

# nassgap

**national association of state student grant and aid programs**  
[www.nassgap.org](http://www.nassgap.org)

**Marie A. Bennett, Director, Washington Office**  
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January 26, 2009

The Honorable

Dear :

As President of the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP), I write to thank you for the inclusion of higher education access programs in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

The improvement of higher education access and degree attainment by our nation's citizens will help power us out of the current recession and into a new era of economic growth and vitality. Programs such as the Pell Grant and College Work Study help needy families break the generational chains of poverty and social dependence, thus strengthening our nation's ability to meet the considerable challenges of world competition.

A recent Lumina Foundation report confirms that the higher education achievement levels of our citizens, once clearly superior, are falling behind those of other nations. At the same time, the fastest growing segments of our population are those with historically the lowest levels of education. If unchecked, these converging patterns will undermine our nation's ability to provide a high quality of life for its citizenry. Our ability to develop, implement and maintain the technology necessary for our national security will also be at risk.

As you refine your stimulus legislation, we encourage you to look to the states as partners. Last year, our member state student aid agencies, using data primarily collected via the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), awarded \$9.3 billion in financial aid to college students, overwhelmingly through need-based student grants. We partner with the federal government, on a matching funds basis, in awarding higher education access funds through the Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (LEAP) program and College Access Challenge Grants, authorized in Title IV of the Higher Education Act. We encourage you to consider providing stimulus funding to those programs and, in recognition of the current fiscal plight of state governments, add a temporary waiver to the state matching requirement for the federal stimulus funding. We believe increased funding through these federal/state partnership access programs would be a significant enhancement to the stimulus efforts.

We invite your staff to contact the director of NASSGAP's Washington, DC office, Marie Bennett at 202-776-2599. Marie can provide you with any details about the state grant programs you might need.

Thank you again for all that you are doing to help our nation through these turbulent times.

Sincerely,

Lee Andes



President

President

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