

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
GRADUATE-PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

# Legislative Letters

February 25, 2019

## Updates in Higher Education



Image Credit: Kaylynne Glover, "The Capitol"

The shutdown has been averted, and President Trump did declare a national emergency to fund his wall. Now that the new session of Congress is underway, higher education is definitely on the radar. In addition to the anticipated HEA reauthorization, several other higher ed bills have been introduced (or re-introduced), and we have a record number of relevant reads on higher education as everyone is chipping in on what needs to happen. Finally, we're only two weeks away from our *Advocacy Summit and Legislative Action Days*, and we've got what you need to know to prepare for that event - all inside!

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](mailto: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.

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# ADVOCACY SUMMIT *and* LAD UPDATES

This will be our last *Letter* before our **2019 Spring Advocacy Summit and Legislative Action Days (LAD)**, and two weeks from now, we hope you'll be with us on the Hill, meeting with legislators and advocating for graduate education. Be sure to check the [most recent updates on the schedule](#) to prepare yourself for training on graduate education policy, the mental health crisis, science funding, open access, the basics of congress and funding, and more.

## What do you need to do between now and then?

- 1) Contact your legislators and request a meeting. This can take a while, so if you haven't yet, do it today: Find your legislators ([House](#), [Senate](#)) and follow the links to their website (and contact pages), where you can either send them a message or call them directly. Feel free to reach out to offices to which you have a strong connection - are from originally or where you live now, even if you aren't registered to vote there. They might still be interested to meet with you.
- 2) Start your research. It's important to know how your legislators feel about our issues. Their websites are good resources, but you can also use government tracking websites ([GovTrack voting records](#), [VoteSmart](#), etc.).
- 3) Read the primers. Don't forget to brush up on how legislation gets passed, how committees are structured, and why it's important to know your own legislators' committee assignments - not to mention when to arrive, what to wear, what to expect, and why you need business cards. We've got primers to help you with this - one on the [Basics of Congress](#) and another on [Basics of Legislative Advocacy](#).
- 4) Review the leave behinds. Whether you choose to leave these behind with offices, or just use them as a reference document for your conversation, we've prepared some documents that can help you make your case - one on [Supporting Graduate Research](#), one on what we'd like to see in the [Higher Education Act Reauthorization](#), and on our [International Student Concerns](#). We'll be updating them right up to the event, so we recommend avoiding printing them off until you pack (we'll keep the most updated versions on our [schedule](#)).
- 5) Send us your stories. It doesn't matter that we have facts on our side - legislators respond to stories. The struggles you've faced can help us make your case, so help us help you. Find out more at our [Grad Student Stories website](#).

Our *Graduate Student Life Brief* is almost ready, so watch your emails over the next week for our guiding document for this year's legislative advocacy.

We hope to be seeing you soon!

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# THE SHUTDOWN *Averted*

A shutdown has been averted, as President Trump signed the funding bill and declared a national emergency to fund his border wall (see *Appropriations* below for more on what made it into this bill). Specifically, the national emergency declaration will [redirect funds from other programs and agencies](#) (\$600 million from Treasury [drug forfeiture], \$6 billion from the Pentagon [\$2.5 from drug interdiction, \$3.5 from military construction]). This action is highly controversial, and the President hasn't helped himself make his case when he said, "[I didn't need to do this \[to get a wall\], but I'd rather done it faster...that's all.](#)" [More than 6 in 10 Americans oppose the measure](#), and it is even splitting conservatives - [several business and conservative groups have officially come out in opposition to it](#), [23 former Republican members of Congress](#), and a [bipartisan group of 58 former national security officials](#). It's already being contested in the the other two branches of government. [Sixteen states](#) and several other groups, including the [ACLU](#) and [Public Citizen](#), have filed lawsuits ([check out the Congressional Research Service \(CRS\)'s document on its legalities](#)). [Additionally, the House has already drafted a measure to overturn it](#), and it'll likely pass without a struggle. It's even possible that it will pass in the Senate, given how unpopular it is with several conservative groups, but it's unknown it will be veto-proof - which President Trump has said he'd do.

## THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

### DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

#### Student Loans

The FY 2019 funding bill for the Department of Education (ED) included a directive to the ED that they [publicly disclose their student loan records](#), a directive prompted by reports that the ED has denied state and federal authorities from accessing records to pursue investigations or lawsuits. The ED has been given until March 5th to identify current requests and outline their disclosure policy.

The ED also signed a [five-year and \\$577 million contract with Accenture Federal Services to oversee the department's student loan collection](#), creating a single digital platform to manage its nearly 37 million borrowers.

#### Borrower Defense to Repayment

[Seventeen Senate Democrats are pressing the ED for more information on the exceptionally large backlog of applications for fraud-based loan forgiveness](#), a revelation that came out last year and that caused considerable backlash against the ED.

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## Title IX

Due to concerns over technical glitches that may have prevented some from submitting comments, the comment period for the proposed changes to Title IX opened for one final day, February 15th, during which [it received an additional 1,400 comments](#). The total number of comments is now nearly 106,000.

### Office of Science and Technology Policy

Kelvin Droegemeier, the new director of the OSTP, gave his first public speech and [outlined the office's policies](#), including improving R&D coordination and addressing harassment.

## THE WHITE HOUSE AND OTHER AGENCIES

### Staff Changes

Brock Long, the previous head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), [resigned on February 13](#), and President Trump has nominated [Jeffrey Byard as his replacement](#). He formerly worked for the Alabama Emergency Management Agency.

[William Barr has been sworn in as the next attorney general](#), having served in the position under former President George H. W. Bush. This position will have broad authority over the special counsel's probe, and Barr has said that he will not interfere in the investigation.

# THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

## LEGISLATION

### Appropriations

[The final appropriations bill for FY19 has passed](#), providing \$333 billion to fund the remaining federal agencies. It [contained \\$1.375 billion of funding for physical barriers along the southern border](#), considerably less than the amount requested by President Trump, and also less than the original bill that did not pass in December. It also contained funding for most of the science agencies: [the National Science Foundation \(NSF\) was approved for a budget of \\$8.1 billion](#), a 4% increase from last year; the [National Institute of Standards and Technology \(NIST\) for \\$986 million](#), an 18% cut, a drop largely due to a decrease in funds for facility construction ([see here for other agencies](#)). [The deal did not include](#) a month-long extension of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), backpay for contractors who lost money during the shutdown, or a package that provides disaster relief for recent natural disasters (including wildlives out west and the hurricane that hit Puerto Rico).

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President Trump is expected to [release his proposed budget for FY20 mid-March](#), at which point legislators will begin to negotiating the next set of bills.

## Higher Education Act

The attempt to reauthorization of the Higher Education Act continues, with [meetings occurring in both congressional chambers](#) to draw together a deal that brings together the top priorities of [Senate HELP Chairman Lamar Alexander \(R-TN\)](#) and [House Education and Labor Chairman Bobby Scott \(D-VA\)](#). Chairman Scott, along with Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), the ranking Democrat on the Senate HELP, have also committed to [reintroduce the “Child Care for Working Families Act”](#) that would expand preschool access.

### *Higher Education Legislation to Watch:*

“Opportunities for Success Act of 2019” ([H.R. 792](#)): reauthorizes the Federal work-study program and includes authorization for graduate student access.

“To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to direct the Secretary of Education to award institutions of higher education grants for teaching English learners.” ([H.R. 1153](#))

“Higher Education Dream Act of 2019” ([H.R. 1298](#)): Expands federal financial aid opportunities to Dreamers and prevents institutions of higher education eligible to receive federal funds from discriminatory policies against students because of immigration status.

“The Employer Participation in Repayment Act” ([S. 460](#) and [H.R. 1043](#)): Companion legislation that allows employers to provide tax-free student loan repayment assistance (up to \$5,250 per year).

“Graduate Student Savings Act” ([unassigned](#)): Reintroduction of legislation that allows students to save fellowship funds for retirement

## Immigration and International Student Impact

The Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Acts ([H.R. 1044](#) and [S. 386](#)) have been reintroduced in the House and Senate. These acts remove the pre-country caps for employment-based green cards and raises them for family-sponsored green cards from 7 to 15%. The legislation doesn’t increase the total number of green cards given per year, effectively creating a “first-come, first-served” system, and current graduate students would not likely be able to be considered for approximately ten years due to pending applications from previous years. [The CRS has released a report on its anticipated effects.](#) The bill has extensive bipartisan support, with 30-40% of legislators co-sponsoring it in each chamber.

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# THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

## LITIGATION

### Affirmative Action

[The final hearing over Harvard University's use of race in admissions has been heard](#), with a key distinction in the closing arguments being whether “motives matter” in discrimination. The highly anticipated ruling is not likely to come soon.

### Gender Identity

U.S. District Judge Arenda L. Wright Allen has ruled that [transgender student Gavin Grimm can sue his school to change his gender as it appears on his transcript](#). The ruling comes as an extension on a previous lawsuit over whether he is allowed to use male restrooms.

## IN RELATED NEWS...

### SOCIAL JUSTICE AND MENTAL HEALTH WATCH

[Student homelessness is on the rise](#), with 7% of students having experienced homeless at some point over a 3 year period, as reported by [the National Center for Homeless Education](#).

[Several senators solicited stakeholder input in regards to disparities faced by students of color](#).

### OPPORTUNITIES AND WEBINARS

#### Post-Doctoral Fellowship: Mellon/ACLS Public Fellows Program

Deadline: Wednesday, March 13

Host: American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS)

Summary: ACLS invites applications for the ninth competition of the Mellon/ACLS Public Fellows program. This year, the program will place up to 21 recent PhDs from the humanities and humanistic social sciences in two-year term staff positions at partnering organizations in government and the nonprofit sector. Fellows will participate in the substantive work of these organizations and receive professional mentoring. Fellows receive a stipend of \$68,000 per year and have access to individual health insurance, a relocation allowance, and up to \$3,000 to be used toward professional development activities over the course of the fellowship term.

[More Information and Application](#)

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## RELEVANT READS

We've got a lot of interesting articles this time, so we've grouped them thematically for your convenience:

### ***Higher Education: General***

[Americans with higher education and income are more likely to be involved in community groups](#)  
[Want to improve higher ed's public perception? Start here](#)  
[Higher Education Needs to Innovate. But How?](#)  
[Are Universities Political?](#)  
[Celebrating Higher Ed's Success Doesn't Mean Ignoring Its Challenges](#)  
[University of Missouri re-establishes graduate school](#)  
[Other Jobs Outside Higher Education jobs](#)  
[Higher Education Under the Microscope](#)  
[Strong stock market lifts higher education giving to record \\$46.7B](#)  
[Higher education finds itself in a "legitimation crisis."](#)  
[What Is the Purpose and Future of Higher Education?](#)  
[Higher Education vs. Homebuying Power](#)  
[Giving to higher ed will slow in 2019, Moody's predicts](#)  
[How can higher ed address the soft skills gap?](#)  
[The search for viewpoint diversity in higher education](#)  
[Making College More Affordable and Accessible](#)  
[US workforce is in danger, and it's up to universities to help turn it around](#)

### ***Higher Education: Social Justice***

[International perspectives on US graduate school experience](#)  
[Higher ed is pushing STEM diversity, but is change happening fast enough?](#)  
[How Universities, Students Can Advance Equity For Women Of Color](#)  
[Sexual Assault on College Campuses](#)  
[ACE Study: Racial Equity Gaps Still Plague Higher Ed](#)  
[Five Takeaways From The ACE Report On Race And Ethnicity In Higher Education](#)  
[Making her mark: women, clothing and the academy](#)  
[Higher Education Grants or Gifts of Interest to African Americans](#)  
[What is the point of higher education if it doesn't make people happy?](#)  
[Diversity lags among faculty at universities. Here's how Rutgers aims to change that](#)  
[Report Urges Increased College Support for 'Invisible' Native Students](#)  
[Higher education policy overlooked as key to women's progress, professor argues in book talk](#)  
[Loosening Standards, Widening Inequalities](#)  
[It's Time to Stop Marginalizing African Americans in Public Higher Education](#)  
[An Equity and Opportunity Agenda for Higher Education](#)  
[Ruling affirming the rights of students accused of sexual misconduct roils California colleges](#)  
[Workplace Harassment in Higher Ed: A Review of Sexual Harassment and Assault Claims](#)  
[The Changing Face of Postsecondary Students](#)

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### ***Higher Education: Policy***

[Democratic Contenders' Record on Higher Ed](#)

[Senator: Let's Take Student Loan Payments From Your Paycheck](#)

[House Committee Plans Hearings on Higher Ed](#)

[Simplifying Higher Ed Accountability -- or Complicating It?](#)

[Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Foxx Announce Five Bipartisan Hearings on Higher Education](#)

[States Increase Higher Education Funding By 3.7%](#)

[Trying Anew to Jump-Start Overhaul of Higher Ed Law](#)

[End of Government Shutdown and Higher Ed](#)

[Alexander's Loan-Repayment Overhaul](#)

## **REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS**

[Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education, ACE](#). This report examines data across 11 chapters that provide a foundation from which the higher education community and its many stakeholders can draw insights, raise new questions, and make the case for why race and ethnicity still matter in American higher education.

[Research and Development Expenditures at Colleges and Universities, Humanities Indicators](#). Data on the level and sources of funding for research and development (RD) at the nation's colleges and universities reveal modest investment in the humanities relative to other fields, as well as the much greater dependence of humanities research on direct institutional support.

[How CBO Develops the Economic Projections Underlying Its Long-Term Budget Projections, CBO](#). Presentation by Wendy Edelberg, an Associate Director for Economic Analysis at CBO, and Jeffrey Werling, Assistant Director of CBO's Macroeconomic Analysis Division, at the 2019 Social Security Technical Panel.

[Seven Resources for Understanding CBO's Role and Work, CBO](#). As the 116th Congress gets under way, I would like to highlight a number of multimedia, interactive, and analytical resources on CBO's website that Members of Congress and Congressional staff might find useful.

[An Overview of CBO's Life-Cycle Growth Model, CBO](#). The life-cycle growth model is one model that CBO uses to estimate the long-term effects of changes in fiscal policy. For example, the model can analyze the effects of changes to the Social Security system.

## **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.