

Dear Elected Officials of America:

The American Dream is only achievable in a society governed for, of and by the people. Indeed, those elected to represent us are tasked in the Preamble to our Constitution with promoting the general welfare. This is no easy task, but for 237 years, our representative democratic system has given the American people a strong and prosperous country. Unfortunately, many Americans are losing faith in this system. The perception of Congress as characterized by partisan agendas and congressional deadlock does not improve with a federal shutdown. It can be different. The United States Congress can be a place where the great leaders of the country come together, united not only to solve America's problems but lead the world into a renaissance of research and innovation as we have done many times before. We can begin to do this by honoring our commitment to America's undergraduate, graduate and professional students. In defense of this goal, we strongly oppose this government shutdown. We feel obligated to share with you the consequences of this avoidable government furlough and its impact on the American people.

Higher education drives our economy. It has done so for over 50 years. During each of these years, students have invested their time, energy, and money in American universities in order to improve their own chances at generating employment opportunities and improving society. Today's American students are no different, except that we have to contend with the reality of burdensome student loans, fewer job prospects, and now an interruption in our education. The government shutdown harms American students, the American dream, and American competitiveness around the world. The time has come to stop. As of Fall 2011, there are 21 million students in American colleges and universities.<sup>1</sup> We support all elected officials who can put their differences aside for the good of all students at American institutions of higher education, and indeed Americans and other concerned world citizens. We urge you to restart this process of student empowerment and economic growth.

Higher education is closely linked to federal funds. From STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) research grants to government research agencies such as NIH, NSF, DOD, NASA, to the Head Start child care services and the GI Bill's allocations to our veterans living the American dream, the shutdown affects not only higher education, but also the quality of life of people involved in educational endeavors. Students across the board are being hampered as many valuable programs lay in stagnation. At the moment, 11,000 researches are barred from the National Archives; databases containing thousands of terabytes of digitized knowledge are now inaccessible. Projects involving collaboration with the Bureau of Land Management, United States Geological Survey and United States Parks have ground to a halt.

At this very minute, thousands of principal investigators are waiting for their grants to be reviewed and approved. These grants not only fund their intellectual output, but also finances future and current postdoctoral researchers, undergraduate and graduate students. Moreover, students who have suffered

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<sup>1</sup> National Association of College and University Business Officers. October 12, 2012. [www.nacubo.org](http://www.nacubo.org)

from sexual assault have been demoralized, as federal investigations into poor University management of these heinous crimes have been classified as non-essential and left uninvestigated.

This list is by no means finite. In fact, it represents only the tip of the iceberg. Most agencies are doing their best to keep their ships afloat. If this shutdown continues, students will continue to feel the full impact of the economic collision caused by this use of congressional power.

The consequences of the government shutdown have clear effects on the higher education system and the American people as a whole. Students and families cannot wait any longer for Congress to act. Failure to end this government shutdown continues to alienate a generation of future scientists and leaders who hold great organizing capacity and political interest. America's best and brightest will begin looking elsewhere in the world to continue their cutting-edge research.

Congress has enjoyed an over 80% incumbent reelection record over the past 50 years. The current 10% approval rating of Congress reveals a much harder time ahead for current representatives.<sup>2</sup> The current status quo gives undergraduate, graduate and professional students cause to host a bipartisan rebellion at the ballot box next November.

We urge you to turn back this destructive tide and give us a reason to reconsider.

Respectfully<sup>3</sup>,

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<sup>2</sup> Phillips, Todd. "How was 91 percent of Congress re-Elected Despite a 10 percent approval rating?" *Huffington Post Politics*. 13 November, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> For Correspondence, Please Contact: USSA (202-640-6570), NAGPS (202.643.8043) or ASA (602-294-6900)