chairs and ranking members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions and the House Committee on Education and the Workforce are excerpted from congressional websites in order to highlight member service in federal education policy. Links to complete bios are included.

U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions

Tom Harkin (Chairman, IA): “As the chair of the Senate subcommittee that funds education, Tom has fought to improve education in Iowa and across the country. He has worked to reduce class size, give students better computer and Internet access, expand school counseling and safety programs and improve teacher training. He has also led the effort to modernize America’s school infrastructure. Each year he secures funding to help school districts in Iowa update and repair their facilities. [. . .]

“In September 2009, following the death of Senator Ted Kennedy, Tom became chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee. Tom believes that to serve in this capacity is to carry on the legacy of Senator Kennedy, who dedicated his life to ensuring that our economy works for all Americans, guaranteeing every child the opportunity to pursue a quality education and, of course, the cause of Kennedy’s life: access to quality, affordable health care for all Americans.” *View Senator Harkin’s [complete bio](#).*

Michael B. Enzi (Ranking Member, WY): “Enzi has made a name on Capitol Hill for his unique way of breaking down party lines and working across the aisle. His way of working across party lines is gaining momentum around the nation’s capital. Since 2005, under his 80 percent rule he has had 39 bills go through the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and be signed into law by the President. The average committee gets 3 bills passed every 2 years. Enzi believes that people can agree on 80 percent of the issues 80 percent of the time and if they leave the other 20 percent out they can get a lot done. With that mentality he has turned one of the most contentious Senate committees into one of the most productive.

“At the start of the 109th Congress in 2005 Enzi became the ninth Wyoming senator to ascend to the rank of chairman on one of the 16 standing Senate committees. Enzi has been a member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, since his arrival in the senate in 1997. In his role as Chairman, Enzi led the Senate in its efforts to help ensure that everyone, no matter their age, can receive a quality education.” *View Senator Enzi’s [complete bio](#).*

	Democrats	Republicans
<i>Senate Committee Members</i>	Tom Harkin (IA) Barbara A. Mikulski (MD) Jeff Bingaman (NM) Patty Murray (WA) Bernard Sanders (I) (VT) Robert P. Casey, Jr. (PA) Kay R. Hagan (NC) Jeff Merkley (OR) Al Franken (MN) Michael F. Bennet (CO) Sheldon Whitehouse (RI) Richard Blumenthal (CT)	Michael B. Enzi (WY) Lamar Alexander (TN) Richard Burr (NC) Johnny Isakson (GA) Rand Paul (KY) Orrin G. Hatch (UT) John McCain (AZ) Pat Roberts (KS) Lisa Murkowski (AK) Mark Kirk (IL)

U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce

Congressman John Kline (Chairman, MN-02): “In 2010, John Kline was chosen by his peers to serve as the Chairman of the Education and the Workforce Committee for the 112th Congress. ‘Job creation and American competitiveness are vital national priorities,’ Kline said. ‘As Chairman, I will ensure they are at the forefront of the Education and Labor agenda.’

“Since joining the Education and Labor Committee in 2003, John has been a strong advocate for greater flexibility and local control in education, and increased federal funding for special needs and low income students. [. . .] John has authored legislation to increase the availability of federal education funding at the local level, for which he was honored with the ‘Star of Education’ Award by the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium.” *View Congressman Kline’s [complete bio](#).*

George Miller (Ranking Member, CA-07): “Congressman George Miller is the Senior Democrat of the House Education and Workforce Committee and chairman of the Democratic Policy Committee, a leadership position. George is a leading advocate in Congress on education, labor, the economy, and the environment. [. . .] He has served on the Education and Workforce Committee since first coming to Congress and was its chairman from 2007 through 2010.

“George also worked with President Obama to transform the federal student loan programs to ensure they work in the best interest of students, not big banks. By eliminating the banking middleman and wasteful subsidies paid to banks, the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2010 saves \$60 billion in taxpayer money and invests that money in students and college completion. And the law does all this without increasing the deficit, in fact the law reduces the deficit over the next ten years. The law raised the Pell Grant scholarship to its highest level in history, decreased interest rates on need-based student loans and invested in community colleges and Historically Black Colleges and Universities.” *View Congressman Miller’s [complete bio](#).* ♦

	Republicans	Democrats
<i>House Committee Members</i>	John Kline (MN-02)	George Miller (CA-07)
	Thomas E. Petri (WI-06)	Dale E. Kildee (MI-05)
	Howard “Buck” McKeon (CA-25)	Donald M. Payne (NJ-10)
	Judy Biggert (IL-13)	Robert E. Andrews (NJ-01)
	Todd Platts (PA-19)	Robert C. Scott (VA-03)
	Joe Wilson (SC-02)	Lynn C. Woolsey (CA-06)
	Virginia Foxx (NC-05)	Rubén Hinojosa (TX-15)
	Duncan D. Hunter, Jr. (CA-52)	Carolyn McCarthy (NY-04)
	Phil Roe (TN-01)	John F. Tierney (MA-06)
	Glenn Thompson (PA-05)	Dennis J. Kucinich (OH-10)
	Tim Walberg (MI-07)	David Wu (OR-01)
	Scott DesJarlais (TN-04)	Rush D. Holt (NJ-12)
	Richard Hanna (NY-24)	Susan A. Davis (CA-53)
	Todd Rokita (IN-04)	Raúl M. Grijalva (AZ-07)
	Larry Bucshon (IN-08)	Timothy A. Bishop (NY-01)
	Trey Gowdy (SC-04)	Dave Loebsack (IA-02)
	Lou Barletta (PA-11)	Mazie Hirono (HI-02)
	Kristi Noem (SD-At Large)	
	Martha Roby (AL-02)	
	Joe Heck (NV-03)	
Dennis Ross (FL-12)		
Mike Kelly (PA-03)		

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David L. Gruen Past National Chair National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators Retired

Mr. David L. Gruen was appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate in 2009 to serve a term that expires in September 2013. Mr. Gruen has been in the financial aid profession for 37 years, and, currently, is semi-retired, doing consulting work for colleges and universities in financial aid operations. He retired as Director of Financial Aid at the University of Wyoming in 2010, a position he held for seven years. Mr. Gruen was chair of the 2008-09 NASFAA Board of Directors and has also served as president of the Southwest Regional and the Oklahoma and Wyoming State Associations of Student Financial Aid Administrators, having been the first national chair from Wyoming. Prior to serving at the University of Wyoming, Mr. Gruen held the position of Director of Student Financial Services at the University of Denver, and Director of Student Financial Aid at the University of Tulsa, at Alfred University in New York, and at Southeastern Community College in North Carolina. ♦

ACSFA Announcements

The Advisory Committee will hold a **public hearing** on **March 17, 2011**, in Washington DC. This one-day hearing will consist of three sessions. The first will be a structured roundtable discussion among experts regarding issues associated with the design and use of the institutional net price calculators mandated by Congress in the *Higher Education Opportunity Act* of 2008. The second will be a structured panel discussion among experts about the nontraditional student population, in particular, the barriers to access and persistence that these students face today. A third session will provide time for those who request in advance to comment on one or both topics.

Staff member **Wendell Hall** has accepted the position of Director of Student Success and Research & Assistant Director, VSA, at the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities.

Ronda Logan has joined the Advisory Committee staff as **Program Associate**.

The Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (Advisory Committee) is a Federal advisory committee chartered by Congress, operating under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA); 5 U.S.C., App. 2. The Advisory Committee provides advice to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education on student financial aid policy. The findings and recommendations of the Advisory Committee do not represent the views of the Agency, and this document does not represent information approved or disseminated by the Department of Education.

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