

aascu
American Association
of State Colleges
and Universities

2008
Public Policy
Agenda



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2008
Public Policy
Agenda

aascu

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Colleges and Universities

Public Policy Principles

AASCU's *Public Policy Agenda* is rooted in an uncompromising commitment to opportunity for the nation's students and expressed through the following core principles:

Higher education is a common good that provides significant benefits to individuals and society as a whole. While the personal gains from higher education are widely acknowledged, the societal benefits are even more significant and lasting, thus warranting continued public investment. These include tangible returns through economic productivity and increased tax revenues, but even more fundamentally, through the promotion of an enlightened citizenry and greater social cohesion.

America's public higher education system stands as an embodiment of the nation's democratic ideals. State colleges and universities accomplish this by promoting broad access to education for all students, regardless of station or circumstance, thus transforming society and setting a global standard. Amid fundamental changes in the state-campus relationship, this principle must not be compromised.

State colleges and universities are committed to delivering America's promise through quality undergraduate and graduate programs that reflect responsible stewardship of the public investment; meaningful engagement of the social and economic issues facing their states, regions, and communities; and the promotion of global awareness, understanding and competitiveness.

No American should be denied the opportunity to pursue higher education for lack of financial resources. Affordable public sector tuition and need-based federal aid are the two requisite ingredients for realizing this ideal.

From the President

Dear Colleagues:

I am pleased to present to you the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' (AASCU) 2008 *Public Policy Agenda*. This annual statement of policy principles and positions guides the association's advocacy on current and developing issues at the federal and state levels.

The ongoing reauthorization of the federal Higher Education Act, revelations about fraud and abuse in the federal student financial aid system, and events prompting concerns about public safety and emergency preparedness form the backdrop of this year's edition of the *Public Policy Agenda*. This year's statement looks a little different from those of past years because we have organized our policy positions around four central themes: affordability, access, accountability, and competitiveness. These are the themes that echo in Congress and in statehouses across the nation. Our commitments, however, remain consistent, focusing around the belief that investment in human capital is in the long-term best interests of our nation and all its citizens. AASCU calls on policymakers to honor their commitments to the nation's students and their families, and to work together to ensure that the doors of college opportunity remain open for all.

The 2008 *Public Policy Agenda* is intended to serve as a point of reference for federal and state policymakers, the association's members, and other interested organizations and individuals. The values and priorities outlined in the *Public Policy Agenda* offer a point of reference for the crucial debates that lie ahead.

The association and its members stand ready to do their part to ensure a higher education system worthy of the public's hope and trust.

Sincerely,



Constantine W. Curris
President

Endorsements

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities' 2008 *Public Policy Agenda* is endorsed by the following organizations:

- American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
- Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education
- Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities
- Council for Opportunity in Education
- Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
- National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges

Affordability

American families continue to identify college affordability as one of their biggest concerns. AASCU, representing more than 430 institutions and heads of systems and on behalf of the 3.5 million students who attend them, advocates for a higher education finance model that ensures that every qualified student—no matter his or her financial need—can afford a college education. In addition, AASCU supports a college financing model that holds each stakeholder accountable for their part in making college affordable—the federal government, states, institutions, and students and their families.

Student grants, student loans, and tax policies all contribute to college affordability. AASCU believes that while each is an important piece of financing a college education, limited public resources should be targeted to the neediest students in the form of direct grant aid. Student debt should be limited, student loan repayment options flexible, work-study opportunities available and financially feasible for students, and education tax benefits transparent.

Affordability Priorities

- ◆ Amend the Higher Education Act to augment the maximum Pell Grant award to benefit the lowest income students.
- ◆ Create and apply a funding goal model to rebalance the college financing responsibility between the federal government and students/families aided by states and institutions through low tuition and grant aid.
- ◆ Maintain aggregate loan limits for undergraduate students in the federal loan programs at the current level.
- ◆ Improve student loan counseling to minimize student debt levels and ensure appropriate repayment for every student-borrower.
- ◆ Require lenders in federal programs to disclose to borrowers pertinent loan information before loan disbursement, before repayment begins, and regularly during repayment, delinquency, and default.
- ◆ Support legislation to strengthen federal regulation of private educational loans and to protect students from taking out private, direct-to-consumer educational loans before applying for financial aid or arriving on the campus.
- ◆ Support changes in the HOPE and Lifetime Learning Tax Credits that will make them more accessible to the most needy students, including refundability, expansion to non-tuition expenses, and for removal of the offset against Pell and SEOG awards.
- ◆ Provide a refundable tax credit for student loan interest paid by low-income borrowers.
- ◆ Support legislation that would make permanent tax provisions due to expire in 2007 that permit individuals 70½ and older to transfer up to \$100,000 from an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) tax-free to charitable and other nonprofit organizations. AASCU will explore the feasibility of lowering the eligibility requirement from age 70½ to 65.

Federal Role in College Affordability— AASCU Policy Statements

Federal Grants

Pell Grants

- Amend the Higher Education Act to augment the maximum Pell award to benefit the lowest income students. Under current law, students whose family income equals the subsistence level set by the Bureau of Labor Statistics are expected to contribute zero dollars, also known as “zero expected family contribution (EFC),” but students with even lower incomes—equivalent to “negative EFC”—receive no additional benefits. The proposed change would augment the maximum Pell award by up to \$750 for students with the lowest incomes.

The FY 2008 maximum Pell Grant award (\$4,241) covers approximately 31 percent of the reported 2007–2008 estimated cost of attendance at public four-year institutions (\$13,589) and approximately 69 percent of reported in-state tuition and fees (\$6,185). The estimated average 2007–2008 Pell award of \$2,647 covers approximately 19 percent of the estimated cost of attendance and 43 percent of in-state tuition and fees.

- Create and apply a funding goal model to rebalance the college financing responsibility between the federal government and students/families aided by states and institutions through low tuition and grant aid. Such a federal model should cover two-thirds of the average cost of attendance including tuition, fees, and room and board, at a public four-year college. Authorize and appropriate a maximum Pell Grant award that equals 70 percent of the two-thirds cost of attendance. The remaining 30 percent of the two-thirds federal commitment would be expected from a subsidized federal student loan.

A theoretical example of this proposed model is as follows: using an average estimated 2007–2008 cost of attendance (COA) of \$13,589 as a base, two-thirds of that would equal approximately \$9,050 to be covered by federal financial aid. Of that \$9,050, 70 percent covered by Pell Grant funds would equal approximately \$6,335.

- Amend the Higher Education Act to support a “year-round Pell Grant” by authorizing a second Pell award for students who are enrolled in year-round studies.

Academic Competitiveness and SMART Grants (ACG/SMART)

- Align eligibility requirements for Academic Competitiveness and SMART Grants with current Title IV eligibility requirements in order to ensure maximum utilization of these grants. Specifically, allow part-time students and U.S. permanent residents and other eligible non-citizen legal residents to qualify for these grants. In addition, the reference to “academic year” should be clarified in the current statute and changed to “year in school” based on credit accumulation in order to minimize confusion about whether a student is eligible.

Under the current structure, when the maximum award for the Pell Grant is increased, essentially all awards are increased by the same amount and the recipient pool expands to include more families with higher incomes. This occurs because most awards are calculated by subtracting the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) from the maximum award. If a negative EFC were to be implemented those who currently have a zero EFC would benefit relative to those with higher incomes, effectively targeting additional dollars to the neediest students.
- Clarify the term “rigorous secondary school program of study” as an eligibility requirement for ACG by assigning that determination to states. Allow institutions to fulfill that requirement in order to grant timely awards to eligible students if the institutions make a good faith effort to use the best available information at the time of the awarding of the grant. The final authority for defining the term “rigorous secondary school program of study” should not reside with the federal government unless the state refuses to establish the rigorous program.
- Replace the 3.0 GPA requirement for ACG second-year eligibility with the satisfactory progress standard that is used to determine eligibility for other Title IV financial aid.

Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant (SEOG)

- Boost appropriations to SEOG.
- Phase in changes to campus-based funding formulas for the distribution of funds based on institutional need, not prior funding.

Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership Program (LEAP)

- Ensure that LEAP funds used in state funding formulas for need-based aid are targeted towards Pell Grant recipients. LEAP funds should be used to supplement, not supplant, Pell Grant aid.

Federal Student Loans

Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) and Direct Loan (DL) Programs

- Support the maintenance of both the FFEL and DL programs.
- Oppose all efforts to undermine either the FFEL or DL programs through legislative and regulatory provisions that would impose artificial disadvantages on the efficient operation of either program.

Perkins Loan

- Appropriate funds for the Perkins Federal Capital Contribution to institutions. These funds allow colleges to offer the lowest-interest student loans available to low-income students.
- Appropriate federal funds for the Perkins Loan Cancellation so that institutions can cancel the loans of students who go into public service fields, such as teaching, nursing, the military, and law enforcement.

Student Debt Burden and Loan Limits

- Maintain aggregate loan limits for undergraduate students in the federal loan programs at the current level of \$23,000 for dependent students in the FFEL and DL programs, augmented by an additional \$23,000 in unsubsidized loans for independent students.
- Revise the authority for PLUS Loans to make it more attractive to parents of dependent students.

Student Loan Counseling and Consumer Information

- Require the Department of Education to provide basic information to colleges and universities to be used for counseling and consumer information for prospective borrowers, such as:

As the reliance on student loans grows, student borrowers should be counseled at various stages in the borrowing process. The federal government, institutions, and lenders all have a role in counseling and disclosure of consumer information.

- Regional data on starting salaries in all major fields.
- The increase in debt that results from forbearance on all loans and from capitalization of interest on unsubsidized loans.
- The various repayment options available in the federal student loan programs, including the availability of the Income-Contingent Repayment (ICR) program and the new Income-Based Repayment programs (IBR).
- The federal government's extraordinary powers to collect student loans, far beyond those of most unsecured creditors. For example, student borrowers should know that even in bankruptcy, most federal student loans must be repaid. There is no statute of limitations.

- Require colleges and universities to ensure that prospective borrowers have access to average indebtedness of borrowers at that institution, details on amount of annual and aggregate debt needed to complete the student's academic program, sample payments for that amount of debt, and information made available by the Department of Education on starting salaries for graduates by field of study.
- Require lenders in federal programs to disclose to borrowers pertinent loan information before loan disbursement, before repayment begins, and regularly during repayment, delinquency, and default. This information should include:
 - Principal borrowed, current balance, interest already paid and interest due over the life of the loan, options by which borrowers may avoid or be removed from default, and relevant fees associated with these options.
 - Any special terms, such as reduced interest rates or prompt payment options, should be made part of the promissory note, to ensure these provisions will continue if the loan is sold to another lender.
- AASCU supports the regulations issued by the Department of Education on November 1, 2007 to improve the management of preferred lender lists in the FFEL program and will encourage institutional compliance.


Loan Repayment

- Strengthen consumer information requirements for lenders and the Department of Education, especially in regards to borrowers who are having difficulty with student loan repayment.
- Require lenders and the Department of Education to clearly and regularly inform borrowers that they have access to two programs created by Congress to ease repayment burden: the Income-Contingent Repayment (ICR) program in the DL program, and the new Income-Based Repayment (IBR) program available in both the FFEL and DL programs.

- Eliminate borrower defaults on federal student loans, which are not only preventable, but also costly to the federal taxpayer. Require that the Department of Education maintain contact with all borrowers after they leave college, and placing them in the most appropriate repayment program.
- Amend the structure of financial incentives for participation in the FFEL program to ensure that lenders and guaranty agencies communicate to and appropriately place borrowers within the repayment options borrowers are entitled to under the law.

Private Loans

- Support legislation that prohibits the inclusion of private loans in official financial aid award letters. Financial aid award letters should only include federal, state, and institutional aid.
- Support legislation to protect students from taking out private, direct-to-consumer educational loans before applying for financial aid or arriving on the campus. Private loans usually do not require a co-signer and therefore carry very high interest rates, carry no repayment protections, and are not subject to federal Title IV disclosure requirements.
- Require lenders to ensure that students and their families contact the student financial aid office before taking out private loans, so that federal grants and loans and campus work opportunities are fully utilized before taking out costly and sometimes unnecessary private loans.
- Require that borrowers be given a basic cooling off period to consider the terms of the loan that have been approved before the loan is consummated.
- Require lenders to provide a full and accurate APR rate quote before borrowers are presented with the promissory note to sign.



A significant increase in private educational lending has led to a growth in alternative, non-federal loan programs in partnership with commercial lenders.

Federal Work Study

- Boost overall funding of Federal Work Study.
- Provide additional funds to or waive the federal matching requirement for those colleges that exceed the federal requirement of service placements.

Tax Policy

Federal Issues

HOPE Scholarship and Lifetime Learning Tax Credits

- Support changes in the HOPE and Lifetime Learning Tax Credits that will make them more accessible to the most needy students, including refundability, expansion to non-tuition expenses, and for removal of the offset against Pell and SEOG awards.

According to the College Board, in 2005 only approximately 17 percent of taxpayers with incomes below \$50,000 benefited from tuition tax deductions. Tuition tax credit benefits went to about 42 percent of taxpayers with incomes below \$50,000.
- Support an overhaul of existing HOPE, Lifetime Learning and other tuition tax deductions. Benefits from these programs do not align with policy priorities that promote greater access to the most needy students. A realignment and overhaul should redirect benefits to students with the most financial need.

Student Related Tax Policy

- Provide a refundable tax credit for student loan interest paid by low-income borrowers.
- Support the establishment of a federal tax exemption for loan forgiveness proceeds for borrowers in the Income-Contingent Repayment program.
- Oppose any proposed modification of the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) exemption for students working on college and university campuses.

Institution-Related Tax Policy

- Support legislation that would make permanent tax provisions due to expire in 2007 that permit individuals 70½ and older to transfer up to \$100,000 from an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) tax-free to charitable and other nonprofit organizations. AASCU will explore the feasibility of lowering the eligibility requirement from age 70½ to 65.
- Oppose any proposal to restrict deductions for non-cash gifts to the amount paid for such property, rather than the current standard of fair market value.
- Support legislation that would allow taxpayers that do not itemize deductions on their federal income tax returns to claim a deduction for charitable contributions.
- Oppose a permanent extension of the federal estate tax repeal, and call on Congress to instead consider estate tax reforms that balance the needs of farms and small business owners with those of states and charitable organizations.
- Support the active enforcement of existing laws and regulations governing the tax-exempt status of nonprofit and charitable organizations over the expansion of these laws and regulations. Specifically, AASCU supports current law that places the burden of proof for reasonable compensation under the intermediate sanctions law on the Internal Revenue Service.
- Oppose any attempt to repeal the existing exemption of tuition remission for college and university employees.

- Oppose any proposal to increase the federal tax liability of public college and university employees by changing the treatment of their contributions to state retirement plans.
- Oppose any proposal to make the Medicare Payroll Tax mandatory for all public sector employees, regardless of hire date or participation in another insurance plan.
- Oppose any proposal to eliminate the ability of issuers of government and tax-exempt bonds to do one advance refunding (i.e., refinancing of outstanding bonds before maturity or callability).
- Oppose any proposal that would require institutions of higher education to spend down their endowment assets. Institutions already spend on average 4–6 percent of their endowments a year.

State Role in College Affordability— AASCU Policy Statements

State Support of Higher Education: Revamping Tax Policy as a Strategy of Investment

- Encourage states to view their public colleges and universities as economic assets that provide critical competitive leverage, and to align state tax policy in a manner that will facilitate greater access to, and investment in, these institutions.
- State operating support for public postsecondary institutions is often viewed as a discretionary spending item and as a result, funding streams change with the ebb and flow of state revenues.

State Financial Aid: Strengthened Investment in Need-Based Aid

- Encourage states to reinvigorate their investment in need-based grant programs that promote increased access for low-income undergraduate students, especially those that are Pell Grant eligible.
- Advise states to earmark grants that facilitate the completion of postsecondary credentials for nontraditional student populations, such as those who are over the age of 25 and those who attend part-time.

Student Loan Forgiveness Programs that Facilitate Access, Boost Competitiveness

- Support state-coordinated loan forgiveness programs that offer incentives to individuals to seek postsecondary training in preparation for high-demand occupations, such as engineering, sciences, and health care, and critical public sector occupations, such as teaching.

Education Tax Credits

- Support provision of state income tax credits for students' and parents' investment in higher education, to include tuition, fees, and related expenses.

- Support tax credits for employers who provide tuition reimbursement or other incentives to employees to promote postsecondary enrollment.

Recognition of Inflationary Pressures Impacting Higher Education

- Advise states to recognize the higher-than-average relative price level of the goods and services purchased by colleges and universities, and to choose appropriate inflation indexes when drafting state policy that affects tuition pricing, state operating support, and grant aid programs.

According to the Commonfund Institute, inflationary costs for the typical market basket of goods purchased by higher education institutions rose by an average 4.7 percent between 2002–2007 in contrast to an increase in the Consumer Price Index of 3.1 percent during the same period.

Improved Representation of Tuition Cost Changes

- Urge states, coordinating boards and other agencies to improve transparency and comparability by expressing tuition changes in dollar terms as opposed to percentage terms—especially as it may relate to formal policy impacting state institutions, such as the provision of state operating support or mandated tuition restraint intent.

Reporting tuition cost changes in dollar figures rather than in percentages leads to greater transparency and clarity. For example, according to the College Board, tuition and fees rose by an average of 6.6 percent in 2007–2008 at state public four-year colleges, a rate slightly above the 6.3 percent increase witnessed at the nation's private four-year not-for-profit colleges—yet, the actual dollar increases paid by students were \$381 and \$1,402, respectively.

Opposition to Mandated Tuition Caps

- Oppose mandated tuition caps on state colleges and universities that are set by state legislatures. Artificial caps may lead to decreases in academic quality, reduced ability to respond to market opportunities that will boost state competitiveness, and a reduction in the availability of institutional student financial aid. Where state tuition restraint policies exist, they should recognize the one-time

impact of tuition increases from institutional guaranteed tuition programs, which may witness significant tuition increases for entering freshmen cohorts, but which eliminate tuition increases for those same students during subsequent years.

Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR)

- Oppose efforts to amend state constitutions to place arbitrary limits on revenues and expenditures through Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABORs) or similar means. Inadequate funding of institutions of higher education penalizes students. The imposition of arbitrary limits on revenues and expenditures constrains the flexibility of state elected leaders to respond to changing needs and circumstances and to invest strategically in the state's economic future, and they have proven devastating to higher education funding.

Access

Access to college means ensuring that all students who wish to pursue a higher education have the opportunity to do so, regardless of their socio-economic, demographic, geographic, or academic backgrounds. It includes the opportunity to earn admittance, experience a supportive environment during their studies, and graduate from college prepared to succeed in the workplace and participate as a citizen of the world.

While state and federal governments, as well as institutions play a role in ensuring the path to college is as smooth as possible for all students, the federal government plays an especially important role in ensuring equal access to college. The states and federal government, in partnership with the nation's pre-K-12 system, have a responsibility to focus the most effective strategies for access and inclusion on the pre-college years and work to reduce barriers in the transition from secondary to postsecondary education.

Access Priorities

- ◆ Boost equitable and competitive funding levels for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities, Alaska Native and Hawaiian Serving Institutions, and Hispanic Serving Institutions, including funds to strengthen graduate education programs at these institutions.
- ◆ Increase support for TRIO and GEAR UP through the annual appropriations process and oppose any proposal to scale back or eliminate any significant component of TRIO and GEAR UP programs.
- ◆ Support amendments to the Montgomery G.I. Bill (MGIB) that would equalize the benefits for active and reserve components.
- ◆ Protect all MGIB benefits from being considered as personal resources when determining federal student financial aid awards.
- ◆ Support changes to federal law to ensure undocumented students can access a college education and continue to contribute to our nation's economic development and global competitiveness by allowing states to determine their own tuition policies, as well as allowing these students to access certain federal financial aid.

Federal Role in College Access—AASCU Policy Statements

Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs)

- Boost authorization funding levels for Title III of the Higher Education Act, which supports the development and strengthening of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities, and Alaska Native and Hawaiian Serving Institutions.

From 2000–2006, underrepresented and disadvantaged populations have increased by 13,650,799. Hispanics or Latino origin rose by 8,661,314; blacks of non-Hispanic origins rose 2,527,582; and Asians rose 2,461,903.

Commitment to diversity: diversity is a compelling state interest, as articulated in *Bakke v. Regents of the University of California*, and must inform all executive, legislative, and judicial deliberations regarding educational access and inclusion.
- Boost authorization funding of Title V of the Higher Education Act, which supports the development and strengthening of Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) in order to address the nation’s changing demographics and the increasing enrollments at HSIs.
- Create a new authorization under Title V of the Higher Education Act that supports graduate education programs at HSIs.
- Extend eligibility requirements in Title III and provide additional funding to public Historically Black Colleges and Universities that have created new graduate programs in the sciences and change funding restrictions to allow for the development of new qualified graduate programs.
- Expand the number of institutions eligible for graduate programming funds by increasing the program funding cap from 10 percent to 30 percent, and permitting institutions to develop new qualified programs to the Ph.D. level; raising the “no match” minimum funding from \$1 million to \$1.5 million; and providing for teaching and research fellowships for students enrolled in graduate programs.

Federal Early Outreach and Student Services Programs: TRIO and GEAR UP

- Increase support for TRIO and GEAR UP through the annual appropriations process.
- Expand TRIO and GEAR UP to include funding of programs to reach community-based institutions and other groups in order to reach and serve more of the low-income and first-generation college students who are eligible to participate in these important programs.
- Create incentives to encourage more partnerships between middle schools, high schools, and colleges, especially those partnership college preparation programs that prepare first-generation college students to major in science and math.
- Oppose any proposal to scale back or eliminate any significant component of TRIO and GEAR UP programs.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, in 2006 there were 2,708 TRIO projects, 872,361 total participants, and a total funding allocation of \$824,225,171 for TRIO. However, 11 million or more people need TRIO services and less than 7 percent of people eligible for TRIO projects are served. Moreover, two-thirds of TRIO participants come from households where neither parent graduated from college and where the income for a family of four is under \$28,000.

Veteran Students and Students Called to Active Duty

- Ensure that no student-reservist is required to repay any unearned federal student aid received for an academic term in which they are called to active duty. States and institutions should not suffer adverse financial consequences as a result of federal action.

While Congress has attempted to keep pace with college costs in regard to benefits, for this academic year, Montgomery GI Bill Active Duty Chapter 30 benefits will cover approximately 73 percent of the cost of attendance at the average four-year public institution. The estimated cost of attendance for the 2007–2008 academic year (using projections based on final 2006–2007 NCES data) is \$13,145, while the benefit is \$9,909.

- Support amendments to the Montgomery G.I. Bill (MGIB) that would equalize the benefits for active and reserve components, including:
 - Benchmark MGIB benefits to the cost of attendance at public four-year institutions.
 - Consolidate active duty and reserve MGIB programs in Title 38, U.S. Code for Veterans Benefits, and align benefit rates with type and length of service (a “Total Force G.I. Bill”).
 - Close the growing benefit gap between Chapter 1606, Educational Assistance for Members of the Selected Reserve, in Title 10 and Chapter 30, Montgomery G.I. Bill-Active Duty (MGIB-AD), in Title 38.
 - Transfer Chapter 1607, The Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP), to Title 38, U.S. Code for Veterans Benefits, from Title 10, U.S. Code for Armed Services, and adjust the rate formula to provide one month of active duty benefits under Chapter 30 for every month mobilized.
 - Authorize the use of reserve MGIB benefits earned during mobilization for a period of 10 years after leaving the service—equal to current portability for active duty members.
- Boost funding for the Upward Bound TRIO programs that prepare low-income, first-generation military veterans for college.
- Reinstate authority of the Department of Education to offer competitive grants for a Veterans Upward Bound Math Science program through the TRIO programs.
- Protect all MGIB benefits from being considered as personal resources when determining federal student financial aid awards:
 - Treat MGIB Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR) benefits such as MGIB Active Duty (MGIB-AD) benefits in the consideration of subsidized Stafford Loans by not counting MGIB-SR benefits as personal resources when determining qualification for subsidized Stafford Loans.

- Increase access to campus-based aid programs, the Federal Supplementary Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG), the Perkins Loan, and Federal Work-Study, for the neediest student-veterans by allowing campus-based aid to be distributed up to the amount of subsidized Stafford Loans, rather than limiting campus-based aid based on MGIB benefits.
- Exempt MGIB-SR and MGIB-AD benefits from the consideration of unsubsidized federal student loans, similar to the current consideration of subsidized federal student loans.

Access for Rural Populations

- Establish federal grant opportunities through new legislation that encourages partnerships between rural colleges and universities and local entities that promote greater access to college for rural high school students.

Pipeline to Graduate School

- Increase investment in federal scholarship and fellowship programs such as the Byrd Honors Scholarship, the Javits Fellowship, and Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GANN) programs as important means of building a pipeline for historically underrepresented groups into academia and advanced graduate studies.
- Boost funding to the Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program through the TRIO programs in order to increase the number of undergraduate students who participate in advanced degree programs. Funding is used to encourage enrollment in advanced degree programs through mentoring, test preparation for the Graduate Record Exam, tutoring, and assistance in applying for graduate school. Students who benefit from this program are tracked and supported as they progress through their advanced degree programs.

- Change Department of Education regulations to allow for institutional payments to master's degree granting institutions that enroll a GANN fellow.

Undocumented Students

- Support clarification of existing federal immigration law to allow states to determine the tuition status of qualified dependents of undocumented immigrants.

AASCU believes that states' authority over tuition policy must be preserved and respected.

Each year, approximately 65,000 undocumented students who were brought to the United States under the age of 16, and have lived here for more than five years, graduate from U.S. high schools.

- Support access to certain federal student financial aid, such as loans and work-study funds, for qualified undocumented students who were brought to the United States under the age of 16, have resided in the United States for five or more years, and have graduated from a United States high school.

Affirmative Action and Diversity of College Campuses

- Oppose federal efforts that prohibit affirmative action policies for colleges and universities in order to ensure equal educational opportunity and access for all students.

State Role in College Access—AASCU Policy Statements

In-State Tuition for Undocumented Students

- Encourage states to offer in-state tuition to qualified undocumented students.

Tuition Benefits for Active Military Personnel and Veterans

- Support access to state-funded resident tuition for active-duty military personnel and veterans and their dependents when serving under military orders in a state other than their home state.

Diversity Referendums

- Oppose state referendums that limit the ability of public colleges and universities to utilize admissions or other policies that aim to engender a diverse student body.

Strengthening and Aligning P-20 Standards

- Support state efforts to increase the preparedness for, and transition to, postsecondary education through strong P-20 coordination initiatives. Such initiatives may include:
 - Alignment of secondary and postsecondary curriculum, standards, and assessments.
 - Clarifying and raising expectations for entering college freshmen by articulating a rigorous statewide high school core course of study that prepares students for college and the world of work.
 - Developing policies that promote access to accelerated learning options and that encourage participation of middle- and lower-achieving groups in such programs as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and dual/concurrent enrollment.

Seamless Student Transitioning

- Encourage states to develop effective policies to support the transfer of credit and streamline credit transfer, including statewide articulation agreements, while recognizing that academic matters are most appropriately handled through the collaborative efforts of accreditors and statewide, system, and institutional boards.
- Urge adoption of policies that remove undue barriers to baccalaureate programs for students completing associate degree programs.

Nontraditional/Adult Learners

- Urge states to develop policies that facilitate adult learner re-entry into college and toward degree completion, such as assessment of prior learning and initiatives designed to help adults meet the logistical challenges of balancing occupational, parental and college responsibilities.

Accountability

Public colleges and universities have an obligation to be responsible guardians of the public's resources and trust and to communicate clearly and effectively about their stewardship of the public's investment in them. AASCU is committed to greater public accountability and has been a leader in promoting improved data systems, greater transparency, and increased focus on student learning outcomes. This year, AASCU calls on its members to participate in the new AASCU/NASULGC Voluntary System of Accountability, designed to improve public understanding of how colleges and universities operate.

Recent national events have focused our attention on additional public accountability issues—transparency, the need to reduce fraud and abuse in the federal student financial aid system, avoid conflicts of interest, and to ensure public safety and emergency preparedness. AASCU believes that the federal government, states, and institutions each play a significant role in addressing these pressing concerns.

Accountability Priorities

- ◆ Ensure that any federal consequences or incentives regarding tuition levels take into account the impact of declining state appropriations on increasing tuition, as well as the tuition-setting authority in each state.
- ◆ Support “state maintenance of funding effort” legislative proposals that strengthen the federal government’s commitment to ensuring state commitment to public higher education.
- ◆ Support a federal and state role in a privacy-protected national system of student level longitudinal data.
- ◆ Authorize and fund a pilot test of an integrated network of state data systems to assess feasibility and usefulness of a national student unit record system and to ensure privacy concerns are addressed appropriately.
- ◆ Require the reporting of disaggregated graduation rates using receipt of federal financial aid as a proxy for income.
- ◆ Oppose federal mandates to report student learning outcomes. Support voluntary efforts such as the AASCU/NASULGC Voluntary System of Accountability to use and report student learning outcomes.
- ◆ Curtail fraud and abuse in the federal student aid programs by maintaining or strengthening, rather than weakening, federal regulations.

Federal Role in College Accountability— AASCU Policy Statements

Consumer Information and College Costs

- Oppose the use of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as a way to understand and measure increases to college tuition; rather, use a “Higher Education Price Index” (HEPI) as a more accurate measure.
- Ensure that any federal effort to measure tuition increases takes into account not only percentage changes, but also dollar changes.
- Ensure that any federal consequences or incentives regarding tuition levels take into account the impact of declining state appropriations on increasing tuition.
- Ensure that any federal consequences or incentives regarding tuition levels take into account the entity that has final tuition-setting authority of public college tuition.
- Support “state maintenance of funding effort” legislative proposals that strengthen the federal government’s commitment to ensuring state commitment to public higher education.
- Support the reporting of “net tuition” using a formula that includes all students, not just aided students, and is determined by subtracting federal, state, and institutional grant aid from the institution’s published tuition price.

In only 14 states do public institutions of higher education determine and have final tuition-setting authority.

Increases in tuition at public colleges are directly correlated to declines in state appropriations; that is, when state appropriations decrease, tuition and fees must be increased—sometimes significantly—to make up the shortfall. For example, in 1999–2000, state appropriations increased by 7.0 percent and tuition and fees increased at a modest 3.3 percent. On the other hand, in 2003–2004, state appropriations decreased by 2.3 percent (continuing a decrease from the previous year), and tuition and fees increased by 13.9 percent.

- Require the reporting of “net tuition” for the following four groups of students, using receipt of federal financial aid as a proxy for income:
 1. Pell Grant recipients with zero expected family contribution.
 2. Pell Grant recipients with an expected family contribution that is higher than zero.
 3. Federal subsidized loan recipients who are not eligible for Pell.
 4. Students who do not receive any federal aid or who receive only unsubsidized loans.

Student Unit Record System

- Support a federal and state role in a privacy-protected national system of student level longitudinal data.
- Authorize and fund a pilot test of an integrated network of state data systems to assess feasibility and usefulness of a national student unit record system and to ensure privacy concerns are addressed appropriately.
- Close existing information gaps by centralizing comparable data on accountability indicators, such as student persistence, attainment and success rates, net price, student attendance patterns, and distribution of federal/state/institutional aid.

Graduation Rates

- Require the reporting of graduation rates for the following four groups of students, using receipt of federal financial aid as a proxy for income:

1. Pell Grant recipients with zero expected family contribution.
2. Pell Grant recipients with an expected family contribution that is higher than zero.

The current federal measure of graduation rate is 150 percent of the normal time of completion of the academic program for first time, full-time students. This measure does not capture the whole story of graduation rates for the nation's college students. Risk factors, most often related to income, determine rates at which students complete a degree.

3. Federal subsidized loan recipients who are not eligible for Pell.
4. Students who do not receive any federal aid or who receive only unsubsidized loans.

Accreditation

- Require public disclosure and dissemination of findings from final accreditation reports.
- Encourage the six regional accrediting associations to clearly define and broadly communicate their expectations for assessing and reporting student learning.

Transfer of Credit

- Oppose the direct involvement of the federal government in regulating inter-institutional academic practices such as the transfer of credit. Academic matters are most appropriately handled through the collaborative efforts of accreditors and statewide, system, and institutional boards.

Fraud and Abuse in Federal Student Financial Aid Programs

90/10 Rule

- Support the strengthening of current law that requires for-profit institutions of higher education to have a diverse revenue stream that includes 10 percent or more of their revenue from sources other than from the federal government's student financial aid programs to ensure the integrity of taxpayer dollars.
- Oppose any efforts to weaken regulations of an institution of higher education's financial viability for participation in the Title IV student financial aid programs.

Definition of Institution of Higher Education

- The federal government should maintain two separate definitions of higher education, as defined in current law, that recognize the different missions and roles of not-for-profit and for-profit higher education institutions.

Cohort Default Rates

- Support the Department of Education Inspector General's 2003 recommendations on Cohort Default Rates, which provide a more accurate measure of CDRs. Such a change would:

Cohort Default Rates (CDRs) on student loans have declined in recent years. However, the decline has been fueled by the misuse of the current CDR formula, which is used to determine eligibility for participation in Title IV programs.

- Ensure more accurate data collection so that a priority is made to place student borrowers into appropriate repayment programs to avoid costly and unnecessary student loan defaults.
- Ensure institutions of higher education are acting in good faith to determine appropriate levels of student debt financing to pay for college.

Academic Freedom

- Oppose federal legislation that restricts academic freedom on college campuses.

Campus Safety, Security and Emergency Preparedness

- Support federal, state, and institutional partnerships that enhance campus safety and security, rather than onerous and expensive mandates from the federal government.
- Support consumer information about campus safety, security, and preparedness.

State Role in College Accountability— AASCU Policy Statements

Accountability for Student Outcomes

- Oppose federal mandates to report student learning outcomes. Support voluntary efforts in regards to the reporting of student learning outcomes.
- Recognize state contributions of the new Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA), a joint initiative between AASCU and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC), which will provide greater transparency of student demographic information, core educational outcomes, and student engagement.

Improved Student and Institutional Data

- Support state efforts to work with the higher education community and the federal government to expand and improve institutional graduation rate measures and reporting to better reflect the diversity of institutions, changing demographics, and increasingly complex attendance patterns.

Support the development of enhanced data systems to inform educators and policymakers on strategies for improving student retention and college completion. The implementation of statewide or multi-state consortiums for tracking student performance of transfer students will inform these efforts. AASCU applauds state efforts such as the “Access to Success” initiative by 19 public systems of higher education to promote college attendance and college success rates among low-income and underrepresented minority students.

Upholding Ethical Standards

- Promote collaborative efforts with states to ensure that appropriate policies are in place that promote ethical behavior, that ensure appropriate transparency and accountability for institutional transactions, and that seek to prevent conflicts of interest that may arise between institutions and third party vendors.

Public Safety, Emergency Preparedness, and Disaster Response

- Support state-coordinated efforts to respond to natural disasters or other emergencies such as pandemic flu. AASCU is appreciative of state efforts to assist universities in ensuring that adequate and appropriate measures and policies are in place to respond in the event of an emergency.
- Encourage institutions to partner in state-coordinated emergency preparedness and response efforts.

Governing Board Selection, Preparation, and Institutional Relations

- AASCU endorses the selection/appointment criteria put forward by the Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis: commitment to public education; record of public or community service; knowledge of complex organizations and academic institutions; demonstrated collaborative leadership; willingness and availability for constructive engagement; commitment to open-minded, non-partisan decision-making; and a record of integrity and civic virtue.
- Encourage the formation and maintenance of appropriate and constructive relationships between institutions, their governing and coordinating entities, and states' elected leaders. The terms of these relationships must be absolutely clear. AASCU opposes changes in these relationships that muddle or politicize the decision-making process or compromise the autonomy or integrity of institutions.

- AASCU endorses the Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities' statement *Governing in the Public Trust: External Influences on Colleges and Universities* as a constructive articulation of the roles and responsibilities of those charged with governing the nation's higher education institutions.

Academic Bill of Rights

- Oppose federal and state legislation mandating intellectual diversity or faculty quotas on campus.

Competitiveness

Public colleges and universities play a central role in expanding the nation's human capital and boosting our competitive advantage in today's global marketplace. This is accomplished, in part, by providing quality preparation for the majority of the nation's K-12 teachers. It is also accomplished by producing graduates in a variety of fields who have the knowledge and skills needed to meet the needs of business, nonprofit, and public sector employers. This includes health care workers, scientists and engineers, business leaders, and others essential to the nation's economy.

AASCU believes that the federal government must play an essential role in supporting institutional efforts to meet national and state workforce needs. The federal government can provide incentives for individuals to enter high-demand fields and to work in hard-to-staff areas, support scientific research and education, and streamline efforts to attract international talent. State governments, as well, can support institutional efforts to educate teachers, health care workers, scientists and engineers, and others. The nation's economic competitiveness, security, and prosperity depend in large measure on how well the nation's colleges prepare citizens for a knowledge-based economy.

Competitiveness Priorities

Teacher Education

- ◆ Require that federally-funded partnership programs between institutions of higher education and K-12 schools include a comprehensive focus on teacher induction, mentoring, and professional development.
- ◆ Target the limited federal funds available to support linkages between teacher preparation programs and the needs of our nation's K-12 system, such as preparing teachers to teach in high-need, hard-to-staff schools, and in high-need subjects.
- ◆ Provide federal funding to increase the number of educators from underrepresented and nontraditional teaching populations through centers of excellence based at institutions of higher education.
- ◆ Support service-payback models to recruit students who agree to teach in targeted school districts, especially schools that are difficult to staff or where salaries are often not comparable to those of more affluent school districts.
- ◆ Support efforts to align Title II of the Higher Education Act and Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to strengthen recruitment, pre-service preparation, induction, and in-service professional development of teachers, principals, and other K-12 school leaders.
- ◆ Recognize the contributions of each sector of higher education in the strengthening of STEM fields and research.
- ◆ Ask the Government Accountability Office to explore how federal aid policy could be improved to encourage more students to enter critical need occupations, for example, by exploring how various loan repayment options or counseling/consumer information might influence occupational choice. Explore specifically how the Pell Grant program has enabled America's neediest students to pursue higher education across the employment spectrum, including fields critical to the nation's economy and security, rather than being tracked into a narrow range of occupations required by more specific federal workforce and job training programs.

Federal Role in College Competitiveness— AASCU Policy Statements

Teacher Preparation and Development

Title II of the Higher Education Act: Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants

- Require that federally-funded partnership programs between institutions of higher education and K-12 schools include a comprehensive focus on teacher induction, mentoring, and professional development.
- Support the strengthening of high quality clinical experiences in all traditional teacher preparation programs and require that all federally funded alternative teacher preparation programs include high quality clinical experiences.
- Support efforts to align Title II of the Higher Education Act and Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to include pre-service preparation, recruitment, and professional development of principals and other K-12 school leaders.
- Target the limited federal funds available to support linkages between teacher preparation programs and the needs of our nation's K-12 system, such as preparing teachers to teach in high-need, hard-to-staff schools, and in high-need subjects.

In 2005–2006, AASCU member institutions awarded over 55,000 bachelor's degrees in education, almost half of those awarded nationwide.

AASCU has a long history of commitment to teacher preparation, development, and support. In recent years, there has been growing consensus about the importance of teacher quality, as well as growing evidence that teacher quality is the most significant factor that affects student learning. AASCU therefore remains deeply committed to the development of a highly qualified teaching force as essential to achieving a more competent, competitive workforce.

AASCU's involvement with teacher preparation policy at the federal level focuses on Title II in both the Higher Education Act (HEA) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

- Oppose requiring states to use funds awarded pursuant to Title II in the Higher Education Act for reforming teacher licensure requirements or for developing policies related to merit pay, teacher advancement, or teacher removal. These issues are more appropriately addressed in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

Federal/State Partnerships to Ensure Teacher Quality

- Provide resources to states to improve the quality of teacher preparation program approval requirements and develop and implement a voluntary process for evaluating the influence that teacher preparation programs have on student learning.
- Oppose federal legislation that infringes on state authority in the regulation of teacher preparation programs.

Accountability of Teacher Preparation Programs

- Provide federal funds for research and evaluation of teacher preparation programs in order to inform and improve them.
- Require the reporting of state-established scaled scores to the public and oppose reporting of raw scores to the public since they can be misleading. Collect raw scores for research and analysis purposes only.

When a single teacher education program tries to gather data to assess the impact of its graduates on K-12 student achievement, it takes extraordinary time and effort. When the state takes up the study of all its programs, in partnership with institutions, there is an economy of scale.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategies

- Provide federal funding to increase the number of educators from underrepresented and nontraditional teaching populations through centers of excellence based at institutions of higher education.

Every \$1.00 spent on high quality teacher induction programs provides a return on investment of \$1.66 after five years. The return on investment is primarily a result of enhanced student learning and reduced teacher turnover costs.

- Support service-payback models to recruit students who agree to teach in targeted school districts, especially schools that are difficult to staff or where salaries are often not comparable to those of more affluent school districts.
- Support loan forgiveness for teachers who work in high-need schools or teach in high-need subject areas.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind

- Boost appropriations to assist states in meeting the teacher quality requirements set forth under the No Child Left Behind Act.
- Support efforts to align Title II of the Higher Education Act and Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to strengthen recruitment, pre-service preparation, induction, and in-service professional development of teachers, principals, and other K-12 school leaders.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education

- Create incentives for partnerships among institutions and states to strengthen traditional and nontraditional pathways for qualified candidates to teach in STEM fields.

There are shortages of qualified P-12 classroom teachers and a weak pipeline of students prepared in the STEM fields.

AASCU will advocate, in collaboration with associations, government entities and universities, to develop a strategy that addresses the national shortage of STEM teachers.
- Boost appropriations to support training, placement, and retention of STEM teachers in areas of greatest need and to encourage federal incentives to improve their compensation.
- Expand funding for research initiatives for the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health and other agencies that support institutional research efforts.

Economic and Workforce Development

Critical Workforce Needs

- Ask the Government Accountability Office to explore how federal aid policy could be improved to encourage more students to enter critical need occupations, for example, by exploring how various loan repayment options or counseling/consumer information might influence occupational choice. Explore specifically how the Pell Grant program has enabled America's neediest students to pursue higher education across the employment spectrum, including fields critical to the nation's economy and security, rather than being tracked into a narrow range of occupations required by more specific federal workforce and job training programs.
- The majority of undergraduate students who receive Pell Grants enter fields of study essential to national and state workforce needs, including 20 percent majoring in health-related fields, 18 percent business, 9 percent education, 6 percent computer/information science, 6 percent math and science, and 5 percent engineering, according to Department of Education research.

Rural Colleges

- Establish federal grant opportunities through new legislation that encourage partnerships between rural colleges and universities and local entities that promote greater access to college for rural high school students, grow the number of adults in rural communities with a bachelor's degree or higher, enhance training, stimulate technological innovation, improve the quality of life, and contribute to meeting and growing the workforce demands of the regional economies.

Workforce Investment Act (WIA)

- Advocate for amendments to WIA that more fully include and recognize the role of four-year colleges and universities in workforce education and that include state college and university leaders in planning and decision-making processes for state utilization of federal WIA funds.

- Support the appropriate use of Pell Grants to provide educational assistance to workforce program participants.

International Education

Study Abroad

- Support and remove any barriers to the open exchange of scholars between all nations and oppose limitations on student study abroad, except in instances of personal health and security issues.
- Boost appropriations for international programs managed by the Department of Education: Title VI of the Higher Education Act: International Education Programs, Fulbright-Hays, and the Institute for International Public Policy.
- Implement and fully fund the Lincoln Commission recommendations as enacted in legislation to establish a national study abroad program, particularly those from underrepresented institutions and populations.

Immigration and Visa Control of Foreign Students

- Relieve the H-1B visa and EB green card problems.
- Protect provisions under current law that permit exemptions from the annual visa cap on H-1B visas for the academic community.
- Support changes in legislation that would raise the current limitation on new visas per year imposed on employers from the business community.
- Support the use of the biometric technology employed by US VISIT, making it simpler for legitimate foreign students and faculty to enter the country.
- Streamline the visa process for students, faculty, and administrators.
- Simplify federal regulations that hinder the successful development of international programs or severely restrict the access of foreign students to American institutions.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)

STEM Research and Workforce Preparation

- Recognize the contributions of each sector of higher education in the strengthening of STEM fields—the resources of the entire community must be tapped when creating, funding, and implementing STEM programs that educate future scientists, engineers and mathematicians, and that create research opportunities for students studying in the STEM fields.
 - Degree production at both the undergraduate and graduate levels must continue to rise in order for the United States to maintain a technological competitive advantage.
 - AASCU institutions play a central role in producing graduates with bachelor's and master's degrees and serve as the primary access to doctoral degrees. In 2005–2006, according to the most recent IPEDS data, AASCU institutions awarded approximately 33 percent of bachelor's degrees in the United States in mathematics and statistics, 27 percent of bachelor's degrees in computer and information sciences, and 21 percent of bachelor's degrees in engineering.
- Support and improve basic and applied scientific research and education activities for undergraduate programs in order to complement established graduate and research programming.
- Strengthen the pipeline for those who have been traditionally underrepresented in STEM fields, such as students of color, low-income students, and women.

State Role in College Competitiveness— AASCU Policy Statements

Higher Education's Role in Statewide Economic Development Initiatives

- Urge states to include the higher education community as an essential partner in statewide economic planning and policy discussions.
- Call for state policies and programs that promote the role of higher education, including four-year institutions, in the development of the human capital essential to advancing state and local economic development and meeting workforce needs.

Preparing, Developing, and Retaining a Quality Teacher Workforce

- Support state efforts to establish and implement rigorous standards of learning for students in teacher preparation programs. These standards should address both specific content area comprehension and knowledge of appropriate methods of instruction and should be used to promote public accountability.
- Encourage states to develop comprehensive teacher workforce strategies that address teacher quality, recruitment, distribution, and retention. These strategies might include:
 - Strengthened teacher preparation, induction and mentoring, and professional development programs.
 - Efforts to increase the number of educators from underrepresented and nontraditional teaching groups.
 - Increased coordination between two-year and four-year colleges to facilitate seamless transfer of teacher preparation students.
 - Financial incentives, including increased salaries and pay for performance.

- Alternative certification programs aimed at high-need areas with assurance that these programs have sufficient rigor.
- Intensified recruitment efforts and partnerships between teacher preparation programs and school districts.
- Increased professionalism and improved working conditions (enhanced license reciprocity and pension portability, opportunities for advancement, reduced teaching loads and extra support in hard-to-staff schools).
- Comprehensive teacher data systems and research on program effectiveness.

State Investment in Capital Outlay and Infrastructure Maintenance Needs

- Urge states to make a greater commitment to the infrastructure and facility needs of their public colleges and universities in order to recruit and retain students and faculty and to fully deliver on their missions.

Ensuring Sufficient Staffing in the Health Care Professions

- Support state efforts to incentivize and facilitate attendance at state colleges and universities for students who seek training in high demand health care professions, such as nursing, through loan forgiveness programs.

Enhanced Preparedness for STEM Occupations

- Support state initiatives designed to prepare students' interest in and training for careers that involve STEM disciplines, both at the K-12 and post-secondary levels.

Stimulating Economic Development through Applied Research and its Commercialization

- Encourage states to create policies and programs and to provide resources that encourage campus-based applied research and that facilitate the transfer of university-borne technologies to the marketplace.

Attracting and Retaining Talent Capacity

- Support state efforts to provide resources and policies that serve to attract and retain diverse and highly capable postsecondary workforce talent, such as through the use of progressive benefits packages.

TANF—State Flexibility

- AASCU supports the position of the National Conference of State Legislatures that expresses the need for state flexibility and adequate federal resources to ensure that implementation of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) provisions are successful.

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Delivering America's Promise

AASCU's membership of 430 public colleges and universities is found throughout the United States and in Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. We range in size from 1,000 students to 44,000. We are found in the inner city, in suburbs, towns and cities, and in remote rural America. We include campuses with extensive offerings in law, medicine and doctoral education—as well as campuses offering associate degrees to complement baccalaureate studies. We are both residential and commuter, and with on-line degrees as well. Yet common to virtually every member institution are three qualities that define its work and characterize our common commitments.

- We are institutions of access and opportunity. We believe that the American promise should be real for all Americans, and that belief shapes our commitment to access, affordability and educational opportunity, and in the process strengthens American democracy for all citizens.
- We are student-centered institutions. We place the student at the heart of our enterprise, enhancing the learning environment and student achievement not only through teaching and advising, but through our research and public service activities.
- We are “stewards of place.” We engage faculty, staff and students with the communities and regions we serve—helping to advance public education, economic development and the quality of life for all with whom we live and who support our work. We affirm that America's promise extends not only to those who come to the campus but to all our neighbors.

We believe that through this stewardship and through our commitments to access and opportunity and to our students, public colleges and universities effectively and accountably deliver America's promise. In so doing we honor and fulfill the public trust.



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