H. RES. 614

Strongly supporting the quality and value of diversity and innovation in the Nation’s higher education institutions, and strongly disagreeing with the President’s proposal to create and administer a Postsecondary Institution Ratings System.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 10, 2014

Mr. GOODLATTE (for himself and Mr. CAPUANO) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

RESOLUTION

Strongly supporting the quality and value of diversity and innovation in the Nation’s higher education institutions, and strongly disagreeing with the President’s proposal to create and administer a Postsecondary Institution Ratings System.

Whereas the Nation’s diverse higher education system, which includes community colleges, public and private four-year colleges, faith-based colleges, research universities, career training schools, work colleges, land grant universities, historically Black colleges, women’s colleges, Hispanic serving institutions, institutes for the arts, and many other specialized institutions, offers opportunity and in-
novation in postsecondary education and for lifelong
learning that is unmatched anywhere in the world;

Whereas this diversity of institutions reflects the plurality
and history of our people, and the diversity of the Na-
tion’s ideas and ideals;

Whereas many of these institutions are the intellectual homes
to our great traditions of faith, social service, research,
arts and humanities, all flourishing in the Nation’s free
marketplace of ideas;

Whereas public, private non-profit, and for-profit institutions
all compete in the marketplace for students causing post-
secondary institutions to constantly innovate and adapt
in order to meet the evolving needs of the Nation’s stu-
dents;

Whereas the Department of Education already collects large
amounts of data and metrics each year from postsec-
ondary institutions with much of this information made
publicly available to prospective students, but not in a
useful way;

Whereas most States are better equipped to distribute mean-
ingful information regarding the postsecondary institu-
tions within their borders;

Whereas the Federal Government has focused its investment
in higher education in providing grants, loans and work-
study funds to help low and middle income students, who
are academically qualified for college and who are willing
to work hard, attend college, but has left the choice of
institution, and the responsibility of effort for success, up
to students and their families;

Whereas institutions that educate students who receive these
funds are and shall continue to be accountable for the ap-
propriate use of those funds, and must already go through private accreditation, State authorization, as well as Federal eligibility certification processes to be able to participate in the Federal student aid programs;

Whereas the amount of Federal aid a student receives is determined by Congress through need analysis formulas in the Higher Education Act and through the annual appropriations process, and may only be adjusted on a case by case basis by a campus Financial Aid Officer, and may not be adjusted by the Administration;

Whereas the development of a Postsecondary Institution Ratings System has been proposed by the current Administration to rate and compare the value of colleges, and to base the amount of need a low-income student receives not exclusively on need, but, also, on the Administration’s rating of the college that student chooses to attend;

Whereas the Administration has suggested this rating system will put a particular emphasis on graduates’ earnings, suggesting that institutions that produce graduates who go into public service, the military, ministry, non-profit work, or who stay at home to care for family are somehow less worthy of support than institutions that produce graduates who go into more lucrative fields;

Whereas the Administration has said the rating system will also give consideration to graduation rates of traditional students, thereby disadvantaging institutions that have a mission to serve students who are first generation to college, persons with learning disabilities, veterans and other adults who are resuming education while also working and caring for families;
WHEREAS a rating system built around a handful of factors chosen by the Department of Education is likely to lead to greater standardization, less choice, and less innovation;

WHEREAS a rating system built around a handful of factors chosen by the Department of Education is reductionist in nature and will overlook many of the qualitative benefits that accrue to individuals and communities from a college degree, including, but not limited to, greater civic participation, better health, greater appreciation of the arts and culture, and critical reasoning skills; and

WHEREAS a Federal rating system will likely carry an image of validity that will mislead the people of the United States on college choice, decrease the ability of colleges to openly compete with each other in the marketplace, and replace the free choices of students and their families, informed by their values, with monetary measures determined by the Federal Government: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representa-
1tives that—
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3 (1) students and families should maintain the
geright and responsibility of determining where to enroll for postsecondary education;
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5 (2) the Federal Government, in conjunction
6 with States and accreditors, has a responsibility to ensure that the significant taxpayer funds that are invested in student aid each year are appropriately spent, and has tools such as program reviews and
eligibility and certification procedures that should be
better targeted to those purposes;

(3) the Federal Government also has a positive
role it could play in making information available to
enable informed choices about postsecondary edu-
cation available to prospective students and the Ad-
ministration should work collaboratively with the
higher education community to make that informa-
tion more consumer friendly and accessible to those
students and their families; and

(4) the Administration’s proposal to rate post-
secondary institutions through an oversimplified
Federal rating system that is not supported by post-
secondary institutions, statute, or by the House of
Representatives, will lead to less choice, diversity,
and innovation, and should be rejected.