

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
GRADUATE-PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

Legislative Letters

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Updates in Higher Education

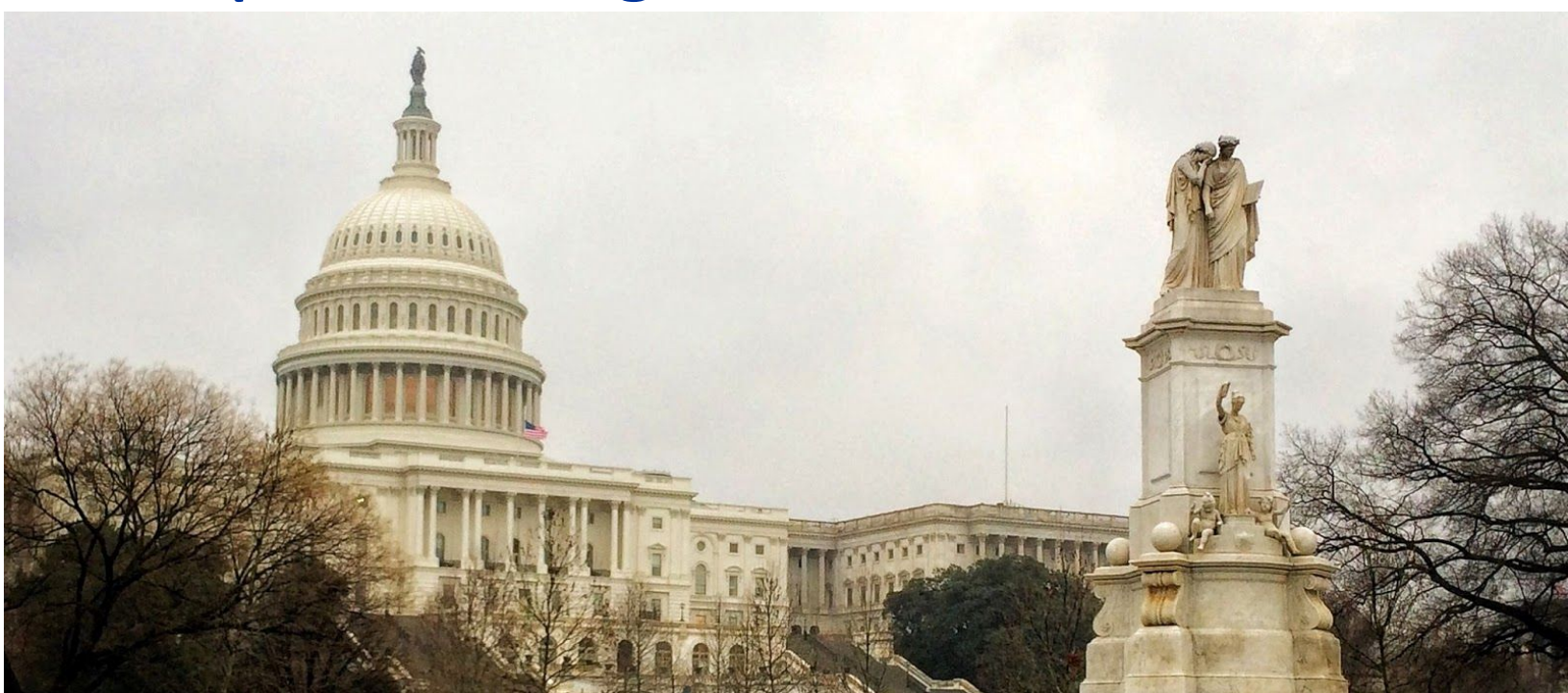


Image Credit: Kaylynne Glover, "The Capitol"

The Trump administration is solidifying its ties with private student loan companies: The new CFPB student loan ombudsman comes from a heavily-criticized student loan organization, and a former education official who has been fighting the borrower defense program is a judicial nominee. Speaking of borrower defense: Secretary DeVos has released its finalized rules which reportedly increases borrower burden. Meanwhile, the climate continues to worsen for international students: a PhD student from the University of Washington has been detained in Egypt due to "suspicions" regarding nature of his research, a Harvard freshman has been deported due to affiliation with others who have criticized Trump, and DACA applications are being denied for non-military applicants. But there is good news: CGS has launched a new initiative to tackle the graduate student mental health crisis, and new legislation has been proposed to protect funding for STEM education at HBCU's (and they need your support!) And LAD is only a month away, and we have new training materials, so [register](#) soon to see us in DC!

Kaylynne Glover, NAGPS Director of Legislative Affairs, legislative@nagps.org

2019 ADVOCACY SUMMIT *and* LEGISLATIVE ACTION DAYS

Our Fall LAD is less than a month away! Hopefully you've [registered for the event](#) and have [booked your hotel room](#), but there's still time if you haven't (though the room block discount closes in less than 2 weeks, so you should move quickly).

We have two new training documents (in addition to our Primers on [Congress](#) and [Legislative Advocacy](#)): **Our [Primers on the Funding Process](#) and the [State of Research Funding](#)**. We'll have two more for you in the coming weeks, along with brand new leave-behinds with up-to-date information from our sources on the Hill. And don't forget to check out the [schedule](#)!

We'll see you in DC!

FAARM **Framework for Accountability in Academic Research and Mentoring**

Research advisors in the United States must be effective teachers, trainers, and mentors to their graduate students and must take an active role in graduate student success and health.

The Project on the Framework for Accountability in Academic Research and Mentoring (FAARM) is a collaborative effort by graduate students, graduate student organizations (GSOs), and allies to propose measures that federal research funding agencies and other stakeholders in academic research can take to incentivize good training and mentorship practices by federally-funded primary investigators (PIs).

We propose a set of reforms that will address key aspects of this crisis:

- Routine data collection on grad student health and success.
- A standardized addendum for research funding applications asking about the training, mentorship, and professional development practices employed by the PI.
- Develop best practices in graduate student advising and celebrate success.
- Incorporate measures of effectiveness in skills training, mentorship, and job placement in the evaluation processes by which tenure track faculty secure tenure.
- And much more! Contact Daniel Curtis <oneforlogic@gmail.com> or the FAARM Team Primary Contact <faarmteam@gmail.com> to join the project!

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Borrower Defense Finalized Rule

Late Friday afternoon (8/30), Secretary DeVos released finalized rules to the “borrower defense to repayment” program that allows students who have been defrauded by their higher education institutions to receive loan forgiveness. While still being analyzed for their full impact, [critics claim the rules increase the burden on borrowers](#).

This change comes after two years of DeVos delaying the implementation of the Obama-era rules while they were drafting their own rules. However, [last October, a federal court](#) ruled that the Department could no longer delay. As of March of this year, [none of the 150,000 pending applications had been processed](#).

THE WHITE HOUSE AND OTHER AGENCIES

Expedited Cancelled Student Loan Debt for Disabled Veterans

President Trump issued an executive order that would expedite student loan debt relief for disabled veterans. Under the [Total and Permanent Disability \(TPD\) Discharge Program](#), disabled veterans who are disabled due to a service-related condition are eligible for a cancellation of federal student loans. President Trump’s executive order creates a new process of identifying eligible borrowers that is designed to make this process more efficient.

New OMB Chief of Staff

The White House’s Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has a new permanent chief of staff, Michelle Williams. The former chief of staff for Mississippi’s state treasurer, she is taking over for Wesley Denton who is returning to his role as senior adviser for the OMB.

EPA Rollback on Methane Emissions Regulations

The Trump administration has [proposed a rule](#) that would eliminate regulations on the oil and gas industry regarding the inspection and repair of methane storage and transfer systems. Methane is a particularly [potent greenhouse gas](#). Interestingly, this change has been opposed by some of the major oil and gas companies, suggesting that this proposal is, in part, motivated because it was an Obama-era regulation.

New CFPB has Ties to Private Student Loan Service

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), responsible for protecting consumers including student loan borrowers, [has a new private education loan ombudsman](#). Robert Cameron formerly worked for the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistant Authority (PHEAA), overseeing their compliance of state and federal laws, and has been heavily criticized by the CRPB in the past due to its treatment of borrowers eligible for loan forgiveness. He replaces Seth Frotman who resigned last year in protest of the Trump administration's treatment of student loan companies and for-profit colleges.

Former Ed Official is Judicial Nominee

The former acting general counsel for the Department of Education, Steven Menashi, has been [nominated to serve](#) on the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals. Menashi had been involved in attempts to delay several Obama-era regulations, including the borrower defense to repayment.

IMMIGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENT CONCERNS

PhD Student Prevented from Leaving Egypt

Walid Khalil el-Sayed Salem, a University of Washington PhD student was arrested in May of 2018 while doing research for his dissertation. He has not been charged with any crime, and is being held due to "[suspicions about the purpose and nature of \[his\] dissertation research](#)." He has not been allowed to leave the country which keeps him from seeing his family and from completing his degree.

Palestinian Harvard Freshman Deported for Affiliation with Trump Criticism

Ismali Ajjawi, along with several other international students, was detained for several hours after arriving at Boston Logan International Airport. While the students were questioned and released, Ajjawi was not. In his statement, Ajjawi said that his phone and laptop was searched for five hours, after which an officer [interrogated him about the social media activity of his friends which criticized the Trump administration](#). The officer then cancelled his visa and sent him back to Lebanon.

Concerns over Intellectual Espionage

As previously reported, U.S. intelligence is [cracking down on potential threats](#) to economic and intellectual espionage cases, [over 90% of which involve China](#). As a result, researchers and institutions are under increased scrutiny - scrutiny criticized by some as [crossing lines](#) - and some institutions are [re-evaluating policies](#) regarding foreign researchers. Meanwhile, a Kansas researcher has been [indicted on federal charges](#) of wire and program fraud for failing to disclose that he was employed by a Chinese university while also doing federally-funded research at the University of Kansas.

Deferred Action Denied for Non-Military Applicants

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) [stopped accepting and processing non-military deferred action](#) applicants on August 7, though this was only confirmed on August 23th. Deferred action recipients are allowed to stay and work in the U.S. legally, a status granted for several reasons, including for [children needing medical treatment](#) (“medical deferred action”). Some families under medical deferred action have been told they have 33 days to leave the country or be deported.

Citizenship Not Guaranteed for All Children of Citizens Born Abroad

The USCIS has changed its policy of automatically granting citizenship status to the children of government employees and military personnel living abroad. Instead, for those in certain circumstances, [parents must apply for citizenship for their children](#) before they turn 18. President Trump has also stated that he is seeking ways to [end birthright citizenship](#).

DACA Survey

Researchers at the University of California, San Diego, United We Dream, and the National Immigration Law Center have launched their [fifth annual DACA survey](#). This is for anyone who holds or has ever held DACA status, or who is DACA-eligible. Please share with those who you know may be eligible. If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to cflores@americanprogress.org.

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

LEGISLATION

Education Legislation

A bicameral bipartisan effort is underway to [retain funding for enhanced STEM education at minority-serving institutions](#) under a program set to expire on September 30th. The legislation, the Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education (FUTURE) ([S. 1279](#) and [H.R. 2486](#)), is being co-sponsored by Senators Dough Jones (D-AL) and Tim Scott (R-SC) and Representatives Alma Adams (D-NC) and Mark Walker (R-NC). [The United Negro College Fund \(UNCF\) has launched a campaign asking for support.](#)

THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

THE SUPREME COURT

DACA

The Department of Justice (DOJ) submitted a [legal brief to the Supreme Court](#) arguing that the Trump administration's attempts to rescind Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was not unlawful, as had been [ruled on appeal last November](#). The Supreme Court is [scheduled to hear arguments this November](#) and will likely issue a ruling next spring or summer.

IN RELATED NEWS...

CAMPUS CLIMATE

Graduate Student Mental Health Crisis

The graduate student mental health crisis [continues to draw national attention](#), with reports of inappropriate behavior by research advisors mounting (see studies reported [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). This includes news of a research center requiring graduate students to [sign nondisclosure agreements](#) while also subjecting them to “[a culture of sexual harassment](#)” and a lawsuit being filed against a university program who removed a student after complained about [inappropriate behavior](#) from her supervisor. Seven faculty at the [University of Illinois-Urbana](#) have been investigated the past few years for sexual harassment, many of which toward students working as researchers under them. Unsurprisingly, the mental health of marginalized students is worse, with gender-nonconforming students [more than four times](#) more likely to report issues.

The often toxic environment of graduate education is compounded by student debt; [borrowing rates for older students](#), who are more likely to be graduate students, has increased more than younger students, and while earning an advanced degree will help overall earning potential, the [high-paying jobs earn less than the debt](#) that has been acquired, making graduate school the “culprit” behind the student loan crisis. Even after graduating, it can take a [long time to find a job](#).

Education advocacy groups and institutions of higher education are beginning to turn their attention to addressing this crisis. This includes efforts to [destigmatize mental health problems](#), expand grad student [non-academic training](#), and emphasize that [student voices are necessary](#) to improve education.

Significantly, the [Council of Graduate Schools](#) (CGS) has announced a new two-year initiative in collaboration with [The Jed Foundation - Supporting Mental Health and Wellness of Graduate](#)

[Students](#). Highlighted in a [recent Nature article](#), this effort intends to address the root causes of the crisis and determine the best practices for student success. Dr. Susan Ortega, President of CGS, said that grad student mental health problems persists because [graduate student issues often go unaddressed](#) in favor of undergraduate concerns. Particular emphasis will be paid to [underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities](#).

RELEVANT READS

Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice

[Women-only STEM college programs under attack for male discrimination](#)

['Go Back to Your Country' A Direct Threat to US Higher Education](#)

[Belief in Gender Bias and Promotions for Women](#)

[OSU Graduate School Dean Discusses 'Great Strides' in Diversity](#)

[Retaining Faculty of Color: Costs and Consequences](#)

[NSF graduate fellowships disproportionately go to students at a few top schools](#)

[Virginia Tech's DePauw Oversees Multifaceted Approach to Grad School Diversity](#)

[Project forges pathways for underrepresented faculty](#)

[Stop treating medical residents like indentured servants](#)

[What's Up With MeTooSTEM?](#)

[Why Has Black-Student Enrollment Fallen?](#)

[Temple Promoting Healthy Attitude Toward Grad Student Success](#)

[Academic Minute: Minority Students and Science Achievement](#)

[University President Hosts Student in Need of Place to Stay](#)

The State of Higher Education

[Ending Tuition Unfairness for Online \(and Part-Time\) Students](#)

[Academic and Political Elitism](#)

[Teaching in the Age of Me Too](#)

[College Board Overhauls 'Adversity Index'](#)

[Arizona Dreamers to Receive Reduced Tuition Rates at State Universities](#)

[A Contingent Faculty Compromise](#)

[Colleges Urged to Make More Data-Driven Decisions](#)

[Universities Face Federal Crackdown Over Foreign Financial Influence](#)

[College Found to Discriminate on Mental Health](#)

[Research Misconduct at U Kentucky](#)

[New From Pew: A Deepening Distrust Of Higher Education And Other American Institutions](#)

Higher Education Policy

[Persistent Partisan Breakdown on Higher Ed](#)

[The Growing Partisan Divide in Views of Higher Education](#)

[Survey: Canceling Student Debt Would Hurt Economy](#)

[Why Conservatives Are Turning Against Higher Education](#)

[Income sharing agreements could mean interest rates for students above 18%](#)

[Biden Reveals Higher Education Policy Ideas While Talking to a Student](#)

[Making Financial Aid Work for All: NASFAA Releases Priorities for Higher Education Act](#)

[Senate Democrats Oppose Industry-Recognized Apprenticeships](#)

[Making Financial Aid Work for All: NASFAA Priorities for HEA](#)
[Republicans Changed Their Mind About Higher Education Really Quickly](#)
[Advocates File Amicus Brief to Defend Students Against Navient Corporation](#)

REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

[Distribution of Students Among Higher-Education Paths by Family Socioeconomic Status, 2016, Chronicle of Higher Education.](#) More than 44 percent of students who were ninth graders in 2009 and whose families were in the lowest quintile for socioeconomic status never enrolled in college, compared with only 7 percent of students from the highest quintile.

[Director’s Statement on An Update to the Budget and Economic Outlook: 2019 to 2029, CBO.](#) Today, CBO released An Update to the Budget and Economic Outlook: 2019 to 2029. In that report, we provide our latest projections of the federal budget and the U.S. economy under current law for this year and the decade that follows.

[An Update to the Budget and Economic Outlook: 2019 to 2029, CBO.](#) In CBO’s projections, federal budget deficits remain large by historical standards, and federal debt grows to equal 95 percent of GDP by 2029. Economic growth is expected to slow from 2.3 percent in 2019 to a rate that is below its long-run historical average.

[The Effects of Tariffs and Trade Barriers in CBO’s Projections, CBO.](#) In CBO’s newly published economic projections, higher trade barriers—in particular, increases in tariff rates—implemented by the United States and its trading partners since January 2018 reduce the level of real (that is, inflation-adjusted) U.S. gross domestic product by roughly 0.3 percent by 2020.

[CBO’s Updated Economic Forecast for the 2019–2029 Period, CBO.](#) If current laws governing federal taxes and spending generally remained in place, the economy would expand by 2.3 percent this year and then grow at an average annual rate of 1.8 percent over the next decade, CBO projects.

Want to let us know how we can improve? [Give us feedback!](#)