



April 13, 2007

Chairman Edward Kennedy  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
644 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Michael Enzi  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
835 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kennedy and Ranking Member Enzi:

On behalf of over 100,000 bipartisan members and 1,300 branches of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), we respectfully submit the following priorities as you work toward reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. Since its founding in 1881, AAUW has been committed to making the dream of a higher education a reality for women. AAUW believes that the most important goal of HEA reauthorization should be updating the bill to reflect the needs of the modern college student.

With changes in the workforce over the last 125 years, higher education is becoming less of a luxury and more of a necessity. By the year 2014, it is estimated that there will be 12 million new jobs where postsecondary education will most likely be necessary.<sup>1</sup> As the skill requirements of jobs continue to increase, so too should access to postsecondary education for all students.

AAUW believes ensuring and increasing access to higher education is imperative to helping women obtain financial security and economic independence. AAUW places particular importance on access to higher education for nontraditional students, ensuring students can stay in school to complete a degree, increasing financial aid, and improving opportunities for women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields.

### **The New Norm: Nontraditional Students**

Nontraditional students—students who are part-time, working, older, or parenting—face unique challenges as they seek to finance a college education. During the 1999-2000 school year, nearly 73 percent of undergraduates were considered “nontraditional,” meaning they are older, they may work, or attend school part-time.<sup>2</sup> In light of the increasing number of nontraditional and parenting students—the majority of whom are women<sup>3</sup>—legislation must create programs that help these students enter college, stay in college, and earn a degree.

In contrast to traditional students, nontraditional students also face challenges as a result of the responsibilities which tax their time and financial resources. While early intervention and support programs currently exist for at-risk, traditionally-aged students, there are no stand-alone federal programs to assist nontraditional students, including pregnant and parenting students, in attending postsecondary education. AAUW believes funding for programs to provide guidance, mentoring, and support services for adults re-entering college—or who need assistance in finding a postsecondary program that fits their needs—should be established.

**Childcare Funding (CCAMPIS Program):** AAUW supports expanding access to support services which help women balance the demands of work, family, and education. Parenting students face serious problems securing convenient and affordable child care, which often becomes a barrier to higher education. Providing quality, campus-based child care will allow thousands of women to pursue a postsecondary education and succeed in that endeavor. Studies show that student parents with children have higher grade point averages, graduate in fewer years, and demonstrate greater persistence when their children are cared for in campus-based child care centers.<sup>4</sup> In 1998, Congress recognized the importance of child care as a support service for parenting students, and authorized the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program through HEA, which provides funds to schools for campus-based child care and after-school programming, primarily to serve the needs of low-income students. AAUW believes campus child care programs should be a top priority for higher education funding; unfortunately, appropriations for this program have dropped in recent years. AAUW also believes HEA should provide incentives for schools to operate CCAMPIS programs at night and on weekends, when many nontraditional and parenting students take classes.

**Year-round Pell Grants:** AAUW supports allowing students to qualify for Pell grants based on a year-round enrollment schedule. Many nontraditional students attend classes during the summers, and Pell grants should be available to these students.

**Federal Loans for Part-Time Students:** Many nontraditional students only have the opportunity to return to school one class at a time.<sup>5</sup> AAUW believes such students should have access to financial aid while ensuring that the integrity of the federal aid programs is maintained. While Pell grants are available to students who attend school less than part-time, most loan programs require students to be enrolled at either the part-time or full-time level. AAUW believes federal student loans should be available to all students willing to make a commitment to higher education, even if they have to chip away at the dream of a college degree one class at a time. Creating night and weekend programs would put a postsecondary education within the reach of more nontraditional students.

## **Preparing Students to Succeed in Higher Education**

Two of the major determinants of whether or not a student will attend college are encouragement and preparation. However, many guidance counselors are not trained to handle the full range of student needs, including college preparation, and are often overburdened and under resourced. AAUW believes programs that train guidance counselors to encourage and prepare students and their families for the realities and rigors of college should be established within elementary and secondary schools and colleges and universities.

## **Improving Student Aid (Title IV)**

Over 6,600 colleges and universities participate in student aid programs funded by HEA, which provide approximately 63 percent of all federal, state, and institutional aid given to students for 2004-2005.<sup>6</sup> The largest program under Title IV of HEA, the section that pertains to student aid, is the Pell grant program. Pell grants were originally intended to serve as the foundation for all financial aid. While the program services over one-quarter of all undergraduates per year,<sup>7</sup> the maximum grant amount was funded in fiscal year 2006 at \$4,050 (even though the FY 2006 program was authorized for a maximum grant amount of \$5,800). The FY 2007 budget, which passed through a continuing resolution in February 2007, included an increase in Pell grants for the first time in four years. The measure (H. J. Res. 20) included \$13.6 billion for the program, an increase of \$615.4 million that will increase the maximum Pell grant per student by \$260 to \$4,310.

**Funding of Pell Grants:** The purchasing power of the Pell grant has declined substantially. Today, the maximum Pell grant covers only 33 percent of the total cost at a public 4-year institution, versus 55 percent of those costs 20 years ago.<sup>8</sup> This is particularly disturbing given that the Pell grant program was designed to aid low-income students and their families achieve their college dreams. In 2004-2005, a third of all Pell grant recipients classified as independent (for tax purposes), made less than \$10,000 per year, and over 60 percent had incomes below \$20,000.<sup>9</sup> To update the Pell grant program, AAUW supports increasing the maximum award level to \$5,100 and advocates mandatory appropriations to provide the increased resources for the program.

**Income Protection Allowance:** AAUW supports a reduction of the “work penalty”—or income protection allowance—and encourages Congress to allow single, financially independent students to keep more of their income when determining eligibility for financial aid. Every year, 400,000 college-qualified students enroll in community college instead of going to a four-year institution, and 200,000 students do not enroll in college at all, because of financial barriers.<sup>10</sup> Because many nontraditional students must work full-time to support their families, even a very modest income can mean they make too much money to qualify for a significant financial aid package. The income protection allowance does not reflect

the actual cost of living for independent or parenting students. Raising the allowance permits students to work without that income counting against their financial aid package. Congress should not punish students who work hard, support their families, and are trying to increase their skills and climb the career ladder. AAUW supports raising the income protection allowance to \$9,000 for dependent students and \$12,000 for independent students.<sup>11</sup> AAUW also believes that the cost of dependent care in student assistance calculations should be extended to graduate students.

### **The Rising Cost of College and Managing Debt**

Loan repayment is an even more significant burden for women, who earn less on average over the course of their lives than their male counterparts. According to AAUW research, in 2004, college-educated women 25 and older earned 75 percent of what their male peers earned.<sup>12</sup> This pay gap appears within the first year after college—even when women are working full-time in the same fields as men—and widens in the first ten years in the workforce. AAUW research points to several factors that appear to be pivotal including the field of study, the decision to have children, occupational choice, and discrimination.<sup>13</sup> Since women are more likely to borrow than men and they will make less on average after graduation, female graduates are more likely to struggle with their loan debt.<sup>14</sup>

There are several steps Congress can take to make loan repayment more manageable for students. First, give students the option of having their federal student loan payments capped at 15 percent of their monthly discretionary income, and forgive student loans after 25 years. Also, provide loan forgiveness for public sector employees after 10 years. Lastly, AAUW also supports increasing the allowable college tuition tax deduction from \$4,000 to \$12,000, and converting the existing student loan tax deduction into a tax credit.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, AAUW supports passage of the Student Debt Relief Act (S. 359) as a stand alone piece of legislation or incorporating this legislation into the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

No student wants to borrow more than is necessary to finance higher education, but when students need to borrow they should have access to loans that carry the most favorable terms and conditions. This means that some students need additional access to federal student loans, especially Subsidized Stafford Loans and Perkins Loans to avoid higher-rate, private bank loans. President George W. Bush has called for the elimination of the federal Perkins Loan program, which requires institutional matching funds and services low-income students. This program offered aid to approximately 673,000 students in 2004.<sup>16</sup> AAUW believes the Perkins Loan program is a crucial part of the total aid package for low-income students, and the program should be maintained and expanded. AAUW also supports increasing unsubsidized Stafford loan limits for graduate and professional students.

Access to affordable loan programs reduces students' reliance on private bank loans, which relieves the debt burden on students over the long term.

### **Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act**

The Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act requires co-educational college and universities that have intercollegiate athletics programs and participate in Title IV student aid programs to prepare an annual report on athletic participation, staffing, and revenues and expenses, by men's and women's teams.<sup>17</sup> This report is submitted to the U.S. Department of Education, which uses this information in preparing its required report to the Congress on gender equity in intercollegiate athletics.<sup>18</sup> AAUW believes this Act, which is part of HEA, should be continued. This information is crucial for monitoring compliance with Title IX, and improving women's opportunities in collegiate athletics.

### **Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Education** **Girls in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Education**

AAUW supports promoting and strengthening science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, especially for women and other underrepresented populations in the fields. By 2010, one in four new jobs will be "technically oriented," or involve computers. However, women still lag far behind in earning computer technology degrees and working in computer technology-related professions. High school girls represent only 16 percent of computer science AP test takers<sup>19</sup> and college-educated women earn only 29.1 percent of bachelor's degrees in mathematics and computer science (down from 39.3 percent in 1984) and 24.7 percent of doctorate degrees in mathematics and computer science.<sup>20</sup> Overall, women comprise roughly 27 percent of computer and mathematical professionals.<sup>21</sup> AAUW supports the following efforts to improve women's achievement in math and science and increase the number of women who choose careers in STEM fields.

**Fulfill the Need for More STEM Teachers:** There is currently a shortage of highly-qualified teachers and an even larger shortage of highly-qualified math and science teachers. Therefore, AAUW supports passing the 10,000 Teachers, 10 Million Minds Science and Math Scholarship Act (H.R. 362), or education provisions in the America Competes Act (S.761), as a stand alone piece of legislation or incorporating this legislation into the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. This measure will have a great impact on teacher preparation by providing teachers with much-needed professional development and improve student achievements by strengthening math and science curriculum. In addition, the bill authorizes scholarships for students majoring in STEM fields who commit to teaching K-12 science or math. In order to build STEM subjects into all levels of curriculum, schools must have access to a qualified pool of teachers. AAUW

supports expanding innovative programs that improve teacher recruitment, training, and retention so that every child learns from a highly qualified teacher.

**Ask For a Report Responding to “Rising Above the Gathering Storm”:** The timely report, *Rising Above the Gathering Storm*, commissioned by Congress from the National Academies on Science, Engineering and Medicine, states that U.S. advantages in science and technology have begun to erode and discusses the need to improve math and science education. Unfortunately, the report largely ignores the issue of women in STEM fields. Congress should request a follow-up report on how to and what affect increasing the number of women in STEM fields would have on enabling the U.S. to remain a leader in the global marketplace. This will illustrate the important contributions women can make to the fields and put weight behind efforts to increase opportunities for women and girls.

**Expand SMART Grant Eligibility:** In the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress AAUW supported the addition of SMART grants. However, AAUW believes current regulations do not reflect the needs of nontraditional students, the majority of whom are women. As the regulations stand today, the SMART grant program denies help to students who are part-time, often as a result of work or family responsibilities they must fulfill while they pursue higher education. Therefore, AAUW believes part-time students who are otherwise eligible should be able to receive SMART grants. In addition, students who receive SMART grants, and are therefore Pell grant eligible, should be able to receive both SMART grants and Pell grants.

### **Diversifying the Professoriate: Patsy Mink Graduate Fellowship Program**

Minorities make up less than 20 percent of all collegiate faculty.<sup>22</sup> Further, although women make up 39 percent of full-time collegiate faculty, they tend to be concentrated in less-senior instructional positions and at two-year institutions, as opposed to research universities.<sup>23</sup> AAUW, together with the United Negro College Fund, recommends a new program be established under HEA. This program would authorize fellowships for doctoral and terminal master’s degree study for students interested in obtaining a doctorate, or other terminal degree, with a specified service requirement to teach at degree-granting institutions of higher education after graduation. Appropriately named in honor of former Congresswoman Patsy Mink (D-HI), a primary force behind the passage of Title IX, the fellowships would be targeted at minorities and women to help diversify the higher education professoriate. The Mink Graduate Fellowship Program was one of just a few new programs included in the Senate HELP Committee-passed HEA legislation during the 109th Congress.

### **Hate Crimes on Campus**

Every year, more than half a million students endure bias-motivated slurs, vandalism, threats, and physical assaults on college campuses.<sup>24</sup> The FBI typically

documents almost 10,000 hate crimes every year, and other estimates range as high as 200,000.<sup>25</sup> To increase awareness of hate crimes on college campuses, the 1998 Higher Education Act required all colleges and universities to collect and report hate crime statistics to the Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE) of the U.S. Department of Education. Currently, colleges must report any crimes involving bodily injury in which the victim was targeted because of his or her race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or disability. However, there are limitations to the data gathered under HEA, which likely result from discrepancies between the FBI definition of hate crimes and the HEA definition. The FBI definition includes several types of offenses omitted by the HEA definition. These include arson, larceny/theft, intimidation, and destruction/ damage/vandalism.<sup>26</sup> The omission of these crimes result in significant gaps in OPE data and substantial inconsistencies between FBI and OPE statistics. Improved data would give parents and students a more accurate sense of campus safety, and education institutions a better picture of their campus climate. AAUW supports amending the HEA hate crime definition to align it with the definition used by the FBI.

Modernizing HEA programs offers a critical opportunity to make higher education an engine for workforce training and productivity. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that on average a worker's annual earnings will double with a college degree compared to a high school degree.<sup>27</sup> In addition to increasing personal earnings, a college degree has other economic and social benefits, including increased tax revenues, decreased reliance on public assistance programs, lower unemployment rates,<sup>28</sup> and increased voting, volunteering, and other civic activities.<sup>29</sup> In order to do this, however, emphasis must be placed on helping students shoulder the economic burden of college attendance costs. AAUW looks forward to working with members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions in order to modernize programs under HEA so that they reflect and meet the needs of today's student body. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 202-785-7720, or Tracy Sherman, government relations manager at 202-785-7730.

Sincerely,



Lisa M. Maatz  
Director, Public Policy and Government Relations

cc: Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

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- <sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. "Special Analysis 2002: Nontraditional Undergraduates." 2002. <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2002/analyses/nontraditional/> Accessed December 21, 2005.
- <sup>3</sup> Kerka, Sandra. "Financial Aid for Lifelong Learning." *ERIC Digest* No. 224. 2003.
- <sup>4</sup> National Campus Children's Centers. 2004 <http://www.campuschildren.org/policy/fact2004.html>
- <sup>5</sup> Most students attend less than half-time temporarily, and aid to those students may increase their ability to complete a degree program. "Initiative to Aid Illinois Adult Learners." 2001. Springfield, IL.
- <sup>6</sup> National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. "Facts for the Media." <http://www.nasfaa.org/Subhomes/MediaCenter/FactsForTheMedia.pdf>, as reported from The College Board, *Trends in Student Aid*, 2005, Table 1.
- <sup>7</sup> The College Board, *Trends in Student Aid*, 2006. p. 18
- <sup>8</sup> The College Board. *Trends in Student Aid*, 2006. p. 17.
- <sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Education. 2004-2005 Federal Pell Grant Program End-of-Year Report. <http://www.ed.gov/finaid/prof/resources/data/pell0405.pdf> Accessed December 14, 2006.
- <sup>10</sup> Non-attendance within two years of graduating from high school. Fitzgerald, Brian. Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance. *Empty Promises: The Myth of College Access in America*. New England Board of Higher Education. September 27, 2004. <http://www.coheao.org/resource/data/am2004/FitzgeraldCoheao12604.ppt#265,1,Empty>
- <sup>11</sup> As of May 2006, the Income Protection Allowance is \$3,000 for a dependent student, and for Independent students the amounts are \$6,050 if single or \$9,700 if married. <http://www.ifap.ed.gov/fregisters/attachments/FR05312006.pdf> Accessed January 18, 2007.
- <sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. 1993/2003 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study.
- <sup>13</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1993/2003 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study. Annual earnings for full-time college-educated woman in 2004 were \$31,223 compared to \$40,798 for college-educated men—a difference of \$9,575. Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States, 2005. U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Government Printing Office.
- <sup>14</sup> Price, Derek V. 2004. *Borrowing Inequality: Race, Class, and Student Loans*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner Publishers.
- <sup>15</sup> A tax credit is a direct reduction in tax liability, independent of tax bracket. For example, a \$1,815 tax credit lowers an individual's tax liability by \$1,815. A tax deduction is an adjustment to income, on which the individual is paying tax. A tax credit is better but is also more expensive.
- <sup>16</sup> American Council on Education. "Bush Budget Proposal Is a Mixed Blessing: More Money for Pell Grants, Increase in Student Loan Limits, Cuts in Pre-College Programs." February 10, 2005. <http://www.acenet.edu/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home&CONTENTID=3550&TEMPLATE=/C/M/ContentDisplay.cfm> Accessed December 18, 2006.
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- <sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of Education. <http://www.ed.gov/finaid/prof/resources/athletics/eada.html>. Accessed December 14, 2006.
- <sup>19</sup> The College Board. *AP Program Summary Report 2006*. [http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/repository/ap06\\_prog\\_summary\\_rpt.pdf](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/repository/ap06_prog_summary_rpt.pdf) Accessed January 17, 2007.
- <sup>20</sup> National Science Foundation, Division of Science Research Statistics. NSF 07-307. 2004 data. [http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/nsf07307/content.cfm?pub\\_id=3634&id=2](http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/nsf07307/content.cfm?pub_id=3634&id=2) Accessed January 17, 2007.
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<sup>22</sup> American Council on Education. *Minorities in Higher Education: 22nd Annual Status Report, 2006*.

<sup>23</sup> West, Martha S. and John W. Curtis. "AAUP Faculty Gender Equity Indicators 2006." American Association of University Professors. <http://www.aaup.org/NR/rdonlyres/63396944-44BE-4ABA-9815-5792D93856F1/0/AAUPGenderEquityIndicators2006.pdf> Accessed December 18, 2006.

<sup>24</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center. "10 Ways to Fight Hate on College Campuses." 2004. [www.tolerance.org/campus](http://www.tolerance.org/campus) December 14, 2006.

<sup>25</sup> Harlow, C.W. "Hate Crime Reported by Victims and Police." Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report. November 2005, NCJ 209911. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/hcrvp.pdf>. Accessed December 14, 2006.

<sup>26</sup> FBI. "Hate Crime Statistics 2005: Universal Crime Reporting." <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/hc2005/methodology.htm> Accessed December 14, 2006.

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/education/004214.html>. 2005.

<sup>28</sup> Institute for Higher Education Policy. "The Investment Payoff: A 50-State Analysis of the Public and Private Benefits of Higher Education." February 2005.

<sup>29</sup> Institute for Higher Education Policy. "The Investment Payoff: A 50-State Analysis of the Public and Private Benefits of Higher Education." February 2005.