In Today's Edition

- Weekly Rundown
- NCHER Legislative and Leadership Conference – Register Today!
- Conduent Education Services Reaches Settlement with DOJ to Resolve Allegations Involving the False Claims Act
- Strada Education Network Announces New Innovation Grants in Beyond Completion Challenge
- U.S. Department of Education News
- General News

Weekly Rundown

The NCHER Weekly Rundown, which includes the latest information on important events in Washington, DC, is available today and can be downloaded from the [NCHER website](https://www.ncher.org).

NCHER Legislative and Leadership Conference – Register Today!

The NCHER Legislative and Leadership Conference, which will be held on January 31-February 1, 2022, is less than two weeks away! This popular conference is the first opportunity to hear about federal and state developments impacting the higher
education finance industry and to meet with the House and Senate Education Committee leadership and Administration officials on your organization’s advocacy priorities.

The NCHER Government Relations Committee has been hard at work putting together the draft program agenda geared toward providing important and timely sessions on the political and policy environment in Congress and the Biden Administration. This is a ‘can’t-miss’ event for the NCHER membership and student loan colleagues!

The current draft agenda includes:

- An important session that will look at the higher education policies and priorities of the Biden Administration as we head into 2022 and discuss how the NCHER membership can effectively influence the U.S. Department of Education’s priorities over the next year.

- House Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee Ranking Member Gregory Murphy (NC) will speak about his priorities for higher education, including ideas for expanding college access and success, and other members of the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate have been invited as well.

- A Congressional staff panel where House and Senate staff will discuss the priorities of the Democratic and Republican leadership in the 117th Congress.

- A timely session examining the resumption of federal student loan repayment in May 2022 where experts will discuss the efforts of the Department of Education and Federal Student Aid.

- An engaging session examining state policies impacting higher education finance, an update on federal regulatory efforts, and an update on the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s efforts regarding federal and private student loans from Director Rohit Chopra’s office.

- Following the conclusion of the conference, NCHER can assist you in setting up meetings with your Congressional delegation.

The registration fee for members to participate virtually in all sessions is $500 per individual, $1,000 for two registrants, and $1,500 for three or more – an unlimited number of – registrants. Register Today!

We look forward to seeing you at the NCHER Legislative and Leadership Conference!
Conduent Education Services Reaches Settlement with DOJ to Resolve Allegations Involving the False Claims Act

Last week, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) announced that it reached a settlement with Conduent Education Services (CES), which serviced student loans for lenders under the Federal Family Education Loan Program. The settlement resolves allegations that, between 2006 and 2016, CES knowingly failed to make required financial adjustments to borrower accounts and improperly treated some borrowers as eligible for military deferments when they were not, resulting in incorrect reporting to the U.S. Department of Education and losses to the United States, in violation of the False Claims Act. Under the settlement, CES will pay $7.9 million to the federal government; prior to this settlement, CES paid $1.4 million to the Department under a remediation plan to partially resolve allegations and received a credit for that payment under the agreement. CES stopped servicing federal student loans in September 2019.

“Holding loan servicers accountable is a top priority for the Biden-Harris Administration, so I am pleased that improper conduct at Conduent Education Services got the oversight and investigation it deserved,” said Under Secretary of Education James Kvaal. “We are grateful to the Department of Justice for working with the Education Department to ensure that CES is held accountable to borrowers and taxpayers.”

Strada Education Network Announces New Innovation Grants in Beyond Completion Challenge

Today, Strada Education Network announced the 15 winning institutions of higher education that will receive $10 million as part of its grant challenge aimed at helping colleges and universities identify and expand new solutions that will improve career and life opportunities for more students of color, first-generation students, those who struggle to afford education, and adult students and workers. The grants will support new projects and initiatives that focus on equitable outcomes through and beyond college completion. Strada will provide more than $6 million in additional support later this year to expand upon these grants and engage in a year-long community of practice with grant recipients and other members of a taskforce working to improve outcomes beyond completion.

Today’s grants were awarded to support curricular career guidance and support, work-based learning, capacity building, and technology innovations. Funded initiatives fall into
four categories:

- Infusing career relevance into the curriculum.
- Developing strategies to expand career support.
- Strengthening connections between education and career.
- Building institutional capacity to improve career outcomes.

The 15 institutions selected to receive innovation grants of up to $250,000 are:

1. Arizona State University
2. City University of New York
3. Georgia State University
4. Georgia Institute of Technology
5. New York University
6. North Carolina A&T State University
7. Northern Virginia Community College
8. Southern New Hampshire University
9. University of Arizona
10. University of Minnesota Rochester
11. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
12. University of Oregon
13. University of Pittsburgh
14. University of Texas System
15. Virginia Tech

**U.S. Department of Education News**

For today's *Federal Register*, click [here](#).

The following announcement was posted to Federal Student Aid’s Knowledge Center website:

- *(ANN-22-01) Live Internet Webinars – Wednesday Webinar Series, February–May 2022*
General News

*Inside Higher Ed* previews the agenda of the U.S. Department of Education's Institutional and Programmatic Eligibility Committee, the negotiated rulemaking proceedings that started today, and the anticipated disagreements that focus on for-profit higher education such as the renewed fight over gainful employment. Related, *U.S. News and World Report* covers the Biden Administration's move to undo former Secretary Betsy DeVos' education agenda through a new round of rulemaking on how the Department oversees colleges and universities – particularly for-profit schools – and their ability to tap into federal funding.

*Inside Higher Ed* reports that state financial aid totals continued to grow during the 2019–20 academic year, just before state budgets and family incomes were roiled by the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the latest report from the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs. Two-thirds of all undergraduate, need-based grant aid awarded during the 2019–20 academic year was concentrated in eight states. California handed out $2.4 billion, the most of any state.

*The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *NBC News* report that Senate Democrats are pressing eight of the nation's largest online program-management companies for details on their operations, a signal that the industry's COVID-fueled expansion may face scrutiny on Capitol Hill.

*Inside Higher Ed* reports that the Common Application has released data from December where it shows the overall numbers of students using the application to apply to colleges are encouraging for higher education.

*The Hill* reports that federal student loan borrowers will face a serious squeeze this spring when the payment and collections pause on their debt payments expires amid surging inflation.

*Forbes* publishes an article that states advocates of wide-scale student loan forgiveness say that cancellation will help close the socioeconomic and racial wealth gap. But, according to new research from The Brookings Institution, student loan forgiveness is regressive whether measured by income, education or wealth.

*Forbes* publishes an article looking at the student loan policy proposals supported by
House and Senate Republicans, and says that it is not what you may think.

An online version of this Daily Briefing is available to view and print from the Daily Briefing Section of the NCHER e-Library.

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