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**From:** NAICU Presidents Network

**Sent:** Wednesday, February 02, 2011 3:19 PM

**To:** NAICU Presidents Network

**Subject:** [presnet] A Plea for Your Help in Reaching Congress

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing you from the NAICU Annual Meeting, where we have heard from both political parties, and both chambers of Congress. They have told us that student aid is certain to be cut in the next several weeks, if we do not effectively make the case for how these programs benefit both students and the nation. As one key senator told the NAICU presidents from his state, "It is heart attack time for the Pell Grant Program."

All congressional speakers have emphasized the need to educate members of Congress – including the 96 new members in the House and 16 new members in the Senate – as to how student aid works. Massive federal budget cuts are looming, and many members are unfamiliar with the federal role in higher education. This makes it essential for us to explain the important partnership between the federal government and colleges, that assures college is possible for students from all walks of life.

Many of your colleague presidents have been talking to elected officials and their staff here in Washington. Now I am asking you to pick up the phone, and reinforce our message with members of Congress who are home this week. [These talking points](#) should be of use in your conversations.

There are several looming deadlines. On February 14, the President is expected to release his proposal for next year's budget. Around the same time, the House leadership will release its proposed new spending resolution to finish paying for this fiscal year. A new resolution must be passed by March 4, to keep the government open.

Our Democratic and Republican supporters alike are telling us that we must make the case NOW, or else the student aid programs, including Pell Grants, are going to face deep cuts.

Here are the points they encouraged us to make:

**Stress the impact on jobs and the economy:** This is the number one consideration for both parties in evaluating current programs. As we were told by Speaker Boehner's staff yesterday, "You fit in (to the economic recovery), but you have to explain how and why you fit in. Members of Congress don't know these programs, and won't make the economic link if you don't do it for them."

**Put a human face on the programs:** Invite your elected officials to campus. Bring a student aid recipient to the local congressional office. Tell stories of lives turned around, and of students working on their version of the American Dream through the student aid programs, and through what your institution provides.

**Explain what you do:** Tell members of Congress about your innovative programs – and do it using "business model" language they can understand. Talk about how you are weathering the economic storm, and are an integral part of rebuilding the nation by keeping students in college and helping them retool.

**Emphasize that you are part of the solution:** Student aid is important to our nation and important to our students. By educating a new generation, and by helping displaced workers acquire new skills, we are contributing to the economic recovery.

Thank you so much for helping to support those who are here in Washington attending this year's Annual Meeting. It is a critical few weeks for us to all work together to save these important programs.

Sincerely,

David

David L. Warren  
President, NAICU