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HACU
H I S P A N I C
A S S O C I A T I O N
O F C O L L E G E S &
U N I V E R S I T I E S

February 23, 2018

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Senate Health, Education, Labor and
Pensions Committee
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Health, Education, Labor and
Pensions Committee
648 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

On behalf of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) and the nearly 500 Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) across the nation it represents, I submit the enclosed series of recommendations to enhance the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965, as amended. We are confident that the Senate Health Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee (HELP) Committee, under your able leadership, will duly consider these HACU recommendations as you proceed with the reauthorization of the HEA. Our recommendations are aimed specifically at strengthening HSIs and increasing Hispanic higher education success.

HACU also shares and supports other broader principles that apply to all higher education institutions and their learning communities, including of course HSIs and Hispanics. We subscribe to the goals of affordability and increased student aid, greater access to postsecondary education and degree completion in a timely manner, institutional autonomy and fair accountability, innovation and lesser regulation, and funding equity for under-resourced institutions. Each and every one of these principles is essential for the improvement of the HEA and for the enhancement of student success.

HACU's Governing Board, composed of presidents/CEOs of higher education institutions, and I would be happy to discuss with you and the HELP Committee our recommendations at your convenience. Please consider HACU as a source of support in your important work for the nation's educational advancement.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our recommendations.

Respectfully,

Antonio R. Flores
President & CEO

Enclosure: "HACU's Priorities for the Higher Education Act (HEA) Reauthorization: 2018"

Cc: HACU Governing Board

HACU's Priorities for the Higher Education Act (HEA) Reauthorization: 2018

The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), as the sole national voice of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), champions Hispanic higher education success through advocacy, exemplary programs, and partnerships. This series of policy priorities is central to HACU's core mission.

CONTEXT:

The Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA), as amended, defines and codifies the federal role in higher education. It governs federal student aid programs, including Pell grants and federal student loans, international education, and developing institution programs. Most critically for HACU, it defines Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and authorizes Title V, Parts A and B, grant programs that support HSI undergraduate and graduate education, as well as Title III, Part F, the Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), and Articulation program. The HEA was last authorized in 2008.

Hispanics are one of the fastest-growing demographics in the U.S. and are increasingly critical to the American workforce of the 21st century. The U.S. Department of Labor has projected 74 percent of people entering the workforce between 2010 and 2020 to be Hispanic. There has recently been considerable progress in Hispanic high school graduation rates: in 2015, 88.4 percent of 18-24 year old Hispanics had graduated from high school, compared to only 70.3 percent in 2005. However, the 2015 Hispanic rate is more than 6 percentage points behind non-Hispanic whites. Over the same time span, the Hispanic college matriculation rate of recent high school graduates has increased from 57.5 percent to 67.1 percent. Despite this progress, wide educational attainment gaps persist. In 2015, 15.5% of Hispanics had at least a bachelor's degree and 4.7% had an advanced degree, compared to 36.2% and 13.5% for non-Hispanic whites. However, the continued increase in Hispanic high school graduation rates is driving the growth in the number of higher education institutions where these students enroll.

The nation now has more than 500 Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) that collectively enroll almost two-thirds of the 3.5 million Hispanic college students today, a disproportionate number of whom are first-generation college students from lower-income families. Yet, they receive one-third less federal funding (on a per student basis) than the rest of higher education. The HEA Title V and Title III, Part F, programs are the main ways in which the federal government has tried to address this disparity. It is worth noting that HSIs educate and graduate the vast majority of K-12 Hispanic teachers and of Hispanic STEM degree recipients across the country. Their potential for increased collaboration with Hispanic-Serving School Districts (HSSDs) to dramatically enhance student success is a major asset for the future of the nation. For these and many other reasons, HSIs need and merit increased public investments under the HEA.

However, as the number of HSIs has more than doubled since 2000 and continues to climb at more than 30 new HSIs annually, the amount of federal funding for this cohort of institutions has stagnated for the past ten years. It is imperative that federal funding keep pace with the increasing number of HSIs. They should be equitably supported to fulfill their mission of educating and training the fastest-growing segment of America’s workforce, Hispanic Americans.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- HACU recommends that the maximum authorized funding level for HSIs under Title V, specifically directed at capacity building for undergraduate programs at 2- and 4-year institutions, be increased to \$465 million per year “and such sums as may be necessary” for the authorized cycle of years following the reenacting of the HEA.
- HACU recommends that collaborations between HSIs and international higher education institutions be allowed with Title V funds.
- HACU recommends that three-quarters of one percent (0.75%) of the yearly appropriations amount for HEA under Title V, Part A, be set aside and dedicated by the U.S. Department of Education for National Activities in support of research, technical assistance and training of administrative staff and faculty at HSIs.
- HACU recommends that a new Part C be created under Title V of the HEA for a new grant program to support collaboration between HSIs, Emerging HSIs¹, Hispanic-Serving School Districts (HSSDs)² and emerging HSSDs³ for greater student success.
- HACU recommends that the “50 percent low-income” assurance requirement be eliminated from the funding criteria of Title V; this provision creates an unnecessary and costly administrative burden as HSIs overwhelmingly enroll a majority of Title IV aid eligible recipients.
- HACU recommends that the Educator Preparation Reform Act (EPRA) serve as the framework for reauthorizing Title II of the Higher Education Act and include in the definitions of the terms “Profession Ready Teachers” and “Profession Ready Principals”

¹ An Emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution is as an eligible institution of higher education, defined as a non-profit, degree-granting institution, with full-time equivalent (FTE) undergraduate Hispanic student enrollment of at least 15% but no more than 24.9%.

² A school district that has an enrollment of students that is at least 25 percent Hispanic at the end of the award year immediately preceding the date of the application by the HSI, and; is characterized as low income, as measured in terms of having at least 50 percent of the student body be eligible for free or reduced-price lunches.

³ A school district that has an enrollment of Hispanic students that is at least between 15 percent and 24.9 at the end of the award year immediately preceding the date of the application by the HSI, and; is characterized as low income, as measured in terms having at least 50 percent of the student body eligible for free or reduced-price lunches.

the following language: “has demonstrated the ability to work with students who are culturally and linguistically diverse.”

- HACU recommends that federal investments be increased to enhance the Teacher Quality Partnership Grants program authorized in HEA under Title II, Part A. This is a promising strategy to address the teacher diversity crisis in the United States and mitigate the negative impact it has on the national majority-minority student population.
- HACU recommends that categorical funding be set aside for consortia and partnerships between HSIs and Emerging HSIs (to be defined under Title V as cited in footnote 1, above) to prepare Hispanic teachers and other underrepresented populations on the teaching ranks and to meet national, state and local needs.
- HACU recommends that other financial support mechanisms for Hispanic achievement in higher education be authorized under Title IV of the HEA, including waiving all federal student loan-origination fees, fixing the maximum interest rate at or below the current level or prime rate (whichever is lower), and forgiving accumulated federal loan debt of graduates who choose to work for HSIs.
- HACU recommends that immigrant students who arrived as minors, have successfully completed a secondary-school program of study or its equivalent, and have been physically present in the United States for a continuous period of not less than five years, be eligible for federal financial aid programs.
- HACU recommends that HSIs and other Minority-Serving Institutions be granted the same number of points given to other institutions for “prior experience” in TRIO grant competitions.
- HACU recommends that a graduate fellowship program be created as part of the Graduate and Postsecondary Improvement Programs under Title VII of HEA to establish partnerships between HSIs and non-HSIs for increased Hispanic student enrollment and success in graduate and professional programs. This graduate fellowship program would attract students of superior ability and achievement, exceptional promise and demonstrated financial need to high-quality graduate programs critical to complete advanced degrees.
- HACU recommends that Congress authorize a new program to support an “HSI Fellowship Program” under Title VII, Part A, Subpart 5, of the HEA. This Fellowship Program will target Hispanics interested in pursuing careers in academia and willing to make a commitment to teach, conduct research, and community service at HSIs as a prerequisite to receive a fellowship.
- HACU recommends that Congress allow simultaneous participation for eligible HSIs and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions under Titles V and III, respectively.

- HACU recommends that the HSI STEM Articulation Program under Title III, Part F, which is scheduled to sunset in 2020, be made permanent and funded at a minimum of \$100 million per year “and such sums as may be necessary” consistent with the growth in the number of HSIs and collegiate Hispanic student enrollment, and to meet the expanding STEM workforce needs of the nation.
- HACU recommends that a new competitive grant program be created under Title VI to enhance the capacity of HSIs to host college and university students from across the Americas and other regions of the world, and to increase Hispanic student participation in study abroad opportunities.

HACU is committed to working with the U.S. Congress and the Administration to ensure that the preceding recommendations are fully incorporated into the reauthorized text of the HEA, as appropriate.