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Access and Persistence and the Reauthorization of the 1965 Higher Education Act

A Presentation by the Federal Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance

Work now underway in Congress to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 has significant ramifications for the board and the thousands of Washington students who rely on financial assistance to pay for college.

Staff of the federal Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance will brief the board on the current condition of access and persistence for low- and moderate-income students. In addition, they will provide an update on the committee's HEA reauthorization recommendations to Congress, with a special focus on the recommendations that may impact the programs and duties of the board. The presenters will be Nicole Barry, deputy director, and Erin Renner, assistant director. (Biographies of the presenters are attached.)

The Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance

The federal Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance was created in 1986 as an independent source of advice and counsel to Congress and the Secretary of Education on student financial aid policy. Heritage University president Sister Kathleen Ross has served on the committee since 2002.

The committee's statutory mandate is to:

- Provide extensive knowledge and understanding of federal, state, and institutional programs of postsecondary student assistance;
- Provide technical expertise with regard to systems of need analysis and application forms; and
- Make recommendations that will result in the maintenance of access to postsecondary education for low- and middle-income students.

The committee is especially concerned about the difficulties that students from low-income and disadvantaged families face when trying to access higher education. It has published several reports that have influenced the reauthorization discussion, including the following:

- *Access Denied: Restoring the Nation's Commitment to Equal Educational Opportunity (2001)*
- *Empty Promises: The Myth of College Access in America (2002)*
- *The Student Aid Gauntlet (2005)*

Committee's Recommendations to Congress

The committee has made ten recommendations to Congress related to the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act; three of these recommendations may specifically impact the programs and duties of the board. These recommendations are:

- Creating a system of early financial aid information to low-income 7th-12th graders;
- Simplifying the federal financial aid application; and
- Creating a national access and persistence partnership.

Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance*Biographies of the Presenters*

Ms. Nicole A. Barry is the advisory committee's deputy director. Prior to joining the committee in September 2003, Ms. Barry worked as a high school social studies teacher in the Baltimore City Public Schools and as the librarian at the International School of Trieste in Trieste, Italy. She is an alumnus of the Teach for America program and a current participant in the associates program of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. Ms. Barry has presented nationally on a broad range of issues related to access and persistence for low- and moderate-income students. She received an M.A. in teaching from Johns Hopkins University in 2002 and a B.A. in social studies from Harvard University in 1998.

Ms. Erin B. Renner joined the committee as an assistant director in June 2005. She previously worked as the assistant to the chief of staff for Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr. Ms. Renner received her Ed.M from Harvard Graduate School of Education in 2005 and her B.A. in political science and communication from the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 2002.