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UB Undergraduate Student Association calls on Congress to advance student-centered policy reform

The University at Buffalo Undergraduate Student Association joined more than a dozen other statewide student associations in urging Congress to develop solutions that match the massive scale of challenges facing students today. The letter specifies a range of policy issues for lawmakers to consider as the Senate HELP Committee and House Education and Labor Committee begin hearings to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA). The student organizations collectively represent more than 6.1 million college students on more than 400 campuses.

The student leaders who organized the letter recognize the urgency of policy reform, as students face growing and continued crises around equity, student finances, and campus safety. Ultimately, the letter reflects the need for policy to be heavily student-driven from design to implementation. That is why elected student leaders from across the country have come together to create a set of student-centered policy principles to help inform higher education policy decisions. The students are urging Congress to ensure that the design and implementation of future policy are truly student-centered.

“Each and every day, college students face a wide variety of issues. Disproportional treatment, financial instability, and sexual violence just to name a few. It is imperative that students, and student rights remain at the forefront of the discussions around the reauthorization of the HEA” said SA President Gunnar Haberl.
In the letter, student leaders outline a set of principles they believe are critical to successfully addressing issues students experience every day. The letter asks lawmakers to consider the following priorities for HEA in a set of three major principles:

1. Cost should not be a barrier to high-quality postsecondary education
2. Equity is central to scaling student success
3. Higher education policy must protect students’ rights

“Students need to be heavily included in the HEA reauthorization process,” said Andy MacCracken, Executive Director and Co-founder of National Campus Leadership Council (NCLC), a national nonprofit that helped coordinate the letter. “It will be impossible to successfully create student-centric policy without significant student input. Students understand student needs better than anyone else,” he added.

Students outlined a range of policy proposals that support their principles, which include efforts to heavily expand the Federal Pell Grant and reinvigorate state investments in higher education. While the student leaders support efforts to address existing $1.5 trillion in student loan debt, they call for major action to reduce students’ need to so heavily rely on loans in the first place.

They are also calling on Congress to take action to address campus sexual assault, expressing concern over proposed Title IX regulations. The students wrote: “Sexual victimization affects roughly 1 in 5 women and 1 in 16 men on college campuses, leading to measurably poor student outcomes, including dropping out, increased prevalence of substance use disorders, and severely negative economic impacts.”

The student signatories represent a diverse array of more than 400 public institutions, including major flagship institutions, regional campus, minority-serving institutions, and community colleges. The letter, organized through NCLC, was a collaborative effort among more than a dozen statewide student associations and similar multi-campus SGA coalitions. The coalition plans to continue engaging in the HEA reauthorization process and beyond.
About the University at Buffalo Undergraduate Student Association

We are your undergraduate student government. We exist to make your undergraduate student experience everything that it can be. We represent you before the university administration, continuously advocating for your best interests. We also provide a wide range of services, oversee an ever growing roster of clubs and organizations and put on memorable events all year long.

The University at Buffalo Student Association is unique amongst SUNY schools in that we are entirely student run. SA is funded through student fees and ultimately overseen by our executive officers, the SA Senate and SA Student Assembly all of which are comprised entirely of undergraduate students. We are your Student Association.

About NCLC

National Campus Leadership Council cultivates, strengthens, and advances student leadership in higher education. Since our launch in 2012, we have empowered thousands of student body leaders at more than 500 colleges and universities around the country to develop the tools, networks, and skills necessary to confront exigent issues facing students today. We work closely with major higher education stakeholders in the public and private sectors to develop unparalleled resources and programs that support and elevate students’ success on a wide range of issues including college affordability, campus sexual assault, mental health, diversity and inclusion, environmental sustainability, and campus to career transitions.