

NEWSLETTER

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HIGHER EDUCATION ACT RENEWED

- CARINA ZARAGOZA

The Higher Education Act of 1965 was overwhelmingly approved on Thursday, February 7, 2008. The House of Representatives voted 354-58 to approve the reauthorization of the bill (H.R. 4137).

The key legislation, known as the College Opportunity and Affordability Act, would toughen the regulation of the student loan industry as well as simplify the financial aid award process. The legislation also puts pressure on colleges and universities to contain the rising cost of attendance.

While the House approved the HEA by a wide margin, the Bush administration issued a statement in which it announced it found fault with nearly every major provision of the bill. Among the criticisms, the administration believes the bill creates four new "costly and duplicative federal programs" and restricts the Department of Education's authority to regulate higher education accreditation, allowing more freedom for colleges to measure student learning outcomes. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings opposes this provision as well. However, the administration stopped short of stating it would veto the bill.

Prior to the reauthorization, an attempt was made by Representative Danny Davis (D-IL) to amend the bankruptcy code to allow the discharge of private education loans. Davis and other advocates for students argued that because private education loans have become a major source of funding due to lack of alternative options (federal and otherwise) and because of the high cost of borrowing private education loans, this type of debt should be considered consumer debt. The amendment appeared to have passed in a

voice vote, but later it was discovered that it was defeated by a 236-179 vote (19 members did not vote). Had the amendment passed, students would have been able to discharge their private education loans after five years in bankruptcy.

Last renewed in 1998, the Higher Education Act bill addresses many issues:

- The Department of Education will have more authority to regulate private education loans. This provision comes out of the investigations into lenders' practices of drawing business by enticing schools.
- Students will be allowed to receive the Pell Grant year-round rather than only during the traditional school year.
- Changes will be made to the Academic Competitiveness Grant Program that will make the grants available to part-time students as well as students earning certificates rather than degrees. The program benefits low-income students but until now has not been effective in assisting students with funding their education.
- The Department of Education will develop a list of accredited institutions and a list of accrediting schools. The purpose of the lists is to crack down on diploma mills.

On the Net

Higher Education Washington Inc.
www.hewi.net

Inside Higher Ed
www.insidehighered.com

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SECRETARY SPELLINGS ANNOUNCES NEW TEACHING AMBASSADOR FELLOWSHIP

- CARINA ZARAGOZA

Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings has announced the new Teaching Ambassador Fellowship Program. The fellowships offer positions with the U.S. Department of Education for teachers to share their input with policymakers. The Teaching Ambassador Fellowship Program will initiate its first cohort in the 2008-2009 school year.

The program will be composed of up to 20 classroom fellows who will continue to work as teachers but also work as part-time employees at the Department of Education. These fellows will be assigned various projects within the Department of Education. The program also calls for up to five Washington fellows, who will work full-time as federal employees in Washington, DC, collaborating on education programs and policy deliberations.

Public school teachers from across the country can apply for the program but must meet eligibility requirements. Among these are:

- They must currently teach at a U.S. K-12 school.
- They must have three years' teaching experience.
- They must meet their state's highly qualified teacher requirements.
- They must be U.S. citizens.
- They must obtain a recommendation from a principal.

The Teaching Ambassador Fellowship Program provides public school teachers with leadership roles and opportunities to participate in the education policymaking process. The Department of Education is seeking to tap into the knowledge and experience of public school teachers to better develop education programs and policies. The

Department of Education anticipates fellows will collaborate directly with district, state, and federal officials to shape national policy on education.

The Department of Education has outlined the goals of the program as follows:

- To recognize motivated and innovative public school teachers and provide them with leadership roles outside the classroom.
- To improve education programs and policies. Efforts will be made to connect policy to the realities of the classroom.
- To assist teachers with voicing their opinions, needs, and ideas within the education community and throughout the country.
- To encourage principals to work with program fellows to promote collaboration at the school level.

The program will begin in the summer of 2008 with a convention outlining the details of the program to fellows. Each fellow will also be matched with a government liaison and be responsible for the completion of projects, including a collaborative class project. Upon completion of the program, fellows will be encouraged to create community leadership groups to further the program's mission.

On the Net

U.S. Department of Education
www.ed.gov

NEWSLETTER

NEWS IN BRIEF

UCLA LAW WILL RECEIVE \$1.5 MILLION

The Shapiro Family Foundation has made a commitment to the UCLA School of Law of \$1.5 million. The money will go toward the Pete Kameron Endowed Chair in Law, which honors music industry legend and philanthropist Pete Kameron. Kameron, who has come to be known as a legend at the law school, is close friends with Ralph Shapiro, and together they have established the Pete Kameron Fund and the Pete Kameron Scholarship Fund at the school so far. The funds provide encouragement and support for students who are dedicated to music, entertainment, and media law.

TOURO LAW SCHOOL TO BE PURCHASED?

It's reported that Stony Brook University is allegedly interested in buying Touro Law School. Touro, located in Central Islip in New York, is a smaller law school but one that has been making a name for itself. The state senate's chairman of higher education is reportedly happy about

the idea of the merger. Although there is no official word yet, talks are being held regarding the future of the law school, which was formerly known as the Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center. If the purchase happens, Touro will become the second law school in New York's state university system, the first one being the University at Buffalo Law School. No final decision will be made until all negotiations are worked out. The final vote will come from the school's president, Bernard Lander, and the college's board of trustees, according to officials.

UC BERKELEY TO GET NEW LAW SCHOOL BUILDING

Thanks to \$56 million, UC Berkeley will be constructing a new law school building. Deemed the Law School Infill Project, the plan includes a "50,000-square-foot building in the courtyard adjacent to the existing building." There will also be a renovation of the current building of up to 10,000 square feet. The school has now made a list of potential bidders and will be receiving bids from firms until the latter part of February.