Plenary Session II
The Pundits’ Take on Reauthorization

Monday, November 10, 2014
2:00 – 3:15 pm
Ballroom
Plenary Session II: The Pundits’ Take on Reauthorization

Many organizations have been weighing in on what the government should do in reauthorization of the Higher Education Opportunity Act. In part this is because both Lumina Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have funded a number of organizations to make such recommendations.

WICHE has been involved in two of these various activities. President Longanecker joined with a number of other higher education leaders in a coalition that released a report entitled “American Dream 2.0; How FINANCIAL AID can help improve college access, affordability, and completion.” This report was managed and directed by HCM strategists with support from the Gates Foundation, and highlighted the serious completion crisis in America, noting the value of federal aid in addressing this crisis, particularly if that aid is altered in ways that directly contribute to the completion agenda. Brian Prescott, director of policy research, and Longanecker also co-authored a paper on state financial aid entitled “States in the Driver’s Seat: Leveraging State Aid to Align Policies and Promote Access, Success, and Affordability,” supported with funds provided from Lumina. Although this paper focuses most significantly on state policy, it suggests the possible benefits of reenvisioning a federal/state partnership akin to the Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (LEAP) program (formerly known as the State Student Incentive Grants) that operated for nearly the first 50 years of the federal investment in financial aid through the original Higher Education Act, and WICHE has joined with SHEEO (the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association) in advancing further discussion of such a federal/state partnership.

The many proposals vary greatly. Almost all suggest significant change. Some propose that the federal government substantially increase funding for financial aid. Others propose elimination of some programs, such as tuition tax credits, and transferring the funding to other programs like Pell grants. Some propose rational economic strategies based on principles of good public policy, others propose politically expedient solutions, while others propose politically impossible ideas. If you can imagine an idea, it has probably been suggested.

In this session we will hear what the organizations that represent higher education institutions in Washington, D.C., think of these ideas and which ones they believe will have salience in the discussions around reauthorization.

Speakers: Tom Harnisch, assistant director of state relations and policy analysis, American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU); and Dan Madzelan, associate vice president for government relations, American Council on Education (ACE)

Facilitated Discussion on The Pundits’ Take on Reauthorization

Facilitator: TBD
Biographical Information on the Speakers

Thomas Harnisch joined AASCU in 2007 and currently serves as assistant director of state relations and policy analysis. His responsibilities include writing and producing EdLines, a weekly digest of higher education state policy headlines; planning the Higher Education Government Relations Conference; developing the association’s annual Public Policy Agenda and providing public policy research support. He also manages the division’s social media, including the @aascupolicy Twitter account. Harnisch’s research interests include state higher education finance, access, affordability, and other state-related higher education topics. His research and commentary have been cited in *Time Magazine*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Education Week*, *Washington Monthly*, and numerous other media outlets and governmental entities. He previously worked as a graduate assistant at the Midwestern Higher Education Compact in Minneapolis. Harnisch received his master’s degree in public policy from the University of Minnesota and his bachelor’s degree in history and political science from University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is currently pursuing a doctorate in education at The George Washington University. His dissertation research involves efforts by public colleges and universities to bolster higher education as a state funding and policy priority. A Wisconsin native, Harnisch is active in numerous civic and charitable causes in the Washington, D.C. area.

Daniel T. Madzelan joined ACE in 2014 as associate vice president for government relations. In his role, Madzelan helps advance ACE’s advocacy on behalf of the higher education community, particularly the array of federal policies and issues critical to the missions of American colleges and universities and the students they serve. From 2009–10, Madzelan served as acting assistant secretary for postsecondary education at the U.S. Department of Education, where he was charged with primary responsibility for administering a $2.6 billion program budget providing financial support to colleges and universities and their students, and had policy and program budget responsibility for the Title IV student financial aid programs that provided nearly $130 billion in grant, loan and work-study assistance to more than 14 million postsecondary students and their families. Previously, he was a longtime director of the forecasting and policy analysis service in the department’s office of postsecondary education. He worked in a number of capacities in that office before becoming a director. Madzelan is a graduate of the University of Maryland, College Park, with a bachelor of arts in economics with a concentration in mathematics and statistics.