

nassgap

national association of state student grant and aid programs

www.nassgap.org (571) 239-0511

Bart Astor
Director, Washington Office

January 19, 2007

Margaret Spellings, Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington DC 20202

Dear Secretary Spellings

I am writing to you as president of the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP) to offer our association's support for your initiative of launching a public awareness campaign with the message, "The most costly education is the one not begun."

As an association of state student grant agencies, our members are acutely aware of the need to make college more affordable, to ensure that all families are aware of the many financial aid programs available, and to streamline the financial aid process. The Department of Education's public awareness campaign and initiatives such as the College Access Initiative which grew out of the Higher Education Reconciliation Act, are national efforts that can only promote our common goals of awareness, access, and affordability.

As the national public awareness campaign gets underway during these first few months of the new year, there are many creative and crucial activities also taking place at the state level that help students and their families understand and navigate the financial aid application process. Whether it is initiated by state grant agencies, loan guaranty agencies, associations of financial aid administrators, or postsecondary institutions, states across the nation are reaching out to their residents during this critical aid application timeframe and helping an untold number of students take steps to fulfill their educational dreams.

A poll of state grant agencies, the results of which are attached to this email, reveals a wide array of activities taking place in the current and coming months that range from College Goal Sundays to public service announcements to direct mailings to students. All of these activities compliment greatly the Department's public awareness initiative and demonstrate the partnership and common goals that NASSGAP and states share with the Department.

President
Mary Ann Welch
Rhode Island Higher
Education Assistance
Authority
560 Jefferson Blvd
Warwick, RI 02886
(401) 736-1171
mawelch@riheaa.org

President-Elect
Marilyn Cargill
Vermont Student
Assistance
Corporation
P.O. Box 2000
Champlain Mill
Winooski, VT 05404
(802) 655-9602
cargill@vsac.org

Secretary
Vicki Merkel
Oregon Student
Assistance
Commission
1500 Valley River Dr,
Suite 100
Eugene, OR 97401
(541) 687-7385
vicki.b.merkel@state.or.us

Treasurer
Lee Andes
State Council of Higher
Education for Virginia
James Monroe Bldg 10th
Floor
101 North 14th Street
Richmond, VI 23219
(804) 225-2614
leeandes@schev.edu

Past-President
Melanie Amrhein
Louisiana Office of
Student Financial
Assistance
PO Box 91202
Baton Rouge, LA
70821
(225) 922-3269
mamrhein@osfa.state.la.us

Member-at-Large
Lois Hollis
Texas Higher Education
Coordinating Board
P.O. Box 12788
Capital Station
Austin, TX 78711
(512) 427-6465
lois.hollis@theeb.state.tx.us

Member-at-Large
Stephanie Butler
Alaska Commission on
Postsecondary Education
PO Box 110505
Juneau, AK 99811-0505
(907) 465-6743
stephanie_butler@acpe.state.ak.us

NASSGAP applauds and supports your recent initiative and continued effort to address college access and affordability. Please know that our members are always available to work with you and your staff in meeting our common goals.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Welch, President
NASSGAP, 2006-07

Cc: Undersecretary Sara Martinez Tucker
Cheryl Oldham
Kristin Conklin