



2016-2017 ABTS Federal Legislative Platform

The Association of Big Ten Students urges Congress to ensure that access to higher education continues to be a fundamental value of the American experience; providing individuals across the country with an opportunity for success in a field of their choosing, and allowing higher education to serve as a catalyst for the economy and a vehicle for innovation while reauthorizing the Higher Education Act. Together, ABTS will advocate for the following to be included in the HEA.

Repeal the Student Unit Record Ban

- A federal student unit record system would make use of new and existing data collected by the federal government to create an accurate representation of how well institutions serve students.
- Congress already requires institutions that choose to offer federal loans and Pell Grants to report significant amounts of data to the U.S. Department of Education. Through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) the federal government collects information from more than 7,000 colleges and universities. IPEDS, however, was not designed to provide answers to questions that students, families, institutions, and policymakers now want about how well particular colleges and universities are serving their students.
- A student unit record system (SURS) would account for non-traditional and transfer students while the IPEDS formula does not account for such shifts taking place in higher education.
- The ABTS supports a federal student unit record system that would provide prospective and current students and their families with accurate information about the institutions to which they are applying in order to make higher education choices and investments.

Simplify the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

- Currently, the FAFSA is over 100 questions and notoriously challenging. It requires filing taxes, a process that remains difficult, especially for people with complicated work arrangements or family situations. It also requires a lot of information that may be difficult to know.
- Research indicates that millions of Pell Grant recipients refile a FAFSA year after year to get a very similar financial-aid package to the one they got the year before. Significant upward trends in income are increasingly rare for most people receiving financial aid.
- There are approximately 2 million enrolled college students who would have been eligible to receive a Federal Pell Grant but never completed a FAFSA, and of Pell Grant recipients who continue their

education, 1 in 10 do not refile a FAFSA. Research shows that many Pell-eligible students are prevented from obtaining aid due to the complexity of the application process.

Exempt Qualified State Student Loan Programs from the Federal Preferred Lender Requirements.

- The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (34 CFR 682.212 and 682.401(HEOA)) requires that postsecondary institutions follow onerous procedures before they can provide information or guidance to students and parents on non-federal loan options.
- The preferred lender requirements have impaired the ability of institutions to provide parents and students with critical information and guidance about non-federal loans, leaving them to make uninformed education financing decisions.
- An exemption for state-based loan programs will restore the partnership between state and federal education programs and enable postsecondary institutions to provide students and families with information about the less costly and more flexible loans.

End Government Profits on Student Loans

- Congress did not create federal student loans to generate revenue for the federal government, but to provide an opportunity for every young person who works hard and plays by the rules to pursue higher education.
- The Congressional Budget Office indicates that the federal government is expected to produce \$110 billion in profits from its student loans over the next decade.
- Profits could be used to relieve the burden of student debt for the nearly 10 million Americans in deferment, forbearance, or default.

Simplify Federal Student Loans and Repayment Programs

- Congress should work to simplify the many grants and loans that are offered to students and parents in order to reduce confusion and uncertainty in financial aid.
- Automatically enroll severely delinquent borrowers in an income-driven plan to help prevent defaults, and automate the annual income recertification process required for borrowers to continue making income-driven payments.
- Replace the multiple income-driven plans with one or two programs that are easy to enroll in and made aware to borrowers.

Pass the Respond, Innovate, Support, and Empower Students with Disabilities Act (RISE Act)

- Students with disabilities are graduating high school and enrolling in college at an all-time high, yet students with disabilities often face barriers in college that prevent them from truly excelling.
- Students with a history of having a disability in their K-12 education may have to undergo new, costly diagnostic testing once in higher education to demonstrate they qualify for disability services in college.
- The RISE Act clarifies that a past individualized education program (IEP), 504 Plan, or other type of documentation commonly held by students with disabilities, will be sufficient to establish a student has a disability in college.
- The RISE Act makes disability services easier for students and families to access and requires schools to adopt transparent policies regarding disability services.