Reauthorizing the Higher Education Act
The Higher Education Act of 1965, which is reauthorized by Congress every five years, expires at the end of 2013. So in preparation for the upcoming reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce issued a letter addressed to higher education stakeholders asking to provide the committee with feedback on important higher education issues. Specifically, the committee is interested in examining ways to:
  • Empower students as consumers in higher education,
  • Simplify and improve the student aid and loan programs,
  • Increase college accessibility, affordability, and completion,
  • Encourage institutions to reduce costs,
  • Promote innovation to improve access to and delivery of higher education, and
  • Balance the need for accountability with the burden of federal requirement.

The committee has asked that any ideas or suggestions for a successful reauthorization be submitted via email by August 2, 2013 to HEA.Reauth@mail.house.gov. They are also urging stakeholders to provide in their email background information, cite any statutory language or regulation, and to include a rationale for the suggested changes.

Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Grants (TAACCCTG)
On April 19, 2013 the Acting Secretary of Labor Seth D. Harris announced the availability of $474.5 million under the TAACCCTG program. These grants help to create and expand innovative partnerships between community colleges and businesses to educate students by developing skills employers need while attaining the necessary credential in high-demand fields of employment. The announcement was made at the RichmondBUILD facility, a Contra Costa College training site in Richmond, California. Contra Costa College is part of the "Design-It Build-It Ship-It" consortium of 10 community colleges in the East Bay area that was awarded $15 million in the second round of TAACCCTG. These funds are being used to support regional partnerships, build career pathways and enhance industry engagement in the advanced manufacturing, logistics and engineering industries. These latest grants will be the third installment of a $2 billion, four-year initiative and will focus on programs designed to meet local labor market needs. Each state will be guaranteed a minimum of 0.5% of the total funding, but institutions or consortiums that are interested in applying for additional funding should visit http://www.grants.gov for more information.

Workforce Preparation Public Hearings
The United States Department of Education will be holding three public hearings across the U.S. to speak with the higher education community on rules that would be designed to ensure colleges and universities are giving students a high-quality education that prepares them for the
workforce and lifelong success. The topics and questions to be addressed at the three hearings are as follows:

- **Cash management**: How institutions disburse federal student aid, how institutions invest and manage those funds, and other issues on this topic.
- **State authorization for distance education programs**: How to address the requirement that states authorize the institutions that provide distance education to its residents when an institution is not physically located in the state.
- **State authorization for foreign locations of domestic institutions**: How foreign locations of domestic institutions should be treated under the state authorization regulations since current rules do not specifically address foreign locations.
- **Clock to credit hour conversion**: Should regulations governing the conversion of clock hours in a program to credit hours be reviewed?
- **Gainful employment**: What are potential approaches to distinguish between successful and unsuccessful programs that seek to prepare students for gainful employment?
- **Campus safety and security reporting**: Developing regulations to implement the new requirements of the Violence Against Women Act.
- **Definition of “adverse credit” for the direct PLUS loan program**: The PLUS Loan program requires that applicants not have an adverse credit history to receive a loan. Should the definition of “adverse credit” be modified because it has not been changed since 1994?

One of the three hearings will be held on May 30, 2013 at the University of California, San Francisco, UC Hall, Toland Hall Auditorium (Room U142), 533 Parnassus Avenue in San Francisco from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. To register to speak at this public hearing, send an e-mail to: negreghearing@ed.gov. The e-mail should include the name of the presenter along with a general timeframe during which the individual would like to speak. For more information, visit: http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-announces-new-hearings-conversations-higher-education-r.

**Student Loan Interest Rate Bills**
Three bills have been introduced in the House and Senate in an attempt to address the impending July 1st interest rate increase from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent on subsidized Stafford loans. One of the bills by Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Richard J. Durbin (D-IL) would set interest rates based in part on the cost of operating student-loan programs. Under **S. 909**, the Responsible Student Loan Solutions Act, rates would be set annually, based on the 91-day Treasury bill plus a percentage determined by the Secretary of Education to cover program-administration and borrower-benefit costs. It would also cap subsidized Stafford loan interest rates at 6.8 percent, and cap parent and unsubsidized rates at 8.25 percent. This bill is currently being heard in the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

On May 9, 2013, **H.R. 1911** was introduced by Representative John Kline (R-MN). This bill would amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to establish interest rates for new loans made on or after July 1, 2013. The bill, known as the Smarter Solutions for Students Act, would move all
federal student loans (except Perkins Loans) to a market-based interest rate. It would calculate subsidized and unsubsidized Stafford loans using a formula based off of the 10-year Treasury Note plus 2.5 percent. Graduate and parent PLUS loans would use the same formula plus 4.5 percent. Loans would be recalculated yearly, and rates could increase or decrease yearly throughout the life of the loan. It also would put an interest rate cap set at 8.5 percent for Stafford loans and 10.5 percent for PLUS and graduate loans. This bill is currently being heard in the House Education and the Workforce Committee and additionally referred to the House Committee on Budget.

Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) introduced her first piece of legislation in the Senate on May 8, 2013. Her bill, S. 897, the Bank on Student Loans Fairness Act prevents the doubling of the interest rates for Federal subsidized student loans for the 2013-14 academic year by providing funds for such loans through the Federal Reserve System to be administered by the Department of Education. It also ensures that such loans are available at interest rates that are equivalent to the interest rates at which the Federal Government provides loans to banks. S. 897 will be heard in the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.

**Other Congressional Community Colleges Bills of Interest**

**H.R. 357: GI Bill Tuition Fairness Act of 2013**

This bipartisan legislation introduced by Representative Jeff Miller (R-FL), Chairman of the House Veterans Committee, and ranking member Representative Mike Michaud (D-ME), would require courses of education provided by public institutions of higher education that are approved for purposes of the educational assistance programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to charge veterans tuition and fees at the in-state tuition rate. This bill is currently being amended in the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee.

**H.R. 359: CAMPUS Safety Act of 2013**

This bill, introduced by Representative Robert Scott (D-VA) would establish and operate a National Center for Campus Public Safety. The Center would: (1) provide quality education and training for public safety personnel of institutions of higher education and their collaborative partners, including campus mental health agencies; (2) foster quality research to strengthen the safety and security of institutions of higher education; and (3) serve as a clearinghouse for the identification and dissemination of information, policies, protocols, procedures, and best practices relevant to campus public safety, including off-campus housing safety, the prevention of violence against persons and property, and emergency response and evacuation procedures. This bill is waiting to be heard in the House Judiciary Committee.

**H.R. 798: Workforce Investment Act Reauthorization**

The Democrats introduced a competing bill to H.R. 803 to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act, H.R. 798 by Representative John Tierney (D-MA). This bill reauthorizes the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to strengthen the United States workforce investment system through innovation in, and alignment and improvement of, employment, training, and education programs, and to promote national economic growth. Unlike H.R. 803, this bill does not consolidate funding streams, it maintains the community college representation on WIBs,
and it authorizes President Obama’s proposed $8 billion Community College to Career Fund. On April 23, 2013 H.R. 798 was referred to Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training.

**H.R. 803: The Support Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills Act (SKILLS Act)**

H.R. 803, also known as the SKILLS Act relates to statewide and local workforce investment systems and activities, identification of eligible training services providers, and use of funds for employment and training activities. As for community colleges, this bill would facilitate greater collaboration with community colleges by allowing states to determine the standards required for eligible training providers and allows local boards to contract with community colleges directly to provide training to large groups of participants instead of on an individual basis. H.R. 803 would also consolidate 35 existing streams of funding into a single Workforce Investment Fund. This Republican bill, introduced by Representative Virginia Foxx (R-NC), passed out of the House Education and Workforce Committee with a 23-0 vote. The Democrats left the hearing early in protest from not being included in the drafting of the bill, so none of the Democrats voted. This bill also passed on the House floor, so it is now being considered in the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.

**S. 3: Strengthen our Schools and Students Act**

Introduced on January 22, 2013 by Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) Senate Bill 3, among other things, would build on recent efforts to continue to make higher education more affordable and to improve access and success for all students. It would also provide all teachers with the support they need to ensure student success, including the creation of a new national Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Master Teacher Corps to recognize and help retain STEM teachers and strengthen STEM education in public schools in the United States. This bill is on its second reading in the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.

**S. 216: Tyler Clementi Higher Education Anti-Harassment Act of 2013**

Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) introduced Senate Bill 216 on February 4, 2013 which would prevent harassment at institutions of higher education. It would authorize the United States Secretary of Education to award grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible entities to enable them to carry out authorized activities such as counseling or redress services to students who have suffered from harassment or students who have been accused of subjecting other students to such harassment; or to educate or train students, faculty, or staff of institutions of higher education about ways to prevent harassment or ways to address such harassment if it occurs. This bill is waiting to be heard in the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.