

December 10, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
The Capitol, S-230  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
The Capitol, S-221  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Republican Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy,

The [Postsecondary Data Collaborative](#) (PostsecData) and the [National Skills Coalition](#), in cooperation with the undersigned organizations and individuals, urge Congress to pass the College Transparency Act (CTA) as part of any end-of-the-year agreement, including appropriations legislation. This is particularly important as more than half of the members of the 116th Congress has cosponsored the bill, and it is likely other higher education provisions will be included. CTA is needed so that policymakers can comprehensively measure the outcomes of policy changes and investment included in the legislation, students and families will have transparent information as they make critical decisions, colleges and universities will have access to the data they seek to support student success initiatives, and, as the nation rebuilds its economy, employers will have the data they need to strengthen their talent pipeline.

This strongly bipartisan, bicameral bill would help students and families, policymakers, institutions and employers to make informed decisions by providing more complete information about college access, success, costs, and outcomes. This information empowers students and families to make well-informed choices about their education, policymakers and institutions to craft evidence-based policies to help students succeed, and employers to navigate the talent pipeline they need to grow the economy. Without complete, representative data that counts all students, equity will be out of reach.

The research is abundantly clear: Investing in a college education pays off. But while college is worth it on average, students, policymakers, institutions and employers cannot answer crucial questions about which postsecondary programs provide an adequate return on investment for which students. Students and taxpayers have a right to know what they can expect in return for their college investment. Yet, existing policies prevent us from answering basic questions, such as:

- What are national completion rates for part-time and transfer students of color?
- How do college access, affordability, and completion vary by race, ethnicity, and income?

- How much do students borrow, and can they repay their loans?
- How many non-completers from a particular college never reenroll, and how many transfer to finish their degree at another institution?
- Which students go on to succeed in the workforce?

Answers to these questions would help students and families choose programs that demonstrate strong outcomes, while helping policymakers and educators to implement policies and practices that help more students succeed. For the marketplace to function effectively, all these stakeholders need access to high-quality information that reflects all types of students and can look at outcomes across state lines. The federal government—with its access to existing data, including on employment and earnings—is uniquely positioned to compile that information, while reducing institutional reporting burdens.

The College Transparency Act:

- Overturns the ban on student-level data collection in the Higher Education Act;
- Creates a secure, privacy protected student-level data network within the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) using strong security standards and data governance protocols;
- Accurately reports on student outcomes including enrollment, completion and post-college success across colleges and programs;
- Leverages existing data at federal agencies and institutional data by matching a limited set of data to calculate aggregate information to answer questions critical to understanding and improving student success;
- Protects all students by limiting data disclosures, prohibiting the sale of data, penalizing illegal data use, protecting vulnerable students, prohibiting the use of the data for law enforcement, safeguarding personally identifiable information, and requiring notice to students and regular audits of the system;
- Streamlines burdensome federal reporting requirements for postsecondary institutions;
- Provides information disaggregated by race, ethnicity and Pell Grant receipt status to identify inequities in students' success;
- Requires a user-friendly website to ensure the data are transparent, informative, and accessible for students, parents, policymakers, and employers; and
- Feeds aggregate information back to states and institutions so they can develop and implement targeted, data-informed strategies aimed at supporting student success.

The College Transparency Act represents broad consensus among students, colleges and universities, employers, and policymakers that a secure, privacy-protected postsecondary student data system is the only way to give students the information they need to make informed college choices. That is why we are coming together to urge Congress to pass this bill **now** to provide accurate, timely, and high-quality aggregate data in a user-friendly, transparent way for students and families, policymakers, institutions and employers who have a right to know answers to key questions about student access and success.

Sincerely,

AAC&U  
AccessLex Institute  
AccuRounds  
Achieve Atlanta  
Achieving the Dream  
Advance CTE  
American Association of Community Colleges  
American Educational Research Association  
AMT - The Association For Manufacturing Technology  
Asian & Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund  
Aspen Institute College Excellence Program  
Association for Career and Technical Education  
Association of Community College Trustees  
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities  
Atlanta Regional Workforce Development Board  
Augustus F. Hawkins Foundation  
Birmingham Prosperity Partnership  
Board of Regents, State of Iowa  
Boston Centerless  
Braven  
Build UP  
Business Roundtable  
California EDGE Coalition  
Campaign for College Opportunity  
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)  
Chicago Jobs Council  
Chiefs for Change  
COABE  
Cobb Chamber of Commerce  
College Now Greater Cleveland  
Colorado Center on Law and Policy  
Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta  
Complete College America, Inc.  
Connecticut State Colleges and Universities  
Corporation for a Skilled Workforce  
Custom Plastics and More  
CWA Southern California Council  
Dallas County Community College District  
Data Quality Campaign  
District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund  
Edmit  
EducationQuest Foundation

Employee Choice Academy  
EmployIndy  
Enlisted Association of the National Guard  
Excelencia in Education  
Field Crest Care Center  
Five Star Development, Inc.  
George Washington Institute of Public Policy  
Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce  
Georgia Association for Career and Technical Education  
Global Resource Management Inc.  
Greater Philadelphia Healthcare Partnership  
Greater Washington Community Foundation  
HCM Strategists  
Higher Learning Advocates  
Holder Construction Company  
Indiana Institute for Working Families  
Institute for Higher Education Policy  
Japanese American Citizens League  
Jersey City Literacy Program  
JEVS Human Services  
Jewish Vocational Service, Boston  
JFF  
JMPDX LLC  
JobTrain  
Knowledge Alliance  
LeaderQuest Holdings Inc.  
Learn4Life  
Mahoning Valley Manufacturers Coalition  
MCCI Medical Group  
Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce  
NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education  
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE)  
National Association for College Admission Counseling  
National Association of Graduate-Professional Students  
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators  
National Council for Adult Learning  
National Council for Workforce Education  
National Laboratory for Education Transformation  
National Roofing Contractors Association  
National Skills Coalition  
National Tooling and Machining Association  
Naugatuck Adult Education  
New America  
New Orleans Youth Alliance

New York Association of Training & Employment Professionals (NYATEP)  
Nexus Research and Policy Center  
NOCTI  
Northwest WI Workforce Investment Board  
Nucleos-PortableCloud  
Optimax Systems Inc.  
Orleans Technical College  
Policy Matters Ohio  
Policy Planning Partners  
Postsecondary Analytics  
Pryor Education Insights  
Public Insight Corporation  
Rebuilding America's Middle Class  
Ripe Data  
Scholarship America  
Skills2Compete Colorado  
Software & Information Industry Association  
South Asian Fund For Education, Scholarship and Training (SAFEST)  
Southwest Ohio Region Workforce Investment Board  
StriveTogether  
Student Veterans of America  
TechBirmingham  
The Bell Policy Center  
The Education Trust  
The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS)  
The Quality Assurance Commons for Higher and Postsecondary Education  
The Veterans Education Project  
Third Way  
Towards Employment  
TRC Staffing Services  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce  
U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG)  
uAspire  
United Way of Central Iowa  
University of Phoenix  
Virginia Community College System  
WKBJ Foundation  
Women and Families Center-Open DOHR Employment Training  
Women Employed  
Workforce Solutions Group  
WSP USA  
Young Invincibles