



DAILY BRIEFING

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In Today's Edition

- Senate Approves Kvaal Nomination to Serve as Under Secretary of Education
- President Biden Signs Executive Order Boosting Hispanic Education
- NerdWallet Releases Survey Finding Some Parent PLUS Loan Borrowers Not Ready to Resume Repayment
- U.S. Department of Education News
- General News

Senate Approves Kvaal Nomination to Serve as Under Secretary of Education

Today, the U.S. Senate approved the nomination of James Kvaal to serve as the next Under Secretary at the U.S. Department of Education, by a vote of 58-37. The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee approved the nomination in April, but was stalled for the last five months by Sen Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) who had placed a hold on the nomination in an effort to escalate pressure on the Biden Administration to move more aggressively on student loan debt. Sen. Warren lifted her hold on the nomination just before the August recess, saying that she won a commitment from the administration on “substantial reforms” to the federal student loan program. Mr. Kvaal has substantial experience on higher education policy, having served as a top education adviser in the White House under President Barack Obama and, more recently, as head of The Institute for College Access and Success. As Under Secretary of Education, he would oversee higher education policy and student aid issues at the Department. Mr. Kvaal is the first person confirmed to the role of Under Secretary by the Senate since Ted Mitchell

in 2014. Nine Republicans joined with Democrats to approve Mr. Kvaal's nomination: Sens. Roy Blunt (R-MO); Richard Burr (R-NC); Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV); Bill Cassidy (R-LA); Susan Collins (R-ME); Lindsey Graham (R-SC); Roger Marshall (R-KS); Mitt Romney (R-UT); and Tim Scott (R-SC).

Following the confirmation vote, Education Secretary Miguel Cardona released a [statement](#) saying that Mr. Kvaal has a “deep understanding of the strengths, needs, and challenges in postsecondary education. This is critical at a time when increasing college access, affordability, and completion is key to helping America build back better. With this confirmation, the Biden Administration and the American people gain a dedicated and distinguished public servant with strong expertise in higher education who will always put students first.”

President Biden Signs Executive Order Boosting Hispanic Education

Yesterday, President Joe Biden signed an [executive order](#) creating the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Hispanics inside the U.S. Department of Education. The initiative, similar to past White House efforts, is aimed at raising graduation rates and test scores among Latino students who lag significantly behind their white peers. Education Secretary Miguel Cardona will chair the initiative. The executive order also establishes a federal interagency working group and a presidential commission to advise the President and Education Secretary on the best ways to improve outcomes for Latino students. The text of the executive order talks about how the Latino population in the United States grew by double digits over the last decade but that Latino families have unequal access to a high-quality education, from early education to college. According to the order, only 19 percent of Latino adults have at least a bachelor's degree compared with one in three overall. “Hispanic students constitute more than 27 percent of all pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students and nearly 20 percent of college students,” the order states. “The nation's future prosperity and global leadership across industries is therefore tied to the success of Hispanic and Latino students, and their success is a priority of my Administration.”

NerdWallet Releases Survey Finding Some Parent PLUS Loan Borrowers Not Ready to Resume Repayment

NerdWallet recently released a new [survey](#), which found that student loan debt spans generations and many parents are not ready to resume payments when the federal

payment pause expires on January 31, 2022. The survey of more than 2,000 U.S. adults (366 have federal student loans, including 130 with Parent PLUS loans) was conducted online by The Harris Poll. The survey asked Parent PLUS loan borrowers how their debt is affecting their finances and future plans, and asked federal student loan borrowers how they are reallocating money during the current payment pause and when they think they will be ready to resume making federal loan payments. Key findings include the following:

- Parent PLUS loans are hindering some borrowers' futures: The survey shows that 26 percent of Americans who have Parent PLUS loan debt say they will be unable to retire as expected because of it. Close to 3 in 10 Parent PLUS borrowers (28 percent) say they are counting on loan forgiveness to help wipe out a large sum of their debt.
- Would-be student loan payments are going toward necessities for many: Federal loans have been in automatic forbearance during the COVID-19 pandemic, and over a third of those with federal loan debt (34 percent) say they are using the money for necessities.
- Some with federal student loan debt say they cannot make payments until next year or later: The survey found about 1 in 10 federal student loan borrowers (11 percent) do not think they will be able to make payments until 2022 or beyond, and another 1 in 10 (10 percent) do not know when they will be able to make payments again. Of those with federal student loan debt, women are much more likely to be unsure of when they can restart payments than men (17 percent vs. 4 percent).

“At this point, student loan debt is affecting families across multiple life stages,” says Cecilia Clark, a NerdWallet authority on student loans. “We have new high school graduates signing up for debt, young adults burdened with debt as they try to build their lives and others near retirement who see their financial lives upended by this debt. And many of those retirement-aged debtors are parents and grandparents who took out loans to help a loved one get through school.”

U.S. Department of Education News

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

General News

[Fox Business](#) reports that Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) has, once again, called on the President to make good on his campaign promise to cancel a portion of college debt for

most federal student loan borrowers.

[*WTOP News*](#) reports that average student loan debt has been on the rise over the last decade as families try to keep up with soaring college costs. Though recent college graduates who borrowed to pay for school took out \$135 less in loans compared with the prior year, the average total student debt continues to teeter around \$30,000, according to data released by *U.S. News and World Report*.

[*Inside Higher Ed*](#) provides further coverage of the recent Gender Equity Policy Institute report that found doubling the maximum Pell Grant to \$13,000 would result in substantial reductions in future student loan debt.

[*Diverse Issues in Higher Ed*](#) reports that on a panel at this week's Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's Annual Legislative Conference, several presidents of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) shared their visible and invisible infrastructure needs on campus and the importance of more federal support for HBCUs.

[*Inside Higher Ed*](#) reports that faculty and staff members reported stark differences in their colleges' fall semester COVID-19 protocols and plans across institutions of higher education and geographic regions, according to a new national survey.

[*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*](#) reports families that do not need the advance child tax credits to pay for everyday household expenses like utility and medical bills are using the extra income to boost their children's college savings accounts.

[*MarketWatch*](#) reports that the top 10 U.S. colleges and universities will cost at least \$55,000 a year.

[*Inside Higher Ed*](#) and [*Higher Ed Dive*](#) report that Anthology, which emerged a year ago from the combination of three higher education administrative software firms, will merge with Blackboard, long the most visible company in learning technology. The combined entity will work with thousands of colleges and universities across administrative and academic departments.

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