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NAICU Provides Comments on Multiple Issues Related to HEA Reauthorization

This summer, NAICU, both individually and with others in the higher education community, responded to requests for feedback from Senate education committee Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA) on a number of pressing issues related to the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. This includes providing feedback on Sen. Harkin’s draft reauthorization bill, separate comments regarding his teacher preparation proposals, and input on proposed sexual assault legislation.

Harkin Draft Reauthorization Bill

In response to an open request by Sen. Harkin, NAICU submitted a number of comments on his draft reauthorization bill.

NAICU’s extensive set of comments highlights some of the key issues and concerns for independent colleges and universities. (See here for a cover letter from David Warren summarizing the key issues found in NAICU’s comments.) Topics covered in the comments include:

- Appreciation for Sen. Harkin’s long standing support of student aid, and, in particular, the preservation of all the campus-based aid programs, and LEAP;
- Concern about a new proposal to fund public colleges on a per-capita basis regardless of the income level of the institution’s students;
- Advice on which of many teacher preparation proposals to include in any final bill;
- Concern about the amount of accreditation material proposed to be made public; and
- A request that Sen. Harkin consider taking legislative steps to fix the troubled federal financial responsibility system, as outlined in a NAICU report from 2012.

Additionally, NAICU provided input on, and was a signatory to, comprehensive comments submitted to Sen. Harkin by the American Council on Education.

Teacher Preparation

NAICU filed more extensive comments on teacher preparation to Sen. Harkin through the Higher Education Task Force on Teacher Preparation, of which NAICU is a founding member, and which is led by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. NAICU is encouraging Congress to build on the successful reforms taking place in campus teacher preparation programs throughout the country.
Sexual Assault

NAICU joined with several other associations in commenting on legislation being proposed to address sexual assault on campus. That issue is likely to be considered by the next Congress as members seek to rewrite some of their initial proposals. If legislation in this area emerges, it could either be folded into a larger Higher Education Act reauthorization bill or move as a separate piece of legislation.

NAICU Efforts on Capitol Hill

NAICU is also in dialogue with the Republican education leadership in both the House and the Senate on their reauthorization proposals. So far, Senate Republicans and Democrats are developing separate legislation, while the House is continuing its bi-partisan conversations.

No Higher Education Act reauthorization proposals are expected to be enacted before the next Congress.

For more information, contact Sarah Flanagan, Sarah@naicu.edu or Susan Hattan, Susan@naicu.edu

NAICU Testifies Before Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance

In testimony before the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, which was hearing comments from the higher education community on President Obama’s Postsecondary Institution Ratings System (PIRS), NAICU Vice President of Government Relations and Policy Development Sarah Flanagan briefed committee members and attendees on both the support and concerns the Association and its members have with the possibility of a federal rating metric.

“In general, our member presidents support the idea of the federal government identifying a series of metrics that they believe families may want to consider when searching for a college,” said Flanagan in her testimony. However, “there is concern that the creation of a simplistic rating system will undermine the president’s own access and completion goals, goals that are strongly shared by the higher education community.”

Flanagan also told the committee that “to make a singular rating, the federal government would have to assign its own values of what is important, and to what degree. The values that the federal government has an interest in, and their relative worth, may not be the same as those for a student who is searching for a good fit school.”

The Advisory Committee was created by Congress in the Higher Education Amendments of 1986 to be an independent and bipartisan source of advice and counsel on student financial aid policy to both Congress and the Secretary of Education.

In closing her remarks, Flanagan noted that “at the end of the day, the federal government has a wonderful opportunity to help those students and families who are weighing options in higher education make a more informed choice. Drawing them away from existing ratings and rankings and onto facts would be a great service. Labelling schools with any kind of federal rating mark will set this opportunity back, not advance it.”

The hearing was held September 12 on the campus of NAICU member Trinity Washington University, and hosted by Trinity President Pat McGuire, a member of the Advisory Committee.

For more information, contact Sarah Flanagan, Sarah@naicu.edu
Knight Commission Calls for Greater Focus on Health, Safety and Treatment of College Athletes

The Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, co-chaired by NAICU member president R. Gerald Turner of Southern Methodist University, met in Washington D.C. on September 8 to hear practitioners and experts share policy updates on new health and safety initiatives for student-athletes. Commission members and panelists also discussed ideas that could help guide future changes in college sports, including the treatment of athletes.

Health and Safety

Brian Hainline, M.D, chief medical officer of the NCAA shared with the Commission, which includes several NAICU members, an array of research projects and initiatives the Association is working on, including:

- A $30 million partnership with the Department of Defense to conduct baseline testing and concussion event monitoring of all athletes. A coalition of 14 colleges, including NAICU member Princeton University, are taking part in the research.
- Expanding the health focus beyond concussions. Dr. Hainline offered insights on mental health issues, overuse injuries caused by early specialization in particular sports, high school and college sports pre-season physical exams, and alcohol and drug abuse.
- Seeking better data to more clearly understand the extent of these health issues. Citing sudden cardiac arrest, accidents, and suicide as the top three causes of death in collegiate sports, Dr. Hainline emphasized the importance of creating a system of standard data collection in order to capture critical health related information.

Sustainability of Collegiate Athletics

The remainder of the meeting was centered on the shape and sustainability of collegiate sports. Oliver Luck, the Athletic Director at West Virginia University, spoke about enhancing the value of athletic scholarships to cover the full cost of attendance. He also addressed the need for better mental health benefits, including post-graduation and career training for athletes. While discussing revenue generation, Luck believes that, with greater promotion, non-revenue sports like soccer and baseball could become, if not revenue producing, revenue neutral for athletic departments.

Sandy Hatfield Clubb, the Athletic Director at Drake University, offered their approach as a model that balances academics, culture, and athletics. According to Hatfield Clubb, Drake takes a co-curricular approach to athletics. Universities, she says, should clearly state they are providing opportunities to participate in sports as a platform for intellectual development. Each Drake student-athlete, for example, signs the Bulldog Way playbook demonstrating a commitment to the school’s approach. That approach focuses on excellence, effort, and accountability. As an example of the co-curricular approach, Hatfield Clubb referenced the foreign travel taken by the Drake football team to Tanzania. In addition to playing the game, the players and coaches built and repaired schools and orphanages in and around the villages.

For more information, contact Bo Newsome, Bo@naicu.edu

Your Vote, Your Voice National Campus Voter Registration Project Returns for 2014

Voter education and registration activities historically have been important undertakings of the nation's colleges and universities. Since 2000, federal law has required postsecondary institutions to make a good-faith effort to distribute voter registration forms to all of their on-campus degree or certificate-seeking students.

To assist campuses with voter registration efforts, the 48 member Washington Higher Education Secretariat recently launched the website Your Vote, Your Voice 2014, the National Campus Voter Registration Project.

Co-chaired by NAICU President David L. Warren, Your Vote, Your Voice 2014 encourages campuses across the nation to engage in voter education, registration and Get-Out-The-Vote activities throughout the 2014 election.
cycle.

The federal voter registration requirement can be met by providing access to registration forms electronically through an email message devoted exclusively to voter registration. Voter registration deadlines arrive as early as October 4.

NAICU recommends members send out the dedicated voter registration message to students as soon as possible to ensure students and others have the opportunity to register prior to the passing of the deadline.

The Your Vote, Your Voice 2014 resources are web based. A brochure mailed to campus presidents and student affairs leaders in August provides an overview of the voter registration initiative. It is intended to encourage those on campus to visit the Your Vote, Your Voice 2014 website to find:

- Link to the U.S. Vote Foundation’s Voter Registration/Absentee Voter web portal
- Detailed information on registration deadlines by state (First state registration deadlines are Oct. 4)
- State-by-state links to election offices and regulations
- 2014 Project Organization Handbook
- Customizable campaign poster for use on campus
- Website widget for your student pages linking to the Voter Registration/Absentee Voter web portal

NAICU’s Public Affairs team will tweet updates @yourvote14 throughout the campaign season.

For more information, contact Bo Newsome, Bo@naicu.edu

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**September 17 is Constitution Day**

Educational institutions receiving federal funds are mandated to observe each September 17 as Constitution Day.

Passed in 2005, the Congressional mandate requires colleges to conduct educational programs related to the United States Constitution. The day is designed to commemorate the September 17, 1787 signing of the Constitution.

Since the legislative provision does not define “educational program,” there is a great deal of latitude as to how exactly a college or university chooses to honor the day.

The Library of Congress lists a number of resources for planning activities and recognizing the day on their web site. In addition, the Constitution Center web site offers a number of idea starters.

NAICU encourages all of our members to embrace this opportunity to advance civic education.

For more information, contact Bo Newsome, Bo@naicu.edu

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**Save the Date for the 2015 NAICU Annual Meeting**

Presidents of the nation’s private, nonprofit colleges and universities will gather February 1-4, 2015 in Washington, DC, for the NAICU Annual Meeting and Advocacy Day. The theme for the 2015 meeting is Capitol Conversations: Overcoming Challenges, Exploring New Opportunities.

The 114th Congress will convene in early January 2015 with a host of new members in both the House and Senate. The Congressional agenda is likely to include new guidelines for student discipline and teacher preparation programs as part of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

Much will be at stake for NAICU members, making it critically important to pause and make time to take the case for private, nonprofit higher education to the Hill on Advocacy Day on Feb. 3.
Plan to be in Washington in early February for these important conversations – central to securing our institutions’ future - and for the learning, sharing and camaraderie that are always part of the NAICU Annual Meeting.

For more information, contact Deborah Reilly, Deborah@naicu.edu

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Washington Update is available to NAICU member presidents and their staff via e-mail, and is archived on the NAICU Web site, both as individual stories and as a complete-issue PDF file, formatted for printing.

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