

Today's students are more diverse in age, race, and income level than any previous generation of college students. Work and family responsibilities beyond the classroom often compete with students' educational goals. Federal policies and financial aid programs must be redesigned to work better for today's students and their realities. In our Policy Toolkit 3.0, Higher Learning Advocates identifies barriers that exist to student success and proposes federal policy changes that will better serve students of all backgrounds.

Student Supports



UTILIZE EMERGENCY AID TO INCREASE COLLEGE COMPLETION

Emergency aid is direct monetary support to students meant to help them deal with unexpected costs that arise during their education. Congress should create a permanent program to provide grants to institutions to fund emergency aid programs, which would ensure that students are not derailed from pursuing higher learning because of unexpected financial hardships.



ADDRESS FOOD INSECURITY FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

Congress temporarily made SNAP accessible for low-income college students who are enrolled at least half-time during the COVID-19 emergency. As the pandemic continues, Congress should permanently expand SNAP eligibility.



EXPAND ACCESS TO FOSTER OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES ADOPTION

Congress should boost appropriations for the Open Textbooks Pilot program at the Department of Education (ED) to help institutions develop and

utilize open educational resources so students can better access educational materials needed to succeed in postsecondary education.



IMPROVE ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR TODAY'S STUDENTS

Congress should increase appropriations to the Garrett Lee Smith Grant program, a grant program for institutions of higher education to prevent suicide and bolster mental health and substance use disorder services on campus.



EXPAND BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY FOR TODAY'S STUDENTS IN COLLEGE

Congress should enact permanent funding for the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB), which provides a monthly subsidy to eligible households, including Pell Grant recipients, to pay for broadband services and connected devices.

Returning Adult Students



ALLOW RETURNING STUDENTS TO RESET THEIR SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS (SAP)

Congress should amend the Higher Education Act to reset SAP for students who have not been enrolled in any postsecondary education in the prior two years. To remain eligible after such a reset, students should be required to prospectively maintain a 2.0 GPA and make reasonable progress towards completing their program.



EXPAND PELL GRANT ELIGIBILITY FOR SHORT-TERM PROGRAMS

Congress should amend the Higher Education Act to allow today's students to use the Pell Grant for high-quality short-term programs that are more than 300 hours and lead to an industry recognized postsecondary credential. Broadening what types of programs federal student aid can be used for will allow more students to pursue higher learning, complete their postsecondary degree or credential, and begin or continue their career.



ALLOW FOR A PELL LIFETIME ELIGIBILITY USAGE (LEU) RESET FOR ADULT STUDENTS

Congress should amend the Higher Education Act to reset Pell LEU for students who have reached the maximum amount of Pell Grants, already hold a degree or credential, and have been employed in the workforce for the majority of the past ten years. A student who receives a Pell LEU reset would only remain eligible for Pell Grants for a maximum of four additional semesters' or their equivalent.



CREATE A DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM TO GIVE STUDENTS ACCESS TO NEW HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION FORMATS

The Department of Education should create a multiple pathways demonstration program, which would allow education programs that are currently not eligible for Title IV aid to apply through quality assurance entities (QAEs) for Title IV approval. Such programs would have to demonstrate that they offer transparent and high-quality outcomes, ensure equitable access, are financially sustainable, and result in a credential that leads to employment or further education in order to receive approval.



MEET TODAY'S STUDENTS' TIME AND LEARNING NEEDS THROUGH COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION

The Department of Education should create a demonstration program to allow students to use federal financial aid for a greater variety of CBE programs. The demonstration program would expand on the preexisting experimental site by allowing qualified, high-quality CBE programs to apply for waivers to allow students access federal financial aid to cover the costs of the program, but only if the programs demonstrate quality and strong outcomes for students.



RECOGNIZE EXISTING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS THROUGH PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENTS

Congress should create a path to help more students access prior learning assessments by allowing students to use federal student aid or reimbursement to cover the cost of PLAs. This would decrease costs for both students and taxpayers while improving student outcomes and affordability.

Student Parents



INCENTIVIZE PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN INSTITUTIONS AND LOCAL CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

The Department of Education (ED) and Congress should allow institutions of higher education to set aside a portion of funds under the Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant (SEOG) program and the Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP) to form relationships to provide care—such as emergency or drop-in care—for student parents through local child care and Head Start providers.



CONTINUE TO EXPAND FUNDING FOR THE CHILD CARE ACCESS MEANS PARENTS IN SCHOOL (CCAMPIS) PROGRAM

Congress should increase CCAMPIS funding to \$500 million annually in order to provide child care support to student parents who are eligible for the Pell Grant. CCAMPIS funding must increase to a similar amount to best serve today's student parents.



ENHANCE THE CHILD AND DEPENDENT CARE TAX CREDIT TO ALLOW ADULTS TO FURTHER THEIR EDUCATION

Congress should allow part-time students with a qualifying dependent under the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit to claim the tax credit for expenses while the taxpayer is attending postsecondary education and make the credit fully refundable. Congress approved making the CDCTC temporarily fully refundable in 2021; making this a permanent benefit and extending it to student parents would put thousands of dollars in the pockets of families to help offset the cost of child and dependent care.

Quality and Accountability



CREATE A NATIONAL STUDENT-LEVEL DATA NETWORK

Congress should create a national student-level data network within the National Center for Educational Statistics using strong security standards and data governance protocols to protect student privacy. This data should be leveraged to provide transparent student outcome data on the National College Scorecard and should be disaggregated by student race and income level.



MODERNIZE ACCREDITATION AND REFOCUS ON OUTCOMES

Congress should raise the bar for student outcomes and focus accreditors on graduation rates, default rates, and loan repayment. Accreditors should also be required to perform differentiated, risk-based reviews, make the accreditation process more transparent, and help institutions respond to changing local workforce needs.



MODERNIZE ACCOUNTABILITY METRICS TO PROTECT STUDENT OUTCOMES

The Department of Education should couple the cohort default rate with a program-level repayment rate which would ensure that a program at an institution must have a repayment rate above 35 percent to remain eligible for federal student aid.