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## **New Nonprofit Organization Sets Out to Change the Conversation Around Higher Education**

*Higher Learning Advocates aims to shift federal policy to fit the needs of today's students*

Washington, D.C (March 15, 2017)— The nation is at a critical juncture for higher education and workforce reform; students need education more than ever before and are accessing learning in a variety of ways. At the same time, the nation's policies do not match the reality on the ground. Higher Learning Advocates, a new nonprofit organization based in Washington, DC, is focused on addressing the needs of and ensuring outcomes for today's students and the workforce.

Higher Learning Advocates, which opens its doors today, seeks to increase postsecondary attainment, and support policies that are student-centered, equitable, outcomes-based, and focused on educational quality. This bipartisan group will work across the political aisle and with a broad array of stakeholders to promote policies that address the postsecondary needs of all of today's students through advocacy, communications, and policy research and education.

Julie Peller will serve as the organization's Executive Director. Peller brings a deep background in federal postsecondary education policy, federal budgeting, and professional management to the organization. Peller has served in a variety of roles related to postsecondary federal policy, including in philanthropy and on Capitol Hill, where she was intimately involved with significant changes to the Higher Education Act, the federal student aid programs, and other higher education issues.

"Higher Learning Advocates is filling an important and unaddressed gap in the policy landscape," said Julie Peller, executive director, Higher Learning Advocates. "Our focus is solely on reforming our nation's federal policies to improve outcomes for today's learners. We are bipartisan, strategically minded, and are eager to roll our sleeves up and tackle these important and timely issues."

Higher Learning Advocates' board of directors includes leaders in higher education with diverse backgrounds and experiences. The Board of Directors will include:

- Hon. Margaret Spellings, President, University of North Carolina
- Rep. George Miller, Senior Education Advisor, Cengage
- Gov. John Engler, Retired President, the Business Roundtable
- Dr. Chris Bustamante, President, Rio Salado College and Maricopa Corporate College
- Dr. Dewayne Matthews, Fellow, Lumina Foundation
- Dr. Kim Hunter Reed, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Higher Education
- Ms. Teresa Lubbers, Commissioner, Indiana Commission for Higher Education

“In a global knowledge economy, we are required to help many more people – particularly people of color and those from first-generation, rural, and low-income backgrounds – to achieve at much higher levels,” said Margaret Spellings. “And we need federal policies that create and support pathways to success, foster innovation, empower students, and improve outcomes. Opportunity is not a zero-sum game — we all benefit when more students have the chance to succeed in a growing economy, and we all gain from a more educated citizenry that better reflects the changing face of our nation.”

Achieving a high quality and equitable system of higher learning requires stakeholders, including policymakers, to focus programs and policies on the student. Higher Learning Advocates will address the issues of today’s students through coalitions, communications, policy development, and most importantly by thinking about policies through the sole lens of increasing student attainment.

In 2016, Higher Learning Advocates received a grant from Lumina Foundation to support the startup and initial operations of the organization. Additional support from other philanthropic foundations and individuals is actively being sought to broaden and diversify the organization’s long-term support and support specific projects and activities.

To learn more, please visit: [www.higherlearningadvocates.org](http://www.higherlearningadvocates.org).

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### **About Higher Learning Advocates**

Higher Learning Advocates is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C. We support a system of higher learning that is student-centered, equitable, outcomes-based, and focused on educational quality by advocating for policies that: are based on student outcomes, make postsecondary education and student aid work for today’s students, and ensure access and affordability. We are bipartisan, strategically minded, and focused on improving postsecondary access and success for all students.