

BPC's Task Force on Higher Education Financing and Student Outcomes

LETTER FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

It is a time of remarkable and accelerating change in the U.S. higher education system. Institutions are innovating like never before, creating linkages with local economies, forging creative partnerships, and offering new opportunities, training, and skills. Since the Higher Education Act (HEA) was last reauthorized in 2008, colleges and universities have continued to serve growing numbers of adult learners, a trend that demands innovative teaching methods as well as additional resources to promote affordability. The past 10 years have also brought an explosion of student debt and a proliferation of distance learning.

These changes have occurred amid a transforming U.S. economy, one characterized by rapid movement away from manufacturing and toward service industries that reward technical skills. A middle-class lifestyle increasingly requires a postsecondary credential, whether it be a short-term certificate or a traditional four-year degree. Unfortunately, federal policy has remained largely centered on the latter, even though labor shortages exist in high-demand industries that often have differing educational requirements.

It is against this backdrop that the Bipartisan Policy Center has launched a Higher Education Task Force—to rethink the federal and state roles in higher education with the goal of better-promoting affordability and accountability throughout the system. We have agreed to co-chair this effort and are honored to serve alongside a bipartisan group of leaders with decades of experience in government, academia, higher education administration, and the business community. Over the next several months, we will deliberate on a range of topics in higher education policy, with the goal of articulating a vision for the future of public policy's role in postsecondary education—one that recognizes the changing student body, institutional transformations, and the demands of America's 21st-century economy.

In order for the United States to maintain a world-class higher education system, government must be responsive to this changing landscape. We must think creatively about how to address the serious challenges facing the system: rising costs and debt, stagnant outcomes, and an outmoded policy framework that is ill-equipped to promote accountability and serve an evolving student body. Only through reasoned debate, analysis, and compromise can we effect positive change and improve the higher education system for students and their families, setting the U.S. economy up for success in the decades to come.

Sincerely,



George Miller



Howard P. Buck McKeon

To learn more visit bipartisanpolicy.org/education.



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Task Force on Higher Education Financing and Student Outcomes

MEMBERS

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