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NCHER Annual Conference: Take Advantage of Early Bird Registration Rate, Register Today!

NCHER will hold its Annual Conference on June 3-5, 2024 at the Hyatt Regency Clearwater in Clearwater, Florida. The conference, which is open and designed for everyone across the higher education finance industry, will provide attendees with ample

opportunities to network, learn, and take information back home that they can use in their current jobs – from hearing about the current trends and hot topics to exploring new and potential business opportunities. The [draft agenda](#) is packed with important and engaging sessions as well as opportunities for small group discussions among industry experts. The current agenda includes:

- A pre-conference session where first-time and veteran attendees will do a deep-dive into federal policy reviewing recent and upcoming developments at the national and state levels.
- An update on the rollout of the 2024-2025 FAFSA [Free Application for Federal Student Aid] and what NCHER members can expect to occur over the next few months following Federal Student Aid's rocky implementation of providing eligibility information to institutions of higher education.
- General sessions built around preparing you and your colleagues for the future: topics include reviewing the changing demographics of the current student population, examining the macro trends that will determine and influence the private education loan market in 2024/2025, examining the ongoing needs of colleges and universities and the role that third-party servicers can play in the current environment, and discussing student perspectives on higher education and how to create a successful marketing strategy for your services and programs and realize a return on investment.
- General sessions geared toward improving your operational and compliance strategies: topics include discussing the potential business and financial value of leveraging the value of artificial intelligence to improve higher education financing and reviewing the most pressing state regulatory topics impacting the membership and what steps compliance offices should be taking now to stay ahead of any potential review.
- Small group break-out sessions centered on industry sectors so that attendees can talk about the most pressing issues of the day with their peers. It will also include an NCHER staple – our annual “Ask the Attorney’s panel.

We urge all of the NCHER membership to [register](#) today and take advantage of the Early Bird registration rate, which expires on May 8th. Members can also make their hotel reservations at a discounted room rate of \$214 at the Hyatt Regency Clearwater as long as the room block is available. Members can book their room [online](#) or by calling 877-803-7534 and telling the reservation agent that you are booking a reservation for the 2024 NCHER Annual Conference.

We look forward to seeing you for some fun and sun in Clearwater!

Senate Appropriations Subcommittee Announces Budget Hearing with Education Secretary Cardona

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies announced that it will hold a budget hearing with Education Secretary Miguel Cardona at 10:00 a.m., next Tuesday, April 30, 2024. The subcommittee hearing will take place two weeks after Secretary Cardona testified before the House Appropriations Subcommittee where he said that “there’s nothing more important right now” than addressing the rocky debut of the new Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by the U.S. Department of Education. Since then, there has been turmoil on numerous college campuses across the country protesting the Israel-Hamas war, new delays and problems with the FAFSA, and new Title IX rules - all of which are sure to be the subject of the Secretary’s testimony and questions from Democrats and Republicans. "Secretary Cardona looks forward to testifying before Senate appropriators next week on President Biden’s Fiscal Year 2025 budget request for the Department," a Department spokesperson said in a statement. "Working with Congress, we can raise the bar in education and lead the world."

The hearing will be livestreamed on the [committee website](#).

House Education and the Workforce Committee Republicans Send Letter to Department of Education Inspector General on Fraud Within Federal Student Financial Aid System

Yesterday, House Education and the Workforce Committee Chairwoman Virginia Foxx (R-NC) and Rep. Michelle Steel (R-CA) sent a [letter](#) to U.S. Department of Education Inspector General Sandra Bruce raising concerns about the possibility of fraud within the federal student financial aid system and demanding answers on the Department’s efforts to prevent and remedy these issues. In the letter, the lawmakers say that criminals have been exploiting low-cost or free programs by using the identities of others to obtain federal student aid fraudulently. “From the fall of 2021 through the present, over \$5 million in federal student aid has been fraudulently paid to individuals who enrolled at

California community colleges, received financial aid, and did not attend college,” the letter says. “The personal toll on students who are prevented from improving their lives through education, as well as the financial toll on this nation, is unacceptable.” The letter continues that, in Fiscal Year 2011, the Office of Inspector General investigated federal student aid programs and discovered that the fraud included “enroll[ing] numerous times under different names,” “falsify[ing] information on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid,” and “initiate[ing] other schemes to receive [student federal aid] funds illegally.” The letter concludes that the Department must take all necessary steps to increase fraud detection and preventative measures, and requests a briefing for the staff no later than May 8, 2024, to understand better what current work has revealed and the steps the Department is doing to prevent, manage, and reduce fraud in the federal student financial aid system.

Department of Education Releases RFI on Postsecondary Student Success Recognition Program

Earlier this week, the U.S. Department of Education [released a Request for Information \(RFI\)](#) to develop a new Postsecondary Student Success Recognition Program that aims to engage institutions of higher education to support all students to complete affordable credentials of value that prepare them for success. The RFI requests insights from the field to better understand institutions’ efforts to promote student success and economic mobility to help evaluate and select institutions to receive the recognition, which includes information about which metrics the Department should use for eligibility and selection for the award; how institutions use data to drive success efforts, how institutions can demonstrate an intentional, scaled, and sustainable commitment to supporting student success; and how institutions evaluate the effectiveness of their student success and economic mobility strategies and policies. For this recognition program, the RFI says that the Department aims to promote a more inclusive definition of student success that includes providing access to an affordable education including to underserved populations, supporting students through to completion of credentials of value, and helping students navigate to career pathways that improve their lives through economic opportunity and mobility. The RFI sets a 30-day public comment period.

ACE Sends Letter to Department of Education Requesting Further Delay in Reporting Requirements on Gainful Employment and Financial Value Transparency

Earlier this week, the American Council of Education (ACE) sent a [letter](#) to Education Secretary Miguel Cardona urging the U.S. Department of Education to further delay its reporting requirements on gainful employment and financial value transparency. In March, the Department announced that it would delay the institutional reporting deadlines from July 31 to October 1, so that schools could focus on assembling financial aid packages due to the botched rollout of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). In this week's letter, ACE and other higher education associations urge the Department to further extend the October 1 reporting deadline commensurate with the delays associated with the FAFSA and request ample time to implement any additional required reporting that would be published in a future Federal Register notice. Lastly, the groups ask that the Department "take into consideration the added financial and administrative burden on institutions to implement these new reporting requirements. While institutions are aware of the 26 metrics regarding the reporting requirements in current regulations, they are not yet aware of the specifics around these items, including many definitions and reporting mechanisms, or any additional reporting that may be required as indicated in the regulations."

Community College Research Center, Aspen Institute Releases Report on Tracking Transfer Students

The Community College Research Center and Aspen Institute recently released a report titled, [Tracking Transfer: Community College and Four-Year Institutional Effectiveness in Broadening Bachelor's Degree Attainment](#). According to the report, despite surveys indicating that nearly 80 percent of community college students aspire to earn a bachelor's degree, only about a third transfer to a four-year institution, and fewer than half of those who do transfer go on to earn a bachelor's degree within six years of community college entry. The report analyzed student data from the National Student Clearinghouse to measure the performance of community colleges and four-year institutions in enabling students who started at a community college as part of the fall 2015 cohort to transfer and earn a bachelor's degree. The authors of the report say that its results should serve as a call to action to improve ineffective and inefficient transfer pathways in higher education.

The report is the first of its kind to report state-by-state transfer rates and outcomes by student subgroup, finding that low-income (11 percent), older (6 percent), Black (9 percent), and Hispanic (13 percent) students transfer and complete bachelor's degrees at even lower rates than community college students overall (16 percent). It finds only modest progress in transfer performance over the past seven years; states with the

largest share of community college students who are low-income, Black, or older have bachelor's completion rates for these students well below the national average for all students; states with the greatest improvement in transfer and bachelor's degree attainment include North Carolina, West Virginia, New Mexico, and South Dakota; and transfer outcomes have stagnated or show little improvement in most states. The report also identifies strategies for community college leaders, four-year institution leaders, and state policymakers to consider for improving transfer practices and bachelor's degree attainment rates, including:

- Expanding dual enrollment opportunities as an on-ramp to transfer and bachelor's completion, particularly for low-income, Black, Hispanic, and other groups that are underrepresented in dual enrollment but benefit from the strong positive correlation between dual enrollment participation and transfer/bachelor's attainment.
- Heightening focus on timely bachelor's completion after transferring from community college to reduce cost and accelerate entry into a job after graduating.
- Promoting associate degree completion prior to transfer, consistent with the report's finding of a strong positive correlation with bachelor's degree attainment.
- Increasing the number of transfers to selective public and private four-year institutions by encouraging more selective institutions to expand access to community college transfers.
- Discouraging transfer to for-profit institutions and primarily online institutions where bachelor's attainment rates after transfer are lowest.
- Learning about effective institutional transfer practices from Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and other institutions that outperform national averages without disparities for underserved groups.

For further coverage, see this article from [The 74](#).

U.S. Department of Education News

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

The following announcements were posted to Federal Student Aid's Knowledge Center:

- [\(GENERAL-24-46\) Service Provider Relationships for GLBA Compliance](#)

- [\(CB-24-09\) Updated Federal Perkins Loan Assignment and Liquidation Guide Now Available](#)
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General News

[Inside Higher Ed](#) reports that the State of New York will require school districts to certify that every high school senior has completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, a similar financial aid form for undocumented students, or a waiver saying they or their parents have opted out of financial aid. The requirement is part of the new fiscal year 2024–25 budget.

[The 74](#) talks to former Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Ranking Member Lamar Alexander (R-TX) whose legacy was reform of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), but now says it is a “big mess.” Related, [Imprint News](#) reports that the debacle with the rollout of the FAFSA is expected to hit foster and homeless youth the hardest. [The Washington Post](#) reports that the fiasco over the rollout of the FAFSA has hurt first-generation college students the most.

[Diverse: Issues In Higher Education](#) publishes an article saying that today’s college students are not who you think they are and institutions must rethink how they serve them.

[CNBC](#) reports that the Biden Administration believes that its latest plan to provide federal student loan forgiveness will survive legal scrutiny.

[The 74](#) reports that, in a disastrous year, states that mandate completion of the FAFSA seemed to fare a bit better.

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