Luncheon

The Evolving Federal Role – Intentional or Not, Here We Come

There is considerable debate amongst federal policy wonks and pundits about what is likely to happen with federal policy over the next few months. On one side of the argument are the pessimists (or perhaps optimists, depending upon one’s perspective) that believe nothing much will happen because we are in an election cycle, President Obama has lost his luster, and the funding rules for the year were pretty much established last fall. Optimists (or whatever), on the other hand, hold that the arena is ripe for potential change, given there is considerable unrest about the efficacy of federal policy (whether it be policies related to student debt, affordability, untidy institutions, or whatever). Obama has been quite activist in pursuing a strong accountability and access agenda and this is his last chance, the House is threatening to upset the applecart with respect to the budget they sort of agreed to last fall, the Senate has clear designs on reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, which is now three years beyond its supposed deadline. It is also conceivable that the current Senate leadership could lose its majority status and thus lose its capacity to shape reauthorization, and the administration has a new team at the Department of Education that has past histories of activism, not complacency.

We are fortunate in having Kim Hunter Reed join us for our luncheon session to discuss the lay of the land from the Obama administration’s perspective. Reed has been appointed as the deputy under secretary of education, serving Under Secretary Ted Mitchell and Secretary John King. She has a distinguished career of leadership in the Louisiana system of higher education and as a consultant with HCM Strategists before joining the Department of Education’s leadership team. She earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Southern Louisiana University and a Ph.D. from Southern University. Reed has assisted several WICHE states, and I have had the opportunity to work with her on a number of occasions. My experience suggests that she did not accept her current position simply to hang around to turn the lights out at the end of the Obama administration, and I am sure that you will receive substantial insight from her into what the president, the secretary of education, and their team hopes to accomplish in the time remaining. ~Dave

Speaker: Kim Hunter Reed, U.S. deputy under secretary of education