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DAILY BRIEFING

Wednesday, June 23, 2021

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NCHER Website to Get Upgrade in Early July, New User Registration Required

The NCHER website is scheduled to receive an upgrade in early July and is likely to be unavailable on July 1 and 2 and over the Independence Day Holiday. While the landing page of the website will remain the same, the rest of the website will have a more streamlined look and feel in order give you, our members, a better experience. The E-library will also have a new look; some of the older information has been archived to the cloud storage servers (which can be accessed, if needed) while preserving key historical information from our storied history and making room for the road ahead.

As part of the upgrading process, NCHER will be moving to new web hosting services. As such, all members will be required to re-register on the new website to maintain access to restricted areas, reserved just for members, and to sign up for the *NCHER Daily Briefing*. We will email you more information in the next week or so, containing specific instructions about the registration process for the new website. Thank you for your patience as we move to a new and better website!

Department of Education Continues Public Hearings on Negotiated Rulemaking

Today, the U.S. Department of Education held its second of three days of virtual public hearings to examine those issues that may be considered as part of an upcoming negotiated rulemaking. During the morning and afternoon sessions, interested parties expressed concern and made recommendations in support of simplifying and streamlining income-driven repayment plans, including limiting events that trigger interest capitalization, imposing payment caps and interest cancellation, and ensuring that all loan types were eligible for repayment relief. They also made recommendations around the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, including allowing all federal loan types to be eligible and all repayment plans to count towards forgiveness as well as instituting a straightforward and transparent appeal process. Some commentators made recommendations around Total and Permanent Disability discharge, including the need for a streamlined and simplified discharge process, the elimination of the monitoring period, and a new data match with the Social Security Administration to provide for an automatic discharge process. The third and final day will take place tomorrow. Public written comments can be submitted to the Department by July 1, 2021.

Reports: Sen. Warren Behind Effort to Stall James Kvaal's Nomination Over Student Loan Policies

Yesterday, several media outlets report that Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) is the unnamed senator who has placed a hold on the nomination of James Kvaal to serve as the next Under Secretary at the U.S. Department of Education. According to the reports, Sen. Warren's hold is the latest escalation of pressure on the Biden Administration from progressives who want to see more aggressive and quicker action on student loan debt. For several months, Sen. Warren and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) have been publicly lobbying the President to use executive action to wipe out \$50,000 of student loan debt per borrower. President Joe Biden had previously campaigned on the concept of Congress authorizing forgiveness of up to \$10,000 per borrower, though the White House has said it is still reviewing its authority to grant forgiveness administratively. Media stories said that Sen. Warren's hold on Mr. Kvaal's nomination is not over the \$50,000 student debt cancellation proposal. Instead, the Senator is seeking concessions on how the Department runs the student loan program and is negotiating with the administration about a "range of necessary reforms in higher education including the administration of the student loan program." A Department spokesperson said the agency had been working with Senate offices and was "encouraged by the conversations and developments around James Kvaal's nomination." In a statement, the spokesperson mentioned, "We share the same goals around making the Federal Student Aid office more consumer friendly and an advocate for student borrowers, which is why we've taken multiple actions to achieve this goal, including providing nearly \$3 billion in targeted loan relief and bringing on Richard Cordray as Chief Operating Officer." For more coverage, see these articles from [Inside Higher Ed](#) or [Business Insider](#).

Reps. Kuster, Burchett, Schrier, and Upton Introduce Expanding Access to Graduate Education Act

Last week, Reps. Annie Kuster (D-NH), Tim Burchett (R-TN), Kim Schrier (D-WA), and Fred Upton (R-MI) re-introduced [H.R.4002, the Expanding Access to Graduate Education Act](#), bipartisan legislation that would allow students who received a Pell Grant during their undergraduate education to utilize any remaining Pell eligibility towards their first graduate degree. Under current federal law, individuals are prohibited from using Pell Grants for graduate degrees. "The high cost of graduate school is a barrier for many qualified and highly capable students from furthering their education and pursuing careers requiring an advanced degree," rep. Kuster said. "The Expanding Access to Graduate Education Act will help level the playing field for post-graduate opportunities, reduce student debt, and ensure workers have the skills they need to help fill the jobs of the future — a win-win for students and our economy."

Bill Introductions

H.R. 4053 - To provide federal student loan relief for teachers who work in a military impacted community. Sponsor: Rep. Jackson, Ronny [R-TX-13] (Introduced 06/22/2021) Cosponsors: (3)
Latest Action: House - 06/22/2021 Referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor. [Press Release](#): Reps. Jackson, Cueller, Lamborn, and Strickland introduce bipartisan legislation to address teacher shortages in military communities.

U.S. Department of Education News

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

Member News

Barron's [announced](#) that it recognized iGrad as a Barron's Celebrates: Financial Employment honoree in a virtual event held on June 8th. iGrad was one of three honorees of the inaugural award and was selected by a team of judges for its contributions to improving the financial health and security of Americans. It was recognized for its award-winning Enrich financial wellness platform and the student-focused iGrad financial wellness platform, which has more than two million users nationwide.



General News

[Forbes](#) continues coverage of the recent denial of a student loan borrower's petition for cancellation by the U.S. Supreme Court and what it means for student loans.

[CBS News](#) reports that students planning to borrow federal student loans for the upcoming school year need to be prepared for higher interest rates.

[myFICO](#) examines what borrowers should know about parent student loans.

[Fox Business](#) reports critics are charging that student loan forgiveness is furthering Democratic influence on college campuses.

[Inside Higher Ed](#) reports that two new surveys of high school students suggest that the impact of the coronavirus pandemic will be with colleges and universities for some time. A significant portion of students report that their college plans have changed and they want to study close to home and inexpensively.

[The Chronicle of Higher Education](#) reports that, in what appears to be the first vaccine-mandate lawsuit filed against a college, eight Indiana University students sued the Board of Trustees over a policy requiring COVID-19 vaccines for students and employees.

[U.S. News and World Report](#) provides 50 questions for prospective students and families to ask on a college visit, including questions to understand a particular college experience.

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National Council of Higher Education Resources**

1050 Connecticut Ave NW
#65793
Washington, DC 20035

Phone: (202) 822-2106

Fax: (202) 822-2142

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