



NCHER Legislative and Leadership Meeting
February 7-9, 2024
Hyatt Regency Washington, DC on Capitol Hill

Program Agenda
(Draft as of January 29, 2024)

Wednesday, February 7, 2024

(Pre-Meeting Activities)

8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

NCHER Members Hold Capitol Hill and Agency Visits

NCHER members are reminded to take this time to make appointments with their Congressional delegations, especially members of the House Education and the Workforce Committee and Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, to talk about their advocacy priorities for 2024. The NCHER staff is available to help members make appointments with House and Senate staff.

2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

NCHER Board of Directors Meeting - Executive Session

The NCHER Board will meet in executive session to discuss items of importance to the membership. This is a closed session.

Thursday, February 8, 2024

(General Meeting Sessions)

7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Registration Open

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.

Continental Breakfast

8:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

Welcome

The NCHER leadership will welcome members to the conference and briefly discuss the conference program for the day.

Speaker

Angela Baier, Chair
National Council of Higher Education Resources
Chief Executive Officer
College Assist / College Invest

8:45 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.

Federal Update Impacting the Higher Education Finance Industry

Even though it is an election year, 2024 is sure to be eventful. The U.S. Department of Education is hoping to release its proposed and final rules implementing a new federal student loan forgiveness program while continuing its effort to enact borrower-friendly changes to the federal student loan program such as expanding the number of borrowers who can qualify for Public Service Loan Forgiveness or Income-Driven Repayment and enrolling more borrowers into the new SAVE plan. With the start of the Second Session of the 118th Congress, both the House and Senate hope to complete action on the budget and appropriations process for Fiscal Year 2024. Meanwhile, House Education and the Workforce Committee Chairwoman Virginia Foxx (R-NC) and Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA) hope to advance H.R. 6585, the Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act, which allows Pell Grants to support students enrolled in high-quality, short-term workforce programs that will lead to career advancement, before election-year politics consume the Congressional calendar. In this session, a panel of experts will provide an update on federal developments and the political/policy outlook as we begin 2024.

Moderator

Alex Nock, Principal
Penn Hill Group

Speakers

Christopher T. Murray, Partner
Thompson Coburn LLP

9:45 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Break

10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Congressional Staff Panel on Higher Education Policy

Both the House Education and the Workforce Committee and the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee have been busy over the last 12 months. While the committees have decided not to address a comprehensive reauthorization of the Higher Education Act this term, the House Committee has been successful in reaching bipartisan agreement on expanding eligibility for the Pell Grant program to cover short-term programs and reauthorizing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. During this session, Republican and Democratic Congressional staff will discuss their higher education priorities for the second session of the 118th Congress and whether there are consensus areas for enactment of improvements to federal student aid programs.

Moderator

Christiana Thornton, President and Chief Executive Officer
Granite Edvance

Speakers

Amaris Benavidez, Professional Staff Member
House Education and the Workforce Committee – Democratic Staff

Patrick Fox, Professional Staff Member
Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee – Republican Staff

Sara Garcia, Professional Staff Member
Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee – Democratic Staff

11:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

Simplifying the FAFSA: An Update on Federal Student Aid’s Actions
Following Congressional passage of the FAFSA [Free Application for Federal Student Aid] Simplification Act and the FUTURE [Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education] Act, the U.S. Department of Education redesigned the federal financial aid system and recently released as part of a soft launch the new 2024-2025 FAFSA and began providing aid eligibility information to institutions of higher education – more than three months behind schedule. This session will provide an update on Federal Student Aid’s actions on FAFSA simplification and what NCHER members can expect to occur over the next few months as they continue to prepare students and families for this important change.

Moderator

Frank Ballmann, Director Federal Relations
National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs

Speakers

Kim Cook, Chief Executive Officer
National College Attainment Network

Jill Desjean, Senior Policy Analyst
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

11:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Reforms to the Federal Student Loan Program: Are They Good, Bad, or Just Ugly?

Over the last two years, Congress has passed legislation to simplify the federal student aid system and the House Education and the Workforce Committee is attempting to create opportunities for short-term Pell. Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Education continues to pursue an aggressive higher education agenda focused on providing targeted loan forgiveness to student and parent borrowers and increasing federal regulations around institutional accountability in order to identify and drive out low-performance programs. In this session, the Urban Institute’s Jason Delisle will discuss federal student loan reforms at the federal level and what it means for borrowers and taxpayers.

Introduction

William C. “Will” Shaffner, Director of Business Development and Government Relations
Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority

Speaker

Jason Delisle, Senior Policy Fellow, Center on Education Data and Policy
Urban Institute

12:15 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.

Lunch Break

1:15 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

State Actions Impacting the Higher Education Finance Industry

Over the last decade, a number of states have passed new laws aimed at promoting college affordability and protecting student and parent borrowers. From the creation of new Student Loan Ombudsman offices to new, annual disclosure requirements for student loan borrowers to new licensure requirements for federal and private student loan servicers and collectors, Governors, Attorneys General, and state policymakers are playing a greater role in higher education policy. During this session, a panel of experts will discuss current and future state efforts impacting the higher education finance industry.

Introduction

Vicki Shipley, Senior Advisor
National Council of Higher Education Resources

Speaker

Scott W. Kemp, M.A., Ed.S., Student Loan Advocate
Office of the Qualified Education Loan Ombudsman
State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

1:45 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Examining Major Proposals to Improve Federal Higher Education Policy

For more than a decade, federal policymakers, trade associations, think-tanks, and other stakeholders have discussed changes that they would like to see made to the federal student loan program to increase college access and success for students and families, reduce overborrowing, and improve the management of student loan debt. In this session, representatives from the higher education community will discuss their priorities for improving federal higher education policy and share their thoughts on current efforts moving through Congress and the regulatory process.

Moderator

Ron Gambill, Executive Vice President of Student Lending and Legislative Affairs
ELFI (Education Loan Finance Inc.)

Speakers

Sarah A. Flanagan, Vice President for Government Relations and Policy Development

National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities

MacGregor Oberfell, Associate Director, Governmental Affairs

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

2:30 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

Refreshment Break

2:45 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Higher Education Priorities of the U.S. Department of Education

From preparing new regulations on federal student loan forgiveness to simplifying the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, the U.S. Department of Education is at the center of efforts to expand college access and success. During this session, Federal Student Aid Chief Operating Officer Richard Cordray will speak about the FSA's policies and priorities to improve the federal student loan program for students and parent borrowers.

Introduction

James P. Bergeron, President

National Council of Higher Education Resources

Speaker

Richard A. Cordray, Chief Operating Officer

Federal Student Aid

U.S. Department of Education

3:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Meeting Wrap Up and Closing Remarks

Speaker

James P. Bergeron, President

National Council of Higher Education Resources

Friday, February 9, 2024

(Post-Meeting Activities)

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

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