



COLLEGE ACCESS AGENDA

As education professionals dedicated to helping all students make the transition to postsecondary education, National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) members consider improving college access to be the number one educational priority for the association. Based on the association's research and observing trends in the ever-changing educational landscape, NACAC has identified three major policy priorities that focus on college access and success.

Access to Quality Counseling

Rationale Access to quality counseling is a critical component of students' postsecondary educational planning and enrollment.

Recommendations

- * Provide maximum funding for Title IV, Part A (Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants) of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to expand the capacity of states and school districts to "provide mentoring and school counseling to all students."
- * Ensure that Title IV, Part A grant recipients emphasize college readiness and collaboration with other school-based staff to reduce barriers to learning.
- * Increase funding for GEAR UP and TRIO, federal programs that provide college counseling and early awareness services to students in underserved communities.

Need-Based Financial Aid

Rationale Need-based financial aid programs are the most effective college access and success programs. Efforts to preserve and/or improve the purchasing power of grants would further improve college access.

Recommendations

- * Maintain investment in the Pell Grant so that the maximum award keeps pace with the cost of postsecondary education and students can avoid a shortfall in tuition and fees.
- * Increase investment in need-based aid programs, including Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG) and Work Study, so that students can cover additional fees that create barriers to completion.
- * Implement measures to improve access to student aid through simplification of the FAFSA application process and providing more affordable interest rates for student borrowers.

Rigorous Curriculum for All Students

Rationale According to NACAC admission professionals, rigorous coursework is the most important factor in admission decisions. Given the small share of education funding provided by the federal government, the federal role should be to provide incentives to states to encourage innovation in this area.

Recommendations

- * Broaden allowable uses of Title I ESSA funds to allow the neediest high schools to develop and support innovative approaches to improving curriculum and supporting well-rounded education, including dual enrollment or early college programs in partnerships with colleges and universities.
- * Help states make K-12 funding equitable. Improved access to resources means improved opportunities for student achievement and improved postsecondary options.