

Charter: Task Force on Assessing Tuition- and Debt-Free Higher Education

APRIL 2016



Timeline & Commitment

Start date: June 2016

End date: September 2016

The task force will exist from June 2016 through September 2016. Throughout this period the group can expect to meet regularly by telephone and at least once in-person at a meeting to be held in Washington, D.C.

Composition

- Chair: Lisa Hopper, Director of Financial Aid, National Park Community College
- Members:
 - Victoria Goeke, College of Southern Nevada
 - Anthony Jones, Appalachian State University
 - Lianne Masterson, Blue Ridge Community College
 - Brandon McAnuff, University of Chicago
 - Kelly Morrissey, Mount Wachusett Community College
 - Scott Skaro, United Tribes Technical College
- NASFAA Staff Liaisons: Policy & Federal Relations team

Background & Purpose

The federal government invests significant dollars into higher education through the Title IV student aid programs within the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. These dollars, however, serve effectively as vouchers and follow the student upon his or her enrollment at an eligible institution.

Not since the passage of the Morrill Land-Grant Acts of 1862 and 1890 has the federal government made concerted efforts to provide funds directly to public-minded institutions in the name of access and affordability.

In January 2015, President Obama announced his signature higher education initiative: America's College Promise. The proposal would provide funding to states who waive tuition and fees at "high-quality programs" at community colleges and agree to increase investment through matching funds from the federal government. The president's plan costs an estimated \$60.8 billion over 10 years. Sen. Baldwin (D-WI) and Rep. Scott (D-VA) introduced a version of this plan called the America's College Promise Act in July 2015, which also included provisions for funding at HBCUs and MSIs.

Building off of the president's proposal, Democratic presidential candidates Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, and then-candidate Martin O'Malley unveiled proposals addressing college affordability through "debt-free college" or "tuition-free college," all of which follow a similar model of providing matching grants to states to support investment in community colleges and in four-year public institutions. Clinton's full higher education plan would cost \$350 billion over 10 years, and Sanders' plan would amount to \$750 billion over the same span.

The primary purposes of the Assessing Tuition- and Debt-Free Higher Education Task Force are to:

- Consider the implications and tradeoffs to specific types of institutions and to the broader higher education landscape in a tuition- and/or debt-free college system.
- Consider the role of states, local governments, and private enterprises in providing a tuition- or debt-free education, including the role of individual development accounts and college-promise programs.
- Identify the role and function of the federal student aid programs in the context of tuition- and/or debt-free higher education.
- Examine the details of these proposals, particularly student eligibility, COA implications, and institutional eligibility.
- Explore the merits of significant investment of federal dollars in tuition- and debt-free college and whether limited federal funds could be directed elsewhere for greater impact on low- and middle-income students and families.
- Discuss the potential impacts on student indebtedness.
- Meet with relevant stakeholders, including other organizations actively working toward tuition- or debt-free education.
- Produce an environmental scan, outlining all existing proposals, including their similarities and differences.
- Provide recommendations and considerations to the NASFAA Board of Directors in a written report.

Task Force Members' Duties & Responsibilities

- Attend all committee meetings and participate in the deliberations. Notify the committee chair and the staff liaison if circumstances prevent attendance at a particular meeting.
- Adhere to deadlines for submission of committee assignments;
- Review all agenda items and background documents prior to each meeting and come prepared for the discussions;
- Serve as recording secretary for a committee meeting if requested by the task force chair; and
- Utilize the most economical means of transportation when attending a meeting and promptly file a travel reimbursement request.

Indicators of Success & Outcomes

The task force will produce a report to the NASFAA Board of Directors with their findings at the November 2016 meeting.

Budget

The task force will have a \$10,000 budget, including travel to D.C. office for the in-person meeting.