

Access & Persistence



ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

As part of the current budget reconciliation process, members of Congress are considering creation of a new two-tiered grant program consisting of Academic Competitiveness Grants and National SMART Grants. The possible creation of a new grant program points to the need to revisit systematically the multiple purposes and benefits of federal student aid, prioritize them, and carefully match priorities to the *amount* of student aid necessary to fulfill each purpose and to the specific *type* of aid as well. That is, the nation needs to develop a national student aid strategy that achieves our goals and is both equitable and efficient.

Two features of the new grant program under consideration are noteworthy: awards are need-based, restricted to Pell-eligible students, and represent a net addition to total grant aid available for low-income students. That is, the new grants will lower the financial barriers facing the poorest students who meet the academic requirements outlined in the legislation. At the same time, however, the new grants will make even more challenging future decisions regarding how to allocate scarce student aid resources among alternative purposes and existing programs. A comprehensive strategy for guiding such decisions does not now exist.

How might such a strategy be developed? First, it would require identifying and prioritizing the multiple and often overlapping purposes and benefits of federal student aid. At a minimum, these would include the following: equal educational opportunity, a more equal income distribution, increased economic productivity and growth, greater social benefits, and enhanced competitiveness in the world economy. Second, it would include an unmet needs assessment that matches specific policy objectives for each purpose with the amount and type of student aid required. The central question of such an approach would be how much grant, work, loan, and tax credit aid is required to meet the objectives in each area? For example, how much grant aid is necessary to encourage a high achieving, fourth-year college student in the sciences to complete a baccalaureate degree? Might other forms of financial assistance serve the purpose equally as well?

Of course, there are dozens of such questions when one crosses each purpose and benefit of student aid with each amount and type of aid. To answer such questions, estimates of how students respond to alternative aid packages must be developed. While that may not be easy to do, we should certainly try. Allocation of scarce student aid resources among multiple purposes should not be left to chance, if at all possible. A coordinated effort is needed to formulate a student aid strategy that can serve as a blueprint for the federal government, states, and institutions.

Ideally, the cornerstone of our strategy would continue to be President Lyndon B. Johnson's simple promise to low-income students in 1965 that "a high school senior anywhere in this great land of ours can apply to any college or any university in any of the 50 States and not be turned away because his family is poor." ♦

WINTER 2006

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

ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS IN BUDGET RECONCILIATION

The end of 2005 saw two major developments in student aid legislation. First, Congress extended the Higher Education Act (HEA) until March 31, 2006, allowing all programs to continue to operate as they are currently (bill number H.R. 4525). This was the second extension issued in 2005; the first expired on December 31, 2005. Education committee leaders in the House of Representatives and in the Senate have indicated their intention to work on HEA during the next session of Congress, but it is also possible that another extension will be required. As Exhibit 1 demonstrates, a majority of the HEA recommendations the Advisory Committee made to Congress were included in either the Senate or House versions of the HEA reauthorization bill.

In addition, the budget reconciliation bill (S.1932), the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, included student aid provisions from the House and Senate HEA bills that have budgetary implications. Among these are a number of provisions related to the Advisory Committee's simplification recommendations (see Exhibit 1). Highlights of the reconciliation bill include:

- **Expanding existing simplification** to more students by raising the automatic zero Expected Family Contribution (auto-zero EFC) income threshold to \$20,000 (from \$15,000) and allowing families who participated in a federal means-tested program or who were eligible to file a 1040A or 1040EZ tax form to be eligible for the Simplified Needs Test or auto-zero (if they meet the respective income thresholds).
- **Encouraging early financial aid information** by establishing a "College Access Initiative," requiring

guaranty agencies to work with the Secretary of Education to provide students with early information on financial aid.

- **Reducing the penalty on student work** by increasing the Income Protection Allowance (IPA) and reducing the assessment rate on assets.
- **Standardizing the treatment of college savings plans** by treating both prepaid tuition plans and savings plans as an asset (of the parent, in the case of a dependent student) in need analysis.
- **Simplifying financial aid application** and delivery processes for students with special circumstances by adding active duty members of the armed forces to those defined as "independent students."
- **Making the FAFSA more understandable** by clarifying the HEA so that only students convicted of drug-related offenses *while they are receiving federal financial aid* become ineligible for further aid for specified periods of time.

The bill would also strengthen legislation to implement a data match with the Internal Revenue Service, pending passage of legislation to amend the IRS code. The House originally approved the reconciliation bill, S.1932, on December 19, 2005, and the Senate approved a modified version on December 21, 2005. Because the Senate made minor changes to the budget bill (that do not effect higher education) before passing it, the modified version now has to be re-approved by the House before it goes to the President to be signed into law. A vote on the modified reconciliation bill is expected on February 1, 2006.

EXHIBIT 1: ACSFA RECOMMENDATIONS IN HEA REAUTHORIZATION AND RECONCILIATION BILLS

Recommendation	Senate Bill (S.1614)	House Bill (H.R.609)	Reconciliation Bill (S.1932)
1. Create a System of Early Financial Aid Information	●	◐	◐
2. Make Federal Need Analysis Transparent, Consistent, Fair	◐	◐	◐
3. Expand Existing Simplification to More Students	◐	◐	◐
4. Allow All Students to Apply for Financial Aid Earlier	◐	◐	
5. Make the FAFSA Relevant and Understandable	◐	◐	◐
6. Create a Simpler Paper Form for Low-Income Students	●	●	
7. Phase Out Full Paper Form and Increase Use of Technology	●	◐	
8. Simplify and Streamline FAFSA on the Web	●	●	
9. Simplify the Verification Process			
10. Create a National Access and Persistence Partnership	●		

NEW GRANT PROGRAM IN BUDGET RECONCILIATION

If passed by the House on February 1, 2006, the budget reconciliation bill (S.1932) would authorize approximately \$3.75 billion to create a new grant aid program that would provide grants to low-income students who have successfully completed a “rigorous” curriculum in high school and maintained a specific G.P.A. in college. Additional aid would go to those students who, in their final years of college, pursue science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects, or critical foreign languages. This new grant aid program represents a shift in federal need-based aid, as it ties federal grants for Pell-eligible students to academic merit or to study in particular subject areas.

The new program is two-tiered, with one component for students in their first two years of college and another component for those in their last two years of college. The first tier, “Academic Competitiveness Grants,” links need-based grant aid to specific merit-based requirements, while the second tier, “National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent (SMART) Grants” ties need-based grant aid to merit within a specific course of study in college. Eligible students would receive these awards in addition to their Pell Grants.

Academic Competitiveness Grants

Within the first tier of the proposed grant program, **students in their first year of college** would be eligible for a grant award of up to \$750 if they meet the following requirements:

- *Are eligible for a Pell Grant,*
- *Are a United States citizen,*
- *Are enrolled as a full-time student in a two- or four-year institution,*
- *Have successfully completed a “rigorous secondary school program of study as established by a state or local education agency and recognized as such by the Secretary,” AND*
- *Have not previously been enrolled in college.*

The legislation requires that the Secretary recognize at least one such “rigorous secondary school program of study” in each state. **Students in their second year of college** would be eligible for a grant award of up to \$1,300 if they meet the above requirements and **obtain a 3.0 cumulative G.P.A. or higher** in their first year of college.

National SMART Grants

The second tier of the legislation applies to undergraduates in their **third or fourth year of college**. Such students would be eligible to receive a grant award of up to \$4,000 if they meet the same requirements as those required for the Academic Competitiveness Grants, and:

- *Major in “physical, life, or computer sciences, mathematics, technology, engineering as determined by the Secretary pursuant to regulations,” OR*
- *Major in a foreign language “that the Secretary of Education, in consultation with the Director of National Intelligence, determines is critical to the national security of the United States,” AND*
- *Have obtained a 3.0 G.P.A. or higher in their major while in college.*

Total authorized appropriations for the two-tiered grant program per year are as follows:

- \$790 million for FY2006,
- \$850 million for FY2007,
- \$920 million for FY2008,
- \$960 million for FY2009,
- \$1.01 billion for FY2010.

There is a “Sunset Provision” for this program, meaning that the funding for Academic Competitiveness and National SMART grants would expire at the end of the 2010-2011 academic year unless this grant program is reauthorized.

The budget reconciliation bill would also create an “Academic Competitiveness Council.” This Council would be chaired by the Secretary of Education and composed of members from “federal agencies with responsibilities for managing existing federal programs that promote math and science.”

Within one year, the Council would be responsible for submitting a report to Congress identifying all federal programs with a math or science focus and determining the effectiveness of each program. In addition, the Council would have to identify target populations served by each program, areas of overlap, and ways to integrate and coordinate such programs. ♦

“INNOVATIVE PATHWAYS” TO DEGREE ATTAINMENT

The Advisory Committee is excited to announce its plans for a major new three-year initiative that will examine innovative ways to increase baccalaureate degree attainment. Through this “Innovative Pathways Study,” we will examine alternative programs or strategies that are designed to increase the number of low- and moderate-income students and non-traditional students who earn a bachelor’s degree.

The Advisory Committee intends to deliver three reports in the next three years, one each year, focused on a particular stage of the education pipeline. The first year of the study will focus on programs that impact students in middle school and high school, and the second year will examine those programs that serve students in the transition from K-12 to higher education. The final year of the study will address programs designed to increase degree attainment in college.

The goal of the study reports will be to highlight “best practices” or programs that are most successful in improving degree attainment rates. Through the publication of these reports, we aim to increase national awareness on innovative pathways to degree attainment and help federal and state policymakers design policies that lead to the replication of successful programs.

In conducting this study, we will specifically seek to understand the impact of innovative pathways on:

- Low- and moderate-income students,
- Non-traditional students,
- College enrollment and degree attainment rates,
- The net price of obtaining a college degree, and
- The cost-effectiveness of implementing innovative pathways for federal, state and local governments, and institutions of higher education.

This study falls within the scope of the Advisory Committee’s charge “to make recommendations that will result in the maintenance of access to postsecondary education for low- and middle-income students.” The particular design and plan for the study is subject to change, however, as we continue to consult with higher education policy experts, research scholars, Congressional staff, students, financial aid administrators, and other stakeholders in higher education and student aid.

We are currently planning to examine innovative programs at various points along the educational pipeline, from middle school to college, that address the following issue areas:

Middle School and High School:

- Academic Preparation: Access to a College-Prep Curriculum
- Early Financial Aid Information
- Credit-Based Transition Programs
- Students in Foster Care and Homeless Youth

Transition from K-12 to Higher Education:

- Academic Preparation: Alignment of Standards*
- Changes to Student Aid Programs and Need Analysis
- Credit-Based Transition Programs
- Students in Foster Care and Homeless Youth

Higher Education:**

- Academic Preparation: Remediation
- The Role of Community Colleges (Improving Articulation/Transfer and the Feasibility of Awarding Four-Year Degrees)
- Alternative Scheduling Models (Distance Education and Compressed/Modular Scheduling)
- Changes to Student Aid Programs and Need Analysis
- Students in Foster Care and Homeless Youth

The Advisory Committee has begun initial development of the study plan, but the official launch will be at the Committee’s spring meeting on April 4, 2006 in Washington, D.C. (see page 8 for more information). At this meeting, Committee members will consult with higher education policy analysts and practitioners on the innovative programs to degree attainment to be examined in the study’s first year. ♦

**Measuring Postsecondary Enrollment and Success: Research for this issue paper will also examine the development of systems that K-12 school systems can use to measure the postsecondary enrollment and persistence rates of their high school graduates.*

***Non-traditional Students: Issue papers in this area will also consider the impact of policies and programs on non-traditional students and adult learners.*

High school graduates from low- and moderate-income families face record high prices, net of grants, at four-year public colleges. These price barriers result in disparate rates of enrollment and persistence for students sorted by family income. Despite these patterns, misleading multivariate analyses continue to crop up with findings that income and prices are not obstacles to access and persistence. Such findings are used to argue against the need to increase financial aid.

Nationally representative longitudinal data arranged in simple descriptive tables show that college enrollment and degree completion depend strongly on family income for college-qualified high school graduates. (See *Access & Persistence*, Fall 2005, page 6-7). How are these data manipulated in multivariate analyses to show the precise opposite: that family income and financial aid do not matter? Three major errors that correspond to three statistical biases are at fault:

- Omitting financial aid as an explanatory variable: **Omitted Variable Bias**
- Selecting the sample in a manner that eliminates the effects of family income and financial aid: **Selection Bias**
- Including explanatory variables that depend on enrollment or persistence (such as financial aid actually received), but ignoring that dependence: **Endogeneity Bias**

The statistical consequences of these errors are widely recognized throughout social science research, but they nevertheless continue to plague analyses of access and persistence. Often committed together, the errors obscure the strong effects of family income and financial aid on college enrollment and persistence. One need not be an expert in statistics to appreciate the potential impact of such errors on student aid policy.

Omitted Variable Bias

The most egregious error of model misspecification is omitting a relevant explanatory variable that is strongly and directly related to the dependent variable and inversely related to an explanatory variable that is included. Not only does this preclude drawing any inferences about the effect of the omitted variable, but it also biases downward the estimated effect of the explanatory variable in question. The stronger the

inverse relationship between the omitted variable and the included explanatory variable, the greater the downward bias. In the very worst case, the coefficient of an included variable that should have a positive sign could appear to be zero or even have a negative sign. Indeed, depending on the method of estimation and model specification, omitting a relevant explanatory variable could bias the coefficient estimates of the included variables even if the omitted variable was not related to the included variable.

Despite widespread knowledge of the consequences of omitted variable bias, it is not unusual in *both* access and persistence analyses to see financial aid omitted as an explanatory variable. Because financial aid is strongly related to enrollment *and* persistence, and inversely related to family income by program design, omitting it precludes making valid inferences about not only its effects but also the effects of differences in family income. That is, omitting financial aid causes downward bias in the estimated effect of family income on enrollment *and* persistence, leading to the faulty inference that income does not matter much, if at all.

Selection Bias

Some analyses that omit financial aid as an explanatory variable also select the sample of students in a manner that effectively screens out most or all of the effects of income and aid. For example, if a subsample of high school graduates is selected containing only those students who are defined as college qualified *and* planning to attend a four-year college immediately upon high school graduation, comparing the enrollment rates of low-income and middle-income students within such a subsample in order to estimate the effect of family income is a textbook example of selection bias. Because differences in family income and financial aid are determinants of whether students become college qualified and plan to attend a four-year college immediately upon graduation in the first place, any conclusion regarding the effect of family income drawn from such a comparison is invalid. Even if the rates of enrollment are equal within the subsample, no valid conclusion can be drawn about the effect of family income or financial aid on college-going.

The most extreme example of omitted variable bias *combined with* selection bias is an analysis that omits financial aid as an explanatory variable *and* arbitrarily

backs into a definition of college qualification that is so stringent as to simply equate the number of students deemed qualified to attend a four-year college with the number actually doing so. This guarantees the faulty conclusion that family income and financial aid do not matter. Such an analysis achieves this result by designating the majority of high school graduates from low- *and* middle-income families as unqualified, which defines away the problem and does not inform public policy in any way.

Endogeneity Bias

Analyses that omit financial aid and select the sample in a manner that effectively screens out most of the effects of family income and financial aid often include other variables that depend on the likelihood of college enrollment itself or involve errors in measurement, but ignore those dependencies. Examples of the former include academic steps, such as testing for and applying to a four-year college, that are directly related to plans to enroll in such a college immediately upon high school graduation. Studies of the effect of aid received by only those who actually enroll in college obviously involve simultaneity. Measurement error problems might be related to using SAT or high school courses taken as a measure of the unobserved college aptitude variable. These are classic cases of endogeneity caused by the inclusion of some explanatory variables that are correlated with other unknown, unmeasured, or omitted variables that affect enrollment or persistence.

Worst Case: All Three Errors Combined

Some analyses of access and persistence contain all three of the statistical errors above. Not surprisingly, such analyses produce the two most seductive, but still faulty, inferences in access and persistence research:

- Family income and financial aid do not matter if high school graduates are college qualified and if they test for and apply to a four-year college.
- Financial aid is at least sufficient to allow initial enrollment of these college-ready students.

Wrong. These two faulty conclusions, referenced often in access and persistence research, result from omitted variable, selection, and endogeneity biases that systematically screen out the effects of family income and financial aid across the access pipeline from middle school through college. Policymakers must understand that such results cannot be used for policy.

In evaluating policy inferences drawn from analyses of financial aid and family income, three often-ignored, critical questions must be asked:

- Were appropriate financial aid and price variables included as explanatory variables?
- Was the sample of students selected in a manner that allowed estimation of the full effects of family income and financial aid?
- Were the effects of family income and financial aid on all other explanatory variables fully accounted for?

If the answer to any of these questions is no, inferences drawn about the effects of family income or student aid on enrollment and persistence for purposes of policy or practice are almost certainly faulty.

Moving Forward

Modeling and estimating the effects of family income and financial aid on college-going behavior is not easy. Many of the factors upon which enrollment and persistence depend in a complete conceptual model are interrelated. Excluding any of the factors or assuming no relationship among them leads to bias in estimates. Improving policymaking requires moving beyond such errors to models and estimation methods that take advantage of advanced econometric and psychometric techniques. Indeed, overcoming the modeling and estimating complexities that are inherent in the use of cross-sectional and longitudinal data on education decisions may require the use of experimental and quasi-experimental methods.

Policy Research Seminars. To help reduce statistical biases in future research, the Advisory Committee will sponsor a series of policy research seminars across the country, co-hosted by its colleagues in the higher education community and graduate programs in higher education. The goal of the seminars will be to enhance federal, state, and institutional policymaking by improving modeling and statistical analyses in college access and persistence. A handbook will be developed to serve as the centerpiece of the seminars. ♦

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COLLEGE EXPECTATIONS AND PLANS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES IN 1992 AND 2004

Last month new data were made available by the National Center on Education Statistics (NCES) showing how students who were 10th graders in 2002 and 12th graders in 2004 regarded their prospects for postsecondary education. These data are from the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002), a longitudinal survey that will monitor the transitions of a

NELS to **50 percent** in ELS for the lowest SES quartile and from **52 percent** in NELS to **58 percent** in ELS for the second SES quartile—a 16 percent and 12 percent improvement, respectively. That is, in the new ELS:2002 cohort, a large portion of increased expectations in 10th grade melted into more modest increases in plans in the 12th grade. This melt between

**TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF 10th GRADE
EXPECTATIONS AND 12th GRADE PLANS**

SES Quartile	Expected in 10 th Grade to Earn at Least a BA		Planned in 12 th Grade to Attend a 4-year College Immediately	
	NELS:88	ELS:2002	NELS:88	ELS:2002
1st	41%	63%	43%	50%
2nd	54%	70%	52%	58%
3rd	67%	80%	64%	70%
4th	86%	89%	83%	83%

national sample of young people as they progress from tenth grade in 2002 to, eventually, the world of work. New data from ELS, which will become available over the next five years, will allow for direct comparisons with existing data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88), which tracked a cohort of students who were 8th graders in 1988 and who graduated from high school in 1992.

Expectations in 10th Grade. The news from the recently released ELS data is mixed (see Table 1). While expectations in 10th grade of earning at least a BA remain related to socioeconomic status (SES) in both cohorts, there has been a dramatic shift upwards, especially among students in lower SES quartiles:

- The percentage of 10th graders in the lowest quartile expecting to earn at least a BA increased to **63 percent** in ELS from **41 percent** in NELS; and
- The percentage of those in the second SES quartile increased to **70 percent** in ELS from **54 percent** in NELS.

This suggests that efforts to enhance awareness of the importance of a college degree may be meeting with much more success than in the past.

Plans in 12th Grade. Unfortunately, the dramatic increases in college degree expectations among 10th graders did not translate into similarly large improvements in plans in the 12th grade to enroll in a four-year college immediately upon graduation. These plans advanced more modestly from **43 percent** in

expectations and plans among students in the lowest SES quartile in the ELS cohort, from **63 percent** who expected to earn at least a BA in 10th grade to **50 percent** who planned to enroll immediately in 12th grade, left those plans only marginally better overall than had been the case in NELS. This melt also occurred among college-qualified students, as shown in Table 2:

**TABLE 2: COMPARISON OF 10th GRADE
EXPECTATIONS AND 12th GRADE PLANS
College-Qualified Students in ELS:2002**

SES Quartile	Expected in 10 th Grade to Earn at Least a BA	Planned in 12 th Grade to Attend a 4-year College Immediately
1st	73%	61%
2nd	79%	68%
3rd	86%	77%
4th	92%	88%

Future Analyses. As transcript and enrollment data become available later this year, it will be possible to compare actual outcomes between students in NELS and ELS. This will allow new estimates of the losses of college-qualified high school graduates described in *Empty Promises* (2002) and a preliminary forecast of baccalaureate completion rates by family income and SES for the next decade, both of which are required to formulate effective student aid policies. ♦

ACSFA FY2006 AGENDA

The Advisory Committee recently agreed upon an ambitious agenda for FY2006 that will allow it to continue to serve Congress and the Secretary of Education by making recommendations to increase access and persistence for low- and moderate-income students. A significant amount of flexibility has been included in this agenda to allow the Committee to adapt to the schedule for reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA), and take into account the interests and priorities of Congress. The following are some of the priorities that the Committee has already begun to address in FY2006:

- **Providing Technical Assistance to Congress:** The Advisory Committee was created to provide Congress and the Secretary of Education with independent, objective advice and analysis regarding student aid policy. The Committee looks forward to continuing to serve in that capacity in FY2006 and will provide technical assistance to Congress as part of the ongoing HEA reauthorization, as well as prepare for possible new charges from Congress.
- **Launching the Innovative Pathways Study:** This study will examine new or existing strategies and programs designed to increase the number of students, particularly those from low- and moderate-income families, who earn bachelor's degrees. This three-year study will include initiatives being implemented across the entire education pipeline, from middle school through college. For more information, see page 3.
- **Disseminating Current Research on College Access and Success:** The Advisory Committee will release a report in 2006 that contains papers commissioned by respected scholars in higher education on various issues related to college enrollment and success, including current financial barriers to college. In addition, the Committee will continue to provide updated data related to these financial barriers in its quarterly publication, *Access & Persistence*. The Committee also plans to update data in *Empty Promises* as soon as new data become available and will produce a Handbook on Modeling Access and Persistence.
- **Planning and Holding Two Advisory Committee Meetings:** The Advisory Committee will hold two public meetings in Washington, D.C. in FY 2006: one in early spring and another in late summer or early fall. These two events will be related to the Advisory Committee's access agenda and to fulfilling any new charges resulting from reauthorization. The first meeting will be held on April 4, 2006 and will be used to formally launch the Innovative Pathways Study (see below).
- **Fulfilling ongoing statutory and reporting requirements:** The Advisory Committee's current statute outlines various ongoing functions and responsibilities that the Committee intends to fulfill in FY2006. For example, the Advisory Committee will continue to annually review and comment upon the system of need analysis and the student aid application and delivery processes, including the simplification and modernization of such processes. In addition, the Advisory Committee will continue to review and comment upon proposed regulations and recommend to Congress and the Secretary of Education areas for future research and analysis. ♦

SAVE THE DATE! ACSFA SPRING HEARING APRIL 4, 2006

The Advisory Committee's next hearing will be on Tuesday, April 4 in Washington, D.C. This hearing will kick-off the Innovative Pathways Study (see page 4) and will bring together researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to discuss groundbreaking strategies for increasing the degree attainment of low-income students. More information will be provided in the coming weeks regarding the meeting location and registration. For more information, please contact:

Nicole Barry, Deputy Director, at 202-219-2099.

BEYOND THE BELTWAY: OVERVIEW OF MEMBER AND STAFF ACTIVITIES IN 2005

Advisory Committee members represent a variety of geographic regions, from California to Florida and Chicago to Nashville. In addition to conducting bi-annual meetings, Advisory Committee members, with support from the staff, frequently present to state agencies and higher education associations from across the country.

TASFAA and MASFAA Conferences	In the spring of 2005, ACSFA Committee member Claude Pressnell , joined by Deputy Director Nicole Barry , presented the Committee’s simplification study findings to the Tennessee Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators and the Mississippi Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.
College Costs Summit and HEA’s 40th Anniversary	Committee staff joined Dr. Pressnell in November at the Lumina Foundation’s D.C. summit, titled “College Costs: Making Opportunity Affordable.” This summit brought together experts on higher education policy and research from across the country to discuss strategies for lowering college costs. In addition, Vice Chair Judith Flink and Committee staff attended a celebration on November 8 to commemorate the 40 th anniversary of the signing of the HEA at Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas.
Illinois Board of Higher Education	Following the HEA celebration in Texas, Ms. Barry and Assistant Director Erin Renner joined Ms. Flink in presenting the Committee’s findings on access and persistence to the Illinois Board of Higher Education at its Higher Education Summit. The presentation featured recent data on work/loan burden and college access in Illinois. Committee staff also conducted a site visit to an alternative education program in Waukegan Public Schools during their trip to Illinois.
NAICUSE	Dr. Pressnell, a member of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities State Executives (NAICUSE), invited Ms. Barry and Assistant Director Michelle Asha Cooper to participate in a panel discussion on articulation agreements between two- and four-year institutions at NAICUSE’s fall meeting.
The Project on Student Debt / AEI Symposium	Committee staff attended a symposium on rising student debt levels co-sponsored by the Project on Student Debt and the American Enterprise Institute. Committee member Robert Shireman is founder and executive director of the Project on Student Debt.
Washington Education Foundation and Higher Education Coordinating Board	In December, staff traveled to Washington State to present the ACSFA’s findings on access and persistence for low- and moderate-income students, both in the nation and in the state, to the Washington Education Foundation and to the Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board. Presentations focused on ACSFA’s recommendation to create a reinvigorated access and persistence partnership. Staff also traveled to Yakima, Washington to visit the campus of Heritage University and its co-founder and president, former Committee member Dr. Kathleen Ross .
Other Recent Staff Presentations and Visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association for the Study of Higher Education • Coalition of State University Aid Administrators • College Board’s Midwest Regional Forum • Commonwealth College Access Network • Michigan Student Financial Aid Association • National Association for College Admission Counseling • National Association of State Student Grant & Aid Programs • National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators • National College Access Network Conference • National Conference of State Legislatures Standing Committee on Education

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MEET AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER



Mr. Darryl A. Marshall
Director, Student Financial Aid
Florida State University (FSU)

Mr. Darryl Marshall was appointed to the Committee by the Secretary of Education in November 2003. He currently serves as director of student financial aid at Florida State University (FSU) and is responsible for the overall coordination and administration of all federal, state, institutional, and private sector student financial aid programs. FSU is a comprehensive, national graduate

research university that puts research into action for the benefit of its students and society and is recognized as a pioneer in the area of distance learning.

Mr. Marshall has spent nearly 20 years in student financial aid administration. At FSU, he has developed and implemented several programs, including a financial aid customer service unit and a comprehensive financial aid awareness campaign, and led a team that converted a 15-year old legacy system into a completely web-based system. He was recently appointed to a Blue Ribbon Commission on Access and Diversity by the Governor of Florida, which will evaluate issues of minority student enrollment. Mr. Marshall has also partnered with several major lenders to implement a comprehensive education finance program that has resulted in industry-leading borrower benefits for students and parents. This partnership has also created a unique school as lender program that has become a major revenue-generating source that funds need-based grant dollars for students at FSU.

From 1985 to 1998, Mr. Marshall held several positions at FSU, such as financial aid specialist, loans assistant director, and associate director of financial aid. Prior to joining FSU, he served as a public assistance specialist at the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services in Quincy, Florida. He is an active member of several professional organizations, including the Florida Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, and the School Advisory Board Student Loan Xpress in San Diego, among others. Mr. Marshall holds a B.S. degree in political science from Florida A&M University and a M.S. degree in higher education from FSU. For more information on FSU, please visit www.fsu.edu. ♦

ACSFA Announcements

- The Secretary of Education appointed **Dr. Lawrence W. Burt** to the Committee for a three-year term that expires in September 2008. Dr. Burt currently serves as Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Director of Student Financial Services at the University of Texas at Austin.
- ACSFA will hold its **next public meeting** on April 4, 2006 in Washington, D.C. Please contact the Committee staff at 202-219-2099 for more details.
- Dr. Jeneva E. Stone has joined ACSFA as a policy analyst.
- ACSFA is seeking to hire an **Assistant Director** and a **Policy Intern**. For more information, please see the job descriptions at our website (below).

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