

July 9, 2014

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Higher Education
and Workforce Training
U.S. House of Representatives
2350 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Luke Messer
Subcommittee on Higher Education
and Workforce Training
U.S. House of Representatives
508 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Foxx and Representative Messer:

On behalf of Apollo Education Group and University of Phoenix, I write to express strong support for H.R. 4983, the *Strengthening Transparency in Higher Education Act of 2014*.

Legislation to address the troubling shortcomings of data collected by the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) is long overdue. Currently, IPEDS collects data only on first-time, full-time college students who have never attended another institution. The database excludes students who transfer schools, start at community or other colleges then transfer to a four-year university, temporarily withdraw from school for personal or military-related reasons, receive academic credit for military service, attend part-time, or those who pursue on-the-job training or vocational certificates. Students who take a non-traditional path to college fit most of the above criteria and are not counted, resulting in highly flawed and incomplete data that does not effectively inform students and families about the return on investment they are making.

On April 11, 2012, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said, "Not all students take a linear path in their pursuit of higher education. Many students work full-time and are balancing family obligations while also attending school." Nearly two years earlier on October 30, 2010, Deputy Secretary of Education Tony Miller said, "Unfortunately, many states have big gaps in tracking student progress through college, as does the federal IPEDS data system. We don't universally collect and report graduation rates for part-time students, transfer students, or disaggregate graduation rates for low-income students."

Yet today students, families, and taxpayers are forced to rely on flawed, incomplete data. This problem is exacerbated for veteran students. Veteran students are highly motivated, resourceful and bring skills and experience to higher education that make them assets to any university or college they enroll in. However, based on the fact that nearly 100 percent of veteran students receive some level of academic credit for the work they performed during their military service, they do not qualify as "first-time" students, and are unilaterally excluded from the Department of Education's antiquated definition of a college student.

The *Strengthening Transparency in Higher Education Act of 2014*, goes a long way to improve consumer information to provide a more complete picture of all students, including working adult students and veteran students, streamline federal efforts to reduce confusion for students, and require better coordination by federal agencies.



As this important legislation moves forward in the House of Representatives, Apollo Education Group and University of Phoenix hope to see it evolve to garner broad bipartisan support so that students are provided the facts they need to make informed decisions on one of the greatest financial investments they will make.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Brenner', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Brenner
Chief of Staff
Apollo Education Group