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**Prepared for the Senate Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education**  
**and Related Agencies**  
**Addressing the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services**  
**Full Testimony**

**Introduction**

Subcommittee Chair Shelley Moore Capito, Ranking Member Tammy Baldwin, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Ted Mitchell, and I serve as the President of the American Council on Education (ACE). We are a membership organization that leads higher education with a united vision for the future. We galvanize our members to make change, and we collaborate across the sector to design solutions for today's challenges, serve the needs of a diverse student population, and shape effective public policy.

As the major coordinating body for the nation's colleges and universities, our strength lies in our diverse membership of nearly 1,600 colleges and universities, related associations, and other organizations in the United States and abroad. In fact, 88 percent of ACE's membership includes colleges and universities; five percent consists of national associations, four percent are affiliate members, two percent are regional associations, and one percent are international members.

ACE is the only major higher education association to represent all types of U.S. accredited, degree-granting colleges and universities. Our members educate two out of every three students in all accredited, degree-granting U.S. institutions. We serve over 680 Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), 75,000 higher education professionals, and 9.7 million students.

Given our vast membership of institutions of higher education and the millions of students they serve, I write to boldly advocate for investment in the federal programs that benefit both students and institutions of higher education. I also ask that language be included in all fiscal year (FY) 2027 appropriations bills clearly stating that the executive branch must fully implement the federal programs at the funding levels directed by Congress with no discretion to move funding to different programs.<sup>1</sup> Below are our requested funding levels for programs in the Department of Education (ED) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) from our members.

**Department of Education**

***Federal Pell Grant: \$7,595 Maximum and Cover Pell Shortfall.*** For FY 2027, the Pell Grant program is predicted to face a \$17 billion shortfall.<sup>2</sup> As a result of the bipartisan passage of the FAFSA Simplification Act of 2020, eligibility for the maximum Pell Grant expanded by 1.7 million additional students and increased access to the program for over 555,000 students. Implementing these bipartisan eligibility expansions resulted in available program funding to go from a \$14.6

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<sup>1</sup> In FY 2025, ED revoked funding for MSIs despite the allocation of funding for these programs by Congress. It is also projected that ED will not hold individual grant competitions for MSI programs in FY 2026.

<sup>2</sup> Congressional Budget Office. (2026, February). *Pell grant program: Baseline projections* [Table 4. Federal Pell Grant Program: Projected Cumulative Shortfall]. <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2026-02/51304-2026-02-pellgrant.pdf>

billion surplus in FY 2022 to a \$17 billion shortfall in FY 2027.<sup>3</sup> We support increased access to the Pell Grant for students and strongly believe that Congress should provide the necessary resources to fully fund the shortfall and place the Pell Grant program on a sustainable path moving forward. While fully funding the Pell Grant shortfall is our main priority, we also ask that Congress strengthen the purchasing power of the Pell Grant by providing an inflationary adjustment of \$200 to the current maximum.

***Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG): \$966.26 million.*** We are asking for at least \$966.26 million for FSEOG as it provides targeted, need-based grant aid of up to \$4,000 per student to over 1.6 million students.

***Federal Work-Study (FWS): \$1.31 billion.*** We are asking for at least \$1.31 billion. This program provides federal and institutional funding to support part-time employment for nearly 500,000 undergraduate and graduate students to help them pay their college costs and gain valuable work experience.

***Federal TRIO Programs: \$1.3 billion.*** We are asking for at least \$1.3 billion for the Federal TRIO Programs. Increased funding would strengthen the academic, financial, and cultural supports provided by TRIO and move the programs closer to their goal of serving 1 million low-income, first-generation students.

***Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness in Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP): \$410 million.*** At least \$410 million is requested as it would bring approximately 40,000 new students into the program and increase the overall number of students served to 626,000. Increased funding is needed to meet the high demand from communities, states, and expiring grantees to apply for new GEAR UP awards.

***Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN): \$28.6 million.*** At least \$28.6 million is requested for GAANN. These competitive grants offer support to top students studying in fields directly related and designated for current competitive needs. Increased funding for GAANN would allow for nearly 400 fellowships.

***Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS): \$75 million.*** We are asking for at least \$75 million for the CCAMPIS program, which helps low-income student parents enrolled in higher education access childcare.

***Strengthening Institutions Program: \$140 million.*** We are asking for at least \$140 million to fund this program. It helps community colleges and other institutions serve low-income students by providing funds to improve academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability.

***Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs): \$115.3 million.*** We request at least \$115.3 million for TCUs. Funding would support 37 fully accredited institutions. The majority of TCUs are 2-year schools, primarily located in regions of the Midwest and Southwest not served by other postsecondary education institutions.

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<sup>3</sup> The FAFSA Simplification Act of 2020 was led by then-Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. On December 27, 2020, President Donald J. Trump signed [H.R. 133, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021](#), into law that housed the FAFSA Simplification Act of 2020.

**Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs): \$585 million.** We are asking for at least \$585 million for HBCUs. This program makes 5-year formula-based discretionary grants to help HBCUs strengthen their infrastructure and achieve greater financial stability. These institutions work to serve low-income students from underrepresented backgrounds.

**HBCU Graduate Institutions (HBGIs): \$125 million.** We request at least \$125 million for HBGIs. This program makes 5-year formula-based discretionary grants to 24 postgraduate institutions that are identified in the Higher Education Act (HEA). These institutions work to serve low-income students from underrepresented backgrounds.

**Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs): \$40 million.** We are asking for at least \$40 million for PBIs. This program makes 5-year formula-based discretionary grants to support activities at PBIs such as academic instruction in disciplines that Black Americans are underrepresented; teacher education programs designed to qualify students to teach in public elementary or secondary schools; and community outreach programs that will encourage elementary and secondary school students to pursue postsecondary education.

**Masters Degree Programs at HBCUs and PBIs: \$25 million.** We request at least \$25 million in funding for this program. This program provides grants of up to 6 years in duration to 18 HBCUs that are identified in the HEA that make a substantial contribution to graduate education opportunities for Black Americans at the master's level.

**Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-serving institutions (ANNHs): \$24.85 million.** We are asking for at least \$24.85 million for ANNHs. This program makes competitive 5-year development grants that enable these institutions to improve and expand their capacity to serve Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian students.

**Asian American- and Native American Pacific Islander-serving institutions (AANAPISIs): \$18.91 million.** We request at least \$18.91 million for AANAPISIs. This program makes five-year competitive grants to these institutions to bolster student support services to all students on their campuses, especially those that identify as Asian American or Native American Pacific Islander.

**Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs): \$259.42 million.** We request at least \$259.42 million for HSIs overall. This amount includes \$231.64 million for the Developing HSIs program and \$27.78 million for the Promoting Postbaccalaureate Opportunities for Hispanic Americans program.

**Teacher Quality Partnerships (TQP): \$130 million.** We are asking for at least \$130 million for TQP. This program provides support for a variety of effective pathways into teaching and support for our Nation's educator workforce.

**Hawkins Centers of Excellence (Hawkins): \$45 million.** We request at least \$45 million for the Hawkins program. This program is designed to support a well-prepared pipeline of effective educators by expanding and strengthening teacher education programs at HBCUs, TCU, and MSIs.

**International Education and Foreign Language Studies: \$85.7 million.** For the Title VI international programs, we request \$85.7 million in FY27 which is \$5.1 million over FY26 and would restore the funding level enacted in FY25.

***Institute for Education Sciences (IES): \$853.9 million.*** For IES, we request at least \$853.9 million, which is an additional \$60.8 million over FY26 to account for inflation and provide the recommended rate of growth for research agencies.

## **Department of Health and Human Services**

***National Institutes of Health (NIH): \$51.303 billion.*** We support the community request of at least \$51.303 billion for NIH for FY 2027, which would represent a \$4.087 billion or 8.7% increase over the enacted funding level for NIH in FY 2026.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the aforementioned programs are critical to student access, persistence, and completion in higher education. Therefore, I strongly encourage you to invest in these programs by maintaining funding for these programs and providing needed increases to meet the needs of today. I appreciate your time and attention to my testimony, and I look forward to working with you during the FY 2027 appropriations process.

Thank you.