

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
GRADUATE-PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

Legislative Letters

February 12, 2019

Updates in Higher Education



Image Credit: Kaylynne Glover, "The Capitol"

Congress has until Friday to reach a deal that President Trump will sign, and we're expecting him to declare a national emergency if it doesn't fund his wall. Almost 97,000 comments were submitted on Title IX, mostly against the proposed changes. Meanwhile, the Graduate Student Mental Health Crisis is gathering attention, which we're hoping to get addressed in the HEA reauthorization - which Senator Alexander has said is going to happen by Christmas. Be sure to join us in 4 weeks on the Hill at our upcoming *Advocacy Summit and Legislative Action Days* to help us make our case!

To view previous editions and to subscribe to our newsletter, check out our [Legislative Letters blog](#)! If you have questions, suggestions, or are interested in contributing to the newsletter, or would like to be a part of the Legislative Concerns Committee, please contact the Director of Legislative Affairs, Kaylynne Glover, at legislative@nagps.org. To provide feedback on the newsletter, you can also follow the link at the end of the Letter to fill out a quick survey. To find out more about the ratified NAGPS [Legislative](#) and [Advocacy](#) Platforms, be sure to follow these links.

LEGISLATIVE *and* ADVOCACY UPDATES

The 2019 Spring Advocacy Summit and Legislative Action Days (LAD) is one month away! With a reception beginning on the evening of March the 8th, expect two days of training followed by up to two days on the Hill meeting with members of Congress.

As you prepare for the event, be sure to review the [live schedule](#) with up-to-the-minute updates on speakers and topics, which so far include the Council of Graduate School's Lauren Inouye, Vice-President for Public Policy and Government Affairs; Susanna Harris, Founder of Ph_Depression; Hanan Saab, Associate Director of International Policy at APLU; and David Goldston the Director of the MIT Washington Office. Don't forget to review our primers on [Congress](#) and [Legislative Advocacy](#) so that you are prepared for the sessions, and watch for our updated leave-behinds as we'll be posting within the next couple of weeks. We also encourage you to go ahead and reach out to your congress members and let them know you'll be in town and would like to meet with them. Go ahead and [register for the event](#), schedule your flights, and [book your rooms under our discounted room rate](#) that we've extended **until Friday, the 22nd, to get \$100 off on your rooms!**

We're also preparing our **Graduate Student Life Brief**, which will be our primary research document on the basics of graduate education. It will include why graduate education is important, what distinguishes it from professional education, what the problems are, and how policy makers can help us solve them. **To help us with this brief, we want to hear from you!**

Your Lives - Your Needs - Your Stories

Stories change the world.

We have the data - that graduate students suffer from anxiety and depression at six times the rate of the general population as we work for 6-8 years at near or below a living wage under advisors that are often controlling and toxic, if not abusive. But data doesn't change the world.

Stories do.

Only you know your story, of the struggles and the difficulties you've faced. But while we don't know your story, we can help you tell your story. Your story can help to improve the lives of thousands of graduate students across the country.

We're listening, and we'll make sure you are heard.

Website: <http://nagps.org/grad-student-stories/>

Email: GradStudentStories@nagps.org

Instagram: [@GradStudentStories](#) / #GradStudentStories

uuTwitter/Facebook: #GradStudentStories

In your submission, please let us know if you would like us to remove identifying information from your story.

THE SHUTDOWN

The longest shutdown in history is over, but if a deal isn't struck by Friday, it'll begin again, once again hurting the [800,000 workers who were affected during the last 35-day shutdown](#). The total estimated costs of the shutdown vary, with [S&P Global Ratings putting it at at least \\$6 billion](#) (ironically close to the \$5.7 billion being requested by President Trump) and the [CBO putting it at around \\$3 billion in net losses](#). The shutdown affected research as [funding for new projects was delayed for weeks, if not months](#), as agencies shift their priorities to taking care of other more pressing problems the shutdown caused. [The American Institute of Physics \(AIP\) has an in-depth summary of the impact of the shutdown on science agencies](#).

Congress had appeared to be [making progress on a deal](#), with both [Republican](#) and [Democratic](#) lawmakers expressing confidence in a bipartisan solution, and while it appeared that [talks had stalled](#) over [detention beds and barriers](#), an [“agreement in principle”](#) has been reached. The seventeen lawmakers would likely need to have something [drafted by early in the week in order for it to get through both chambers by Friday](#). The tentative deal includes [some type of fencing, well below the President's request, and doesn't limit the number that can be detained](#). If the President doesn't sign the deal, a continuing resolution is likely. President Trump seems [uninterested in shutting down the government again](#) (though his acting chief of staff stated on Sunday that another shutdown is [“absolutely on the table”](#)), and instead shows signs he's [prepared to declare an emergency](#), convinced that [Congress won't be able to come to an agreement](#). However, [lawmakers seem to want to avoid that option](#), which isn't surprising as [approximately 2/3rds Americans polled](#) want to avoid it, too, and it's almost certainly going to result in [lengthy litigation](#).

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Staff Changes

[The acting inspector general within the Department of Education \(ED\) for two months has been removed from his position, effective immediately](#). No reason was given.

Title IX

[The comment period for the proposed changes to Title IX drew nearly 97,000 comments by the time it closed](#), including one from [36 Senate Democrats](#) and one from the [American Council on Education](#) (which represents over 60 higher education associations). Most of the comments were against the proposed changes. The ED has to review all of them before it can release a final rule, meaning that it

may take a long time, which may buy opponents time to protect Title IX in other ways, including passing legislation or [pursuing litigation](#).

THE WHITE HOUSE AND OTHER AGENCIES

The State of the Union Address

President Trump delivered his [State of the Union address last week](#), and most of his nearly hour and a half speech focused on his immigration policies, though without mentioning the recent shutdown that was caused over them. There were elements of bipartisanship in the speech, primarily those that indicated a focus on infrastructure, healthcare, and family leave policies.

IMMIGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENT CONCERNS

Policy Change Impact

Last year witnessed a drop in international graduate student application and enrollment rates (of 3% and 1%, respectively), and it was followed this year by [another drop this year of 4% and 1%](#), as reported by the Council of Graduate Schools. International graduate student enrollment [hadn't dropped since 2003](#), and this pattern indicates that the U.S.'s policies on immigration are acting as a deterrent. [Inside Higher Ed has a comprehensive summary of the research findings](#).

H-1B Changes

[A final rule for H-1B visas has been published](#), and it will go into effect on April 1 of this year. The rule changes the order of the lottery, prioritizing applicants with advanced degrees, and is estimated to [increase the number of awarded individuals with degrees from the U.S. by 16%](#).

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

LEGISLATION

Higher Education Act

At a meeting last Monday at the American Enterprise Institute, Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN), chairman of the Senate HELP committee, has made it clear: [He wants a new HEA reauthorization by the end of the year](#) (Tip: Watch the video for the Q&A that included APLU's Craig Lindwarm asking about graduate and professional student loans). Whether it will happen within that deadline is unknown, but we can expect mobility on it in the Senate. He also discussed the three main items he wants to address in HEA: (1) simplifying the FAFSA, (2) simplifying loan repayment options that include an income-based option, and (3) increasing accountability for all institutions of higher education to

ensure that degrees awarded translate to jobs. The same remarks were given later to an *Inside Higher Ed* event, where he was followed by Chairman Bobby Scott (D-VA) of the House Education and Labor committee. Chairman Scott [emphasized the need for a comprehensive reform](#) that included increasing oversight and incentivizing states that increase higher education funding that, in turn, decreases tuition. Senator Alexander and Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), the ranking member on HELP, [have begun meeting to put together a comprehensive reauthorization](#), indicating that they are taking this seriously.

Meanwhile, the “Opportunities for Success Act of 2019” ([H.R. 792 \[116\]](#)), has been proposed in the House that would reauthorize the Federal work-study program and includes authorization for graduate student access.

Travel Ban

House and Senate Democrats have proposed [two companion bills that would prohibit federal funds to be used to implement President Trump’s travel ban](#).

FEDERAL BUDGET

[The President’s budget proposal is expected to get to Congress on March 11](#), and it’s expected to be unveiled in two parts - though not much else is known yet.

THE NEW CONGRESS

As committee assignments wrap up (here’s the [Senate HELP](#) and [House Education and Labor](#)), we start getting an idea of this Congress’s priorities. We already know that both education committees are serious about reauthorizing HEA, but we also know that the House Education and Labor committee is getting serious about [civil rights and human services](#) - they created a new subcommittee on just that in response to the ED policy changes (chaired by Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) with Rep. James Comer (R-KY) as ranking member). The chair and ranking member of the Higher Education and Workforce Investment subcommittee are Rep. Susan Davis (D-CA) and Rep. Lloyd Smucker (R-PA). Chairman Scott has also indicated that his committee will begin [investigating the Department of Education](#). In addition to HEA, we can see [this Congress focus on deregulation as well as free college](#), though these issues are likely to be contentious.

Congress is also getting pretty serious about climate change, an issue the last few sessions of Congress avoided. The charge is led, in large part, by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), and the committees on Energy and Commerce and the Natural Resources [are already holding hearings on the subject](#). The Chair of the Research and Technology Subcommittee is Rep. Haley Stevens (D-MI), and the chair for the Subcommittee on Energy is Rep. Conor Lamb (D-PA).

IN RELATED NEWS...

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND MENTAL HEALTH WATCH

The Graduate Student Mental Health Crisis is beginning to gain traction, as more and more reports of the emotional cost of graduate school come out. Scientific American released an article ([“The Emotional Toll of Graduate School”](#)) summarizing many of them, as well as the climate of graduate education behind the crisis. Other reports come from the [Council of Graduate Schools](#); [Nature Biotechnology](#), with a comprehensive global study of primarily PhD students; the [University of Berkley](#); the [University of Arizona](#); [Harvard University](#); [Belgium](#); and [Emory University](#).

There are two primary concerns: (1) an exceptionally poor work-life balance, demanding 60-80 hours a week for 6-8 years working less than 30,000 a year (at the high end), and (2) negative relationships with advisors and mentors, who directly control the progress and ultimate graduation of graduate students with little oversight or training.

OPPORTUNITIES AND WEBINARS

Webinar: Results from the Fall 2018 CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey

When: Tuesday, February 12, 2019, 2:00-3:00 PM EST

Host: Council of Graduate Schools (CGS)

Summary: Where does your institution stand with respect to national trends in international graduate student enrollment? Are other universities experiencing similar patterns, or is your university an outlier? This webinar provides an overview of the 2018 International Graduate Admissions survey results, and provide an opportunity for CGS members to share their questions and experiences. This webinar features a brief presentation by CGS researchers Hironao Okahana and Enyu Zhou followed by a question and answer session.

[Register](#)

RELEVANT READS

[Don't believe women in science face huge inequality? Here's the proof](#)

[How To Make Grad School More Humane](#)

[Grad School Is Hard on Mental Health. Here's an Antidote.](#)

[US Government Escalates Opposition to Chinese Talent Recruitment Programs](#)

[Assessing Betsy DeVos's Proposed Rules on Title IX and Sexual Assault](#)

[The History, Uses, and Abuses of Title IX.](#)

[ACE, Higher Education Groups Comment on Proposed Title IX Rules, Caution That Colleges Are ...](#)

[Scientists protest plan to weaken US gender-discrimination law](#)

[How Every Member Got to Congress](#)

[Other Jobs Outside Higher Education jobs](#)

[Higher Education Has Always Been Commercial](#)

[This Is Higher Education's Gilded Age](#)

[Analysis of Gains in Higher Ed State Funding](#)

[In Defense of Standardized Testing in Admissions](#)

[Giving to Colleges Is Up 7.2%](#)

REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

[Workbook For How Changes in Economic Conditions Might Affect the Federal Budget, January 2019, CBO.](#) This workbook allows users to enter an alternative scenario for productivity growth, labor force growth, inflation, or interest rates and see estimates of revenues, several types of spending, and deficits under those scenarios.

[The Budget and Economic Outlook: 2019 to 2029, CBO.](#) In CBO's projections, deficits remain large by historical standards, and federal debt grows to equal 93 percent of GDP by 2029. As the effects of fiscal stimulus wane, projected economic growth falls back below the historical average.

[The Effects of the Partial Shutdown Ending in January 2019, CBO.](#) CBO estimates that the partial shutdown delayed \$18 billion in federal spending and suspended some federal services, thus lowering the projected level of real GDP in the first quarter of 2019 by \$8 billion (in 2019 dollars), or 0.2 percent.

[Director's Statement on The Budget and Economic Outlook: 2019 to 2029, CBO.](#) This morning I briefed the press about The Budget and Economic Outlook: 2019 to 2029, which the Congressional Budget Office published today. I delivered the following remarks about that report. Also presented here are some answers to questions that I expected to receive.

[Analysis of CBO's January 2019 Budget and Economic Outloo, CRFB.](#) The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released its Budget and Economic Outlook today, projecting high and rising deficits and debt over the next decade and beyond.

[An Overview of The Budget and Economic Outlook: 2019 to 2029, CBO](#). Presentation by Christina Hawley Anthony, Chief of the Projections Unit in CBO's Budget Analysis Division, Robert Arnold, Chief of the Projections Unit in CBO's Macroeconomic Analysis Division, and Joshua Shakin, Chief of the Revenue Estimating Unit in CBO's Tax Analysis Division, at a joint seminar with the Congressional Research Service.

[Digest of Education Statistics 2017, NCES](#). The 53rd in a series of publications initiated in 1962, the Digest's purpose is to provide a compilation of statistical information covering the broad field of education from prekindergarten through graduate school. The Digest contains data on a variety of topics, including the number of schools and colleges, teachers, enrollments, and graduates, in addition to educational attainment, finances, and federal funds for education, libraries, and international comparisons.

FEEDBACK FOR LEGISLATIVE LETTERS

Our *Letter* is still new, and we would really appreciate your thoughts on it - after all, it's for you! So please follow [this link](#) to fill out a quick survey so that we can best meet your needs.

(The link was broken in the last edition - sorry!)