

NACAC Supports Minibus That Preserves Federal Investments in College Access

Over the past year, access to postsecondary education has been attacked by the Trump administration and its attempts to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education. The withholding of congressionally appropriated funds, cancellation of federal grants, and an unlawful anti-DEI campaign have created widespread uncertainty — leaving students questioning whether college remains within reach and institutions questioning whether the federal government will be a reliable partner in supporting educational opportunity and the systems that make higher education a critical driver of our economy and society.

Against this backdrop, congressional appropriators have released a [minibus federal spending package](#) that includes funding for Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education ahead of the Jan. 30 deadline. If enacted, this legislation would represent a significant victory for students and institutions — and a clear rebuke of the administration's efforts to weaken federal education infrastructure. NACAC supports this legislation and the decision to provide stable funding for key education programs.

Keeping education programs at the Department of Education

The minibus reinforces congressional intent by ensuring that education programs appropriated by Congress remain at the federal agencies Congress has designated. This clarity is critical to maintaining program integrity, accountability, and continuity for students and institutions.

Interagency agreements (IAAs)

While the bill does not retroactively unwind existing interagency agreements, it places important guardrails around future actions by reaffirming congressional authority over program administration and funding. This helps limit further disruption and reinforces the long-standing role of the Education Department in administering federal student aid and higher education programs.

Funding levels that protect college access and affordability

The funding framework in the minibus prioritizes stability and rejects proposals that would have erected new barriers to postsecondary opportunity, particularly for low-income students, first-generation students, and students of color.

Specifically, the package would:

- **Maintain the maximum Pell Grant award at \$7,395 for the 2026–27 award year**, rather than adopting a White House proposal to cut the award by more than \$1,000. Such a reduction would have significantly increased unmet need, forcing more students to take on additional debt or stop out altogether.
- **Sustain funding for TRIO and GEAR UP at FY 2025 levels**, preserving programs that play a critical role in college preparation, access, and persistence for students facing systemic barriers.
- **Protect programs funded through the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE)**, including \$45 million for Postsecondary Student Success Grants and \$10 million for the

Basic Needs Grant Program — investments that support student retention and completion by addressing both academic and basic needs.

- **Maintain FY 2025 funding levels for the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)**, ensuring institutions can continue directing limited campus-based aid to students with the greatest financial need.
- **Sustain FY 2025 funding for Federal Work-Study (FWS) and Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS)**, safeguarding programs that help students balance employment, caregiving responsibilities, and academic progress.
- **Increase funding above FY 2025 levels for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and other Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs)**, strengthening institutions that serve as engines of opportunity and economic mobility.
- **Provide clear direction through an explanatory statement on congressional intent for program-level spending**, reducing uncertainty for institutions and students, and preventing the confusion around higher education grant opportunities experienced in FY 2025.

Next steps in Congress

Following House passage, attention now turns to the Senate. With the Jan. 30 funding deadline fast approaching, the Senate must act swiftly to pass this legislation and ensure continued funding for Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. This package represents a clear commitment to protecting college access and affordability by rejecting harmful cuts and maintaining critical federal investments that students and institutions rely on.

NACAC urges the Senate to advance and pass this legislation without delay. Doing so would provide stability for students and families, reinforce congressional intent to keep education programs at the Department of Education, and prevent further disruption to the federal partnerships that support postsecondary access, persistence, and success.

NACAC members are encouraged to urge their Senators to pass this legislation and maintain education programs at the Education Department. Sending a message to your Senators takes only a few minutes and can make a meaningful difference. [Tell the Senate: Keep Education Programs at the Education Department.](#)