

## **Questions to Ask on Your Campus in Preparation for Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act**

September 2016

This set of questions is designed as an internal guide to help AAU member institutions prepare for the upcoming reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) and to better prepare for higher education policy issues broadly. While the list is not exhaustive, it should help campuses formulate their views on any proposed legislation. When available, national data points are provided so campuses can compare their responses to other campuses.

You may wish to develop a campus “task force” of individuals impacted by the HEA with whom you can share information and solicit feedback as the reauthorization process moves forward. Participants could include, for example, representatives from: financial aid, general counsel, compliance office, institutional research, registrar, graduate dean, education dean, Provost, student affairs, athletics, development/ alumni affairs, business/finance office, and campus safety.

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**TOPIC:** Population of Students Served

**WHO TO ASK:** **Financial aid officer, institutional research office**

- How has enrollment changed at your institution since the 2008 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, AY 2008-2009? For example, are there more part-time students? Are there more veterans?
- How many students do you serve? Is this an increase or decrease?
- What percentage of your undergraduate population was eligible to receive Pell grants this past year? Is this an increase or decrease since Academic Year (AY) 2008-2009?
- What percentage is the first in their family to attend college?
- What was the median income of undergraduate students or families attending your school this past year?
- What percentage of students identify as a racial or ethnic minority?

**FOR COMPARISON:**

- Enrollments increased by 88,284 undergraduates between 2008 and 2014 at AAU institutions (7.5%)
- Enrollments increased by 52,000 graduate and professional students between 2008 and 2014 (9.0%) At all AAU institutions, 23.3% of all undergraduates received a Pell Grant. Nationally, at all 4-year publics and non-profit institutions, 35.7% of undergraduates received Pell Grants. (FY 13 – 14)
- In 2014, 52.0% of all students at AAU institutions (both undergrad and graduate) self-identified as white. Nationally, at 4-year publics and non-profit institutions, that figure was 55.3%

**TOPIC:** Admissions

**WHO TO ASK:** **Admissions office**

- How have your undergraduate application figures changed over the last five academic years? How many more undergraduate applications did you have for this academic year's entering class than five years ago?
- How have your undergraduate acceptance rates changed over the last five years?
- How many students did you enroll this last academic year? Is this an increase or decrease?
- What percentage is eligible to receive Pell grants? Is this an increase or decrease since AY 2008-2009?
- Does your institution have a need-blind admission policy?
- Does your institution have policies regarding "special admits"? If so, have the numbers of students admitted under these policies changed over the last 5 years?
- Has the number categories of special admits changed in the last 5 years?

- Does your institution have outreach programs intended to identify high-achieving low-income students? How are such students identified?

**FOR COMPARISON:**

- In the past five academic years, AAU's total undergraduate applications have increased by 30.8% with the total admissions increasing by 15.7%.

**TOPIC:** College Cost, Net Price, and Grant Aid

**WHO TO ASK:** **Financial aid office, institutional research office, campus business office, graduate dean.**

*Student Aid*

- What is the average net price – the average yearly price charged to first-time, full-time students after deducting all grant aid for undergraduate students in 2011-2012 (or the latest year available)? What is the breakdown of the net price by income bracket?
- How much has net price changed (in both dollars and percentage terms) over the last 5 academic years? 10 years?
- How does the net price compare to the sticker price at your institution?
- For public institutions: How much has your state funding per full time equivalent (FTE) student changed over the past 3 academic years? 5 years? 10 years?
- For the last year that figures are available, how many undergraduates (and what percentage) received federal grant aid? State aid? Institutional (campus-provided) aid?
- How much did undergraduates receive in federal student aid during the last academic year? What is the average grant aid per student at your institution?
- What number and what percentage of students received Pell grants? How has this number changed in the last three, five, or ten years?
- How much did your university award in institutional (campus-provided) need-based and merit-based grant aid in AY 2011-2012? What was the methodology for awarding these dollars? What was the percentage change over the last year, three, five or ten years?
- What was the average institutional grant during the last academic year? What percentage of grant aid for your students was institutional aid?
- What role does the endowment play in student scholarships/student support at your institution?
- Describe any special initiatives at your institution to help make college more affordable/accessible.

### *Federal requirements*

- Does your campus use the Financial Aid Shopping Sheet? Why or why not?
- If your campus uses the Shopping Sheet, what, if any, limitations does it employ? (e.g. shopping sheet is provided to prospective undergraduate freshman and transfers only)?
- If your campus uses the Shopping Sheet, does it continue to use its own financial aid letter? If so, are there elements of the Shopping Sheet that require clarification or explanation to fit your institution or aid programs?
- Do students and parents find your federally-required online net price calculator useful? Do you employ a customized model or do you rely on one of the federal calculators?
- In general, what kind of feedback, if any, has your institution received regarding the use of the net price calculator?

### *Graduate and professional students*

- Does your university waive tuition or provide institutional aid or support to graduate and professional students? If so, what types of support and how much?
- Which of your graduate and professional students participate in federal student aid programs like Federal Work Study, Perkins loans, Stafford loans, TEACH grants and Grad PLUS loans?
- Do graduate and professional students at your institution receive military service benefits, such as the Post-9/11 GI Bill?

### *Cost and efficiency*

- How is cost of attendance determined?
- What innovations has your institution undertaken to hold down costs or rate of tuition growth?
- What measures has your institution taken recently to improve efficiencies and reduce and/or reallocate costs in the delivery of academic programs, student services, or other programs while maintaining the quality of those activities?

### **FOR COMPARISON:**

According to the U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

- On average, AAU institutions cover 42% of tuition and fees at public institutions and 57% at private institutions due to generous financial aid packages.

According to the College Board:

- Students at private nonprofit four-year institutions paid \$13,820 a year in net price and students at public four-year institutions paid \$3,730 in 2015-2016.
- The average net tuition paid by full-time students at private nonprofit four-year institutions increased by \$620 beyond inflation over the past three years (2012-13 to 2014 -15), and net tuition and fees at public four-year institutions increased by \$80.
- The average student aid award amount was \$14,210 in 2014-2015.
- In 2014-2015, 35 percent of undergraduate students received a Pell. In 2013-2014, 30 percent of undergraduates at public four-year schools and 14 percent of undergraduates at private nonprofit schools received a Pell Grant.
- Institutional grants represented 60 percent of all grant aid for graduate students.

**TOPIC:** [Student Loans and Student Debt](#)

**WHO TO ASK:** **Financial aid office, institutional research office**

### *Loans*

- What percentage of your undergraduate students had student loans in 2011-2012 (or the latest year available)? What was the average loan amount? What portion were federal loans? Private loans? Both?
- What financing options, such as parent monthly payment plans, loan programs, or the opportunity to pre-pay tuition, does your institution offer beyond your need-based aid programs?
- Does your institution have policies that seek to limit borrowing by students, and if so, what are they?
- What are some of the creative ways that your institution has addressed student debt and loan repayment issues? Has your institution undertaken efforts to increase financial literacy among your students and their families?

### *Student Debt*

- What was the average student debt at graduation this past academic year?
- What percentage of students graduated with debt?
- What measures does your school use to determine how successful your students are in managing their student debt? Federal cohort default rates? Rates of Perkins Loan repayment or defaults? Other measures?
- What is your institution's federal student loan cohort default rate (the share of federal student loan borrowers who default within the first two years of repayment)?

### **FOR COMPARISON:**

- According to College Insight, in the FY 13 -14 academic year, 60 percent of undergraduate students at public four-year colleges graduated with debt from the

college at which they began their studies, with an average debt for those graduating with debt of \$25,902.

- For comparison, in FY 13 - 14, 51.4 percent of students who graduated from AAU publics (self-reported data from 33 of 35 members) with undergraduate degrees did so with debt. The average debt for those graduating with debt was \$25,238.
- According to College Insight, in the FY 13 -14 academic year, 64 percent of undergraduates at private four-year colleges graduated with debt, with an average debt of \$29,657.
- For comparison, in FY 13 - 14, 45.3 percent of students who graduated from AAU privates (self-reported data from 24 of 25 members) with undergraduate degrees did so with debt. The average debt for those graduating with debt was \$27,100
- Overall, 50.3 percent of AAU grads leave without debt. The average debt for those graduating with debt was \$25,694.
- Nationally, the cohort default rate for public four-year schools was 7.1 percent and 6.5 percent for private four-year schools in 2013.
- For comparison, in 2013, the cohort default rate for AAU publics was 3.2 percent and 1.5 percent for AAU privates. Overall, at AAU institutions, the cohort default rate was 2.8 percent.

**TOPIC:** [Student Outcomes](#)

**WHO TO ASK:** **Enrollment and financial aid officers, institutional research office, alumni office, Provost**

#### *Outcomes*

- What is your first-year undergraduate retention rate? What is the rate for Pell- eligible students?
- What is the percentage of enrolled undergraduates who graduate in four years? Six years? What is the percentage for Pell-eligible students?
- How many degrees did your institution confer last year? How does that number compare to the last three, five, or ten years?
- How do you track what happens to your graduates after graduation?
- What percentage of your institution's undergraduate students goes on to graduate school or professional school?
- What, if any, data does your institution report in response to demand for earning potential and job placement data? To whom do you report this data?

#### *Federal requirements*

- How does your campus feel about the concept of a federal unit record data system which tracks students' outcomes between kindergarten and college?
- How does your campus feel about the federal government developing student outcomes measurements and/or requiring campuses to report on them?
- In your institutions' view, what would be appropriate means or mechanism, if any, through which the federal government could obtain accurate information on student outcomes?
- How does your campus feel about the federal College Scorecard?

**FOR COMPARISON:**

- According to the U.S. Department of Education, nationally, the average 6-year graduation rate in 2013 was 65 percent for private nonprofit four-year schools and 58 percent for public four-year schools.

**TOPIC:** [Accreditation and State Authorization](#)

**WHO TO ASK:** **Provost, compliance office, registrar**

*Accreditation*

- Who is your regional accreditor?
- Has your regional accreditor clearly articulated (through meetings or manuals) its expectations of student learning assessment?
- How have your interactions with regional accreditor officials affected your internal institutional processes to assure the quality of teaching and learning?
- How much did your institution spend on your last accreditation cycle for institutional accreditation?
- How many of your programs are subject to programmatic accreditation? How much have the programmatic reviews cost the institution collectively during the last five years?

*State authorization*

- In what manner are you authorized by your state to operate? Examples might include: by statute, by charter, due to being a state university.

**TOPIC:** [Hybrid and Online Learning](#)

**WHO TO ASK:** **Provost, distance education office, registrar**

- Do you offer online educational programs (either fully online or those requiring low residency requirements) for credit towards a degree or certificate to students located in other states? What are examples of those programs? And, how does your campus currently comply with the state authorization law requiring universities to be authorized in every state in which they offer educational services?
- Do you provide Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs), either on your own or through partnerships with EdX, Coursera, etc.? Do you intend to either accept or award credit from these MOOCs?
- What other free or low cost online learning opportunities does your institution support? E.g. iTunes U, MIT Open Courseware.
- What role, if any, should accreditors and the federal government play in online learning?
- What are your university's goals for online learning?



**TOPIC:** Teacher Preparation

**WHO TO ASK:** **Dean of the school of education, possibly Institutional Research**

- How much time do your teach preparation students spend in an elementary or secondary school classroom as part of their training?
- What degrees does your school of education offer?
- What licensure exams do your students usually take (i.e. Praxis) and what is the average score for students from each program?
- How does your campus measure the effectiveness of your teaching graduates?
- What methods, if any, does your state or local education agency (school district) use to evaluate the effectiveness of elementary and secondary teachers? How does your campus feel about tying these or other measures back to the university where a teacher was educated? In your campus's view, is there an accurate way to link the performance of teachers trained at your institution to the quality of your training programs?
- How does your campus feel about making non-university teacher preparation programs eligible for federal teacher preparation funding?

**TOPIC:** Other Authorized Programs

**WHO TO ASK:** **Student affairs, international education center director, graduate dean, Provost**

- Do you have **TRIO** programs, such as Upward Bound, Talent Search, or McNair Scholars? In your view, are there policy or operational changes that would improve these programs?
- Do you have **Title VI international education** programs like National Resource Centers (NRC's), Centers for International Business, Education, and Research (CIBER's), or Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS)? In your view, are there policy or operational changes that would improve these programs?
- Do you have a **Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN)** Fellowship program or any **Javits** fellows? Are there any program changes you would like to see to improve the program? What, if any, institutional changes have you made to address the GAANN/Javits consolidation?

**TOPIC:** Other HEA Reporting and Disclosure Requirements

**WHO TO ASK:** **Public safety office, campus health center, student affairs office, compliance office, general counsel, bookstore, financial aid, business/finance office, athletics, development/alumni affairs**

- Who compiles data on campus safety? Are there federally-required elements you would like to see added? Removed? In what ways do students, parents, and the larger community find the data useful? What do they not find useful?
- How does your campus implement compliance with the existing regulations on peer-to-peer file sharing?

- What creative or low-cost options do you provide students purchasing college textbooks, such as book loan programs, partnerships with online retailers, etc.?
- Of the current reporting and disclosure requirements in the HEA, which ones do students and parents find most useful? Least useful?
- Which reporting requirements are the most challenging to fulfill? What are the challenges? Are there requirements your campus would like to see changed or eliminated?