

## Goals set for higher education policy

Work moves forward on reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. In March a coalition of 23 national higher education organizations made recommendations to Congress on a number of issues. The March 21 edition of *Academe Today*, the electronic supplement to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, noted that the recommendations proposed few sweeping changes in the law. The recommendations are organized around 16 goals for federal higher education policy:

1) Maintain and strengthen the focus on financially needy and moderate-income students.

2) Strengthen campus-based programs so that, together with Pell Grants, they will help reduce student borrowing.

3) Increase investment in early intervention and support services programs, such as TRIO, that help open the doors of college to low-income, first-generation college students.

4) Make borrowing in the federal student loan program less expensive for students.

5) Retain both the Ford Direct Student Loan Program and the Federal Family Education Loan Program and create a level playing field of beneficial student terms and conditions in both.

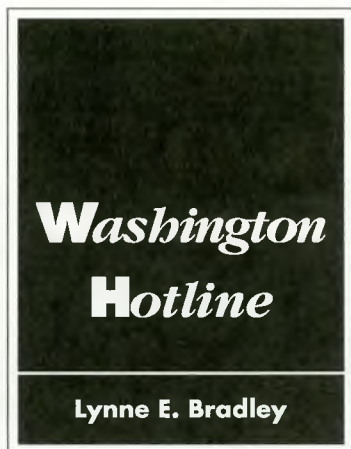
6) Reassess the process by which schools become and remain eligible to participate in the student aid programs and seek procedures that are more effective, efficient, and less intrusive than those currently in place.

7) Eliminate statutory provisions that have led to the development of regulations that are excessive and costly to implement, but that contribute little or nothing to net Title IV accountability.

8) Enhance accountability through modernization of student aid processing.

9) Explore new ways to expand federal/state partnerships in support of need-based student aid.

10) Congress should analyze current federal policies with respect to distance education and



determine whether modifications are needed to address the enormous opportunities that increasingly are available to students in this area.

11) Continue and strengthen Title II of the Higher Education Act.

12) Reauthorize the Urban Community Service program in Title XI of the Higher Education Act with minor changes.

13) The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) plays an important role in encouraging innovation in postsecondary education and should be continued.

14. Federal support for international education is increasingly important and necessary.

15. Maintain a strong and visible role in financing graduate education.

16. Replace the existing programs in Title V of the Higher Education Act with a streamlined new authority narrowly focused on the initial preparation of teachers.

Ten of these goals relate to student financial aid. Beyond that, the higher education associations have been strategically selective in choosing which other HEA programs to address. In general, programs or titles that are no longer operational or that have had no funding or minimal funding in recent years have not been included. Title II library programs, for instance, are not included, nor are several other programs. Said Edward M. Elmendorf, vice-president for governmental relations at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, "Given how intent the Republican-led Congress is on balancing the federal budget, it didn't appear as if anything major or radical would get past first base."

The joint recommendations also ask for congressional hearings on a number of key issues. Some HEA hearings have been conducted recently, although clearly there will be others in the coming months focusing on several or all of these specific recommendations. Note that while goal 10—concerning distance education—relates to the issues surrounding federal student aid for students enrolled in such programs, the called-for exploration by Congress

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of these new methods of teaching and learning could raise broader issues as well.

Overall, HEA reauthorization is a high priority of both the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee (where education is handled at the full committee level) and the House Education and the Workforce Committee (and its Postsecondary Education, Training and Lifelong Learning Subcommittee). ACRL and others concerned with academic library issues should review these recommendations and work extensively on their campuses with their respective presidents, deans, financial aid officers, etc., to express library implications of these key issues. ALA will continue to monitor the HEA reauthorization process.

### **Library Research and Demonstration Program available**

According to the *Federal Register* (March 27, 1997), applications are now available for the Library Research and Demonstration Program. The program provides grants to institutions of higher education and other public or private agencies, institutions, and organizations for research and demonstration programs related to the improvement of libraries, education in library and information science, the enhancement of library services through effective and efficient use of new technologies, and dissemination of information derived from these projects.

Institutions of higher education that meet the definition of eligibility under the terms of 20 U.S.C. 1141(a) and other public or private agencies, institutions, and organizations are eligible. This program is part of the "America Reads" Challenge, a major initiative announced by President Clinton on August 27, 1996, to ensure that all children can read independently and well by the third grade.

The deadline for applications is May 12, 1997. Approximately \$1 million is available. An estimated five awards at an average of \$200,000 for up to 24 months will be granted. For applications contact Chris Dunn, U.S. Department of Education, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Room 300, Washington, DC 20208-5571; phone: (202) 219-2299. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Services (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday. A copy of the *Federal Register* notice is available at <http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/announcements/1997-1/index.html>. ■

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