



★ FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT ★

February 25, 2011

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell,

On behalf of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), I write to urge you to provide sufficient Pell Grant funding to ensure students' awards are not reduced in the 2011-12 academic year. NASFAA represents more than 18,000 financial aid professionals who serve 16 million students each year at 2,800 colleges and universities throughout the country. The current continuing resolution (P.L. 111-322) provides sufficient Pell Grant program funding to ensure a \$5,550 maximum grant level for the 2011-12 academic year. However, language in House-passed H.R. 1 calls for an \$845 reduction to the maximum Pell Grant award—resulting in a \$4,705 maximum award—and proportionate reductions to awards below the maximum. H.R.1 also calls for the elimination of funds for the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG), another vital grant program for the neediest students. Reducing the Pell Grant level and eliminating funding for FSEOG will have a detrimental impact on low-income students.

On February 1, as required by law, the U.S. Department of Education released the 2011-12 Pell Grant payment schedules—a guide that schools use to determine Pell Grant awards for students. Schools have begun packaging and offering student aid funds for the 2011-12 year using these payment schedules. By March 4—when the CR is scheduled to end—many students will have already received their award packages and will be making their postsecondary plans based on the Pell Grant and FSEOG awards they are scheduled to receive. In addition, the FAFSA4caster, an online tool provided by the Department to help students predict their award levels, produces Pell award estimates based on the funding levels in the current CR.

Any changes to Pell or FSEOG funding at this point could disrupt, delay, or halt low-income students and families' higher education aspirations. To prevent this, the Senate must ensure that the \$845 cut to the Pell Grant maximum award and elimination of funding for FSEOG are not

included in their FY 2011 spending bill.

The Pell Grant program continues to be the cornerstone of the federal student aid programs and millions of students will be relying on Congress to ensure its funding. Thank you for your continued support of the Pell Grant program and all you do for students and families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Draeger", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Justin Draeger
President and CEO

cc:

The Honorable Tom Harkin
The Honorable Michael Enzi