



DAILY BRIEFING

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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](#).

Department of Education Begins Second Set of Negotiated Rulemaking Sessions on Loan Issues

Today, the U.S. Department of Education held the second in a series of negotiated rulemaking sessions of its Affordability and Student Loans Committee, which has been formed to review and revise federal regulations around total and permanent disability (TPD), closed school discharge, interest capitalization, the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, the borrower defense to repayment process, Pell Grants for Prison Education programs, and income-driven repayment. As has been reported, the committee includes representatives of organizations with interests that are significantly affected by the subject matter, including Federal Family Education Loan Program lenders and guaranty agencies. For a complete list of the members, click [here](#).

During today's session, the Department and committee members received an update on the discussions involving the prison education subcommittee, which is examining Pell Grant eligibility for prison programs. The subcommittee indicated that it is still working on the definition of a "confined or incarcerated individual," the definition of a "prison education program," language for technical changes to the definition of Pell Grant, language for reporting the expansion of the program at additional locations, and disclosure requirements to incarcerated individuals. The committee also voted to add a representative with expertise on Pell Grant eligibility for prison programs to the full committee. The committee then moved to consideration of the draft regulatory text on TPD where the Department is proposing to eliminate the three-year income monitoring period. In addition to automating the process through information sharing agreements between federal agencies, thus alleviating the need for borrowers to file paperwork to have their loans discharged, the committee discussed the idea of providing discharge to any borrower that has been on Social Security Disability Insurance for five years. The committee then moved on to reviewing the proposed regulatory text for closed school discharge, which includes restating automatic discharges and setting the eligibility window to 180 days. For both TPD and closed school discharge, the Department asked for a 'temperature check' for tentative agreement on the proposed language. There was no consensus from the non-federal negotiators on the committee based on the current draft language provided by the Department.

The next committee meeting will take place tomorrow from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. with a public comment period from approximately 3:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Those who are interested in attending the sessions are required to register separately for each day. To register as a participant, click [here](#).

FSA Issues Updated Guidance on Financial Aid Offers

Last week, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA)

released an [Electronic Announcement](#) offering guidance on what institutions of higher education should include in their financial aid offers, and what they should avoid. The announcement updates guidance previously issued in 2019. The new recommendations include the following:

- Avoid calling a financial aid offer an “award” and avoid calling it a “letter.” The guidance specifies that loans and work-study are not awards and the guidance recommends using a term like “financial aid offer” which it cites as clearer.
- Always include cost of attendance in a financial aid offer. The guidance recommends breaking down cost of attendance in ways that help students understand college costs.
- List grants, scholarship aid, loans, and Federal Work-Study separately.
- Explain and calculate the estimated net cost for students in the financial aid offer.
- Separate out other options for repaying the net cost, such as tuition payment plans; state, institutional, or private loans; or Parent PLUS loans.

The guidance says that, because the financial aid process can be intimidating to students and families (especially for first generation students), the offer should spell out specific next steps that a student/family should follow to accept or decline the financial aid. In addition to the guidance, FSA also released the [2022-23 College Financing Plan](#), which illustrates these newly formed recommendations for aid offers.

Rep. Morelle Introduces Legislation to Provide Pell Grant Flexibility to Students with Disabilities

Rep. Joe Morelle (D-NY) recently introduced [H.R. 5739](#), which aims to make higher education more accessible to students with disabilities. The bill would amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to lower the amount of credit hours required for Pell Grants for students with disabilities and allow for adjustments to award calculations and waivers for semester limits for those students. “Nearly twenty percent of undergraduate students in colleges and universities have a disability, and unfortunately, many of these students do not go on to complete their degrees,” said Rep. Morelle. “We must do more to eliminate the roadblocks these students face and put college graduation within reach for students of all abilities. My legislation will help students stay in school, graduate, and pursue meaningful employment while building a more inclusive and equitable higher education system.” The bill has been referred to the House Education and Labor Committee.

Reps. Fernandez and Spartz Introduce Bill to Help Build Financial Literacy Skills

Reps. Teresa Leger Fernández (D-NM) and Victoria Spartz (R-IN) introduced the [H.R. 5779, the Financial Fitness Act](#), which would create a public personal finance education portal within the U.S. Department of Education website to help students and families grow their financial literacy skills and better prepare for their future. It would also provide information on core personal finance concepts such as budgeting, saving, and investing, and help students learn about managing student loan repayment including benefits, policies, and forgiveness.

“Every year, students and their families face substantial and difficult financial and debt questions - especially low-income and minority students. Despite this fact, we have yet to make personal finance a core part of students’ basic education,” **said Rep. Leger Fernández**. “New Mexico is ranked as one of the lowest in the country for financial knowledge, but we can fix this. This legislation would create an accessible and comprehensive personal finance portal that allows students and the public to develop and improve their financial fitness to better prepare for their future. I was inspired by the success of the financial fitness programs we used when I was with Home wise. As we rebuild our economy, I want every student to build their own financial strength and awareness so they can succeed financially.” The bill has been referred to the House Education and Labor Committee.

U.S. Department of Education News

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

The following announcements were posted to the Information for Financial Aid Professionals website:

- [\(APP-21-22\) 2022–23 Federal School Code List of Participating Schools \(November 2021\)](#)
- [\(GENERAL-21-71\) Availability of Updated NSLDS Enrollment Reporting Guide \(September 2021\)](#)
- [\(GENERAL-21-70\) Issuing Financial Aid Offers–What Institutions Should Include and Avoid](#)



The Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority released the [Financial Aid Tip for Students – November 2021](#) stating that high school students can get an idea of how much it may cost to attend college by using a school’s net price calculator. “Pursuing

some level of education beyond high school can help enrich a student’s long-term earning potential, but it often does require a significant financial investment,” Gov. Andy Beshear said. “Online calculators are a useful tool in determining what the estimated costs may be, including scholarships, as well as low-interest loans. It’s important to remember that the calculation is only an estimate, but it can be helpful as students pick the right school for their education.”

General News

House Education and Labor Committee Chairman Bobby Scott (D-VA) recently published an [op-ed](#) where he discussed the Build Back Better Act’s investments in Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

[Inside Higher Ed](#) reports that the Biden Administration and Congressional Democrats cut the Build Back Better Act in half, leaving many higher education investments behind but boosting the maximum award for the Pell Grant program and funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other minority-serving institutions.

[Diverse Issues in Higher Education](#) reports that, while many higher education advocacy groups are praising the Biden Administration’s framework for a \$1.75 trillion reconciliation package, there appears to be a noticeable shortcoming in the proposed legislation: a measly increase in the Pell Grant program.

[Higher Ed Dive](#) reports that early fall 2021 enrollment numbers delivered more disappointing news to higher education leaders this month. Using preliminary enrollment data from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, Higher Ed Dive publishes five charts providing a breakdown of 2021’s college enrollment trends.

[*USA Today*](#) reports that canceling federal student loan debt would cost the federal government billions while [*Forbes*](#) reports student loan cancellation could cost upwards of \$1 trillion.

[*Forbes*](#) publishes a column that continues to cover the student loan forgiveness debate and whether it is going to happen as Biden Administration officials send mixed signals.

[*The New Yorker*](#) reports on what the President can do and what he will not do on student debt.

[*Forbes*](#) reports that federal student loans are not part of the Build Back Better Act, but House and Senate Democrats still think President Joe Biden should cancel student debt.

[*Inside Higher Ed*](#) reports that the U.S. Department of Education has deferred its decision on whether to continue recognizing the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges, as it announced last week the recognition status of nine accrediting agencies.

[*Inside Higher Ed*](#) reports that more colleges and universities announced employee vaccine mandates to comply with the Biden Administration's order mandating vaccination against COVID-19 for employees of federal contractors. But with the deadline for vaccination fast approaching, some institutions are still studying the order or determining next steps.

[*Higher Ed Dive*](#) reports on what colleges and universities can do in states that limit vaccine requirements with the Biden Administration's mandates looming.

[*St. Cloud Times*](#) reports that the State of Minnesota has a new student loan bill of rights and what it means for student and parent borrowers.

[*Higher Ed Dive*](#) reports that two-thirds of students experiencing basic needs insecurity did not apply for emergency grant aid during the coronavirus pandemic, according to a new report from the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice.

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