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The House Budget Committee is working behind the scenes on its Fiscal Year 2017 budget resolution and, following a confirmation hearing this week, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee plans to vote on President Obama's nominee for Secretary of Education on March 9.

Title IX Resources on Sexual Harassment and Violence

AACC government relations staff recently posted a document on the [AACC website](#) about Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 as it relates to sexual harassment and violence. Most of the information concerns Title IX compliance and general information pertaining to sexual harassment and violence on campus. Also included is information about prevention strategies, as well as resources for closely related laws and regulations, particularly the Clery Act. These resources are provided for informational purposes only, and their inclusion should not be considered an endorsement by AACC of any specific organization or initiative.

Why Don't More Students Complete the FAFSA?

Students at community colleges often fail to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and thus miss out on receiving federal student assistance for which they would be otherwise eligible. An [AACC survey](#) provides some valuable insights as to why students may not be completing the process. Top reasons cited included: the students were unaware of grant eligibility, immigration-related issues, the FAFSA form is too complicated, parents were unwilling to provide information, and the verification process inhibits completion.

New Cash Management Regulations

As colleges strive to implement the new cash management regulations, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) hosted a recent webinar outlining many of the new requirements. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is provided [here](#).

TRIO Training

[Training](#) for the federal TRIO programs grant competition is now underway through April 15. ED's Office of Postsecondary Education is providing training for those working on one of the 2,831 projects funded under the federal TRIO programs. ED plans to award a total of nine grants in 2016.

New America Proposes Overhaul of Higher Education Financing

Tweaking or even reforming the current system of paying for higher education is simply not sufficient, according to a [New America report](#) that calls the system "broken beyond repair." The current financial aid system, made up of vouchers (e.g., Pell Grant), loans, and tax credits, is criticized for faulty design for not serving students well, particularly low-income students. A new federal and state partnership is proposed to basically eliminate unmet financial need and improve student outcomes. Under the proposed plan, the current array of federal loans, grants, and higher education tax credits would be eliminated and replaced by a formula-based funding scheme. The new system would provide states with federal funds conditioned on the share of low-income students enrolled, maintaining a certain investment in higher education, and being held accountable for student outcomes. The specific roles of the federal government, states, and colleges are spelled out, including state participation requirements as well as college application requirements.

Reality Belies Belief with Regard to College Readiness

Community college surveys of student engagement show that there is a disconnection between student perceptions about their readiness for college work and the reality of assessments. A [report](#) by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE), using the results of three surveys, documents the widespread unpreparedness of community college students, but also presents numerous examples of effective efforts to improving college completion. While still the most prevalent method of assessing college readiness, some community colleges are combining placement tests with other measures as part of a multiple measures approach. The students who are determined to require developmental education are not all placed into traditional remedial courses. Many colleges are piloting a number of approaches, including corequisite courses and redesigned courses. For more information about the report's findings, read the article in the [Community College Daily](#).

Mixed Score for College Scorecard

The [Center for American Progress report](#) on the College Scorecard highlights indicators that are good, those that need improvement, and makes suggestions for additional indicators. As far as the author is concerned, the more detail the better, applauding the fact the student financial aid information (e.g., loan amount, repayment rate) is disaggregated by student characteristics as well as type of institution. Also, in the good indicator column is the use of repayment rather than cohort default rates. The author suggests changes to the repayment rate metrics and better alignment among several indicators, including the repayment rates, cumulative debt, earnings, and completion rates.

Minorities Hit Harder by Student Debt Crisis

According to research conducted by the Washington Center for Equitable Growth, delinquency on student loans is associated with income distribution and the proportion of African Americans and Latinos in a community. The first interactive [Mapping Student Debt](#) focused on the geography of debt. The [second](#), with an accompanying [report](#), focused on race. The finding that "zip codes with higher shares of African Americans or Latinos show much higher delinquency" should come as no surprise. However, the finding that was not expected was that "most adversely affected are middle class—those who have taken out debt to go to college but who haven't been able to find jobs or don't have sufficient family wealth to pay it back." This pattern held in various parts of the country, from Washington, DC, to Los Angeles. The reasons for the racial disparity in student loan delinquency involve the higher education system as well as the economy, the report says. African Americans and Latinos are on average less likely to complete college. They are also less likely to have access to credit, fall prey to discrimination in the labor markets, and have lower levels of wealth.

Status of State Policy on Prior Learning Assessment

[A Resource Guide for State Leaders](#) is intended for state leaders interested in promoting prior learning assessment policy. First, the report provides the various methods or tools to define prior learning assessment (PLA), ranging from individualized student portfolios to standardized exams. It makes the case for advancing a systematic approach to PLA and delineates a number of factors for consideration when reviewing existing PLA policies and practices. The bulk of the report is focused on state examples of PLA policies, starting with establishment of PLA policy, assessment methods, fees, transfer, and articulation of PLA credit and culminating in efforts to raise awareness, capacity building, and workforce system support of PLA.

Many Start at Community College but Complete Elsewhere

The National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) released this month a [state-level supplement](#) to its earlier [report](#) on national completion rates. The same methodology was used of tracking students across institutions in a 6-year window. The NSC found that nationally, about a third (32%) of students who started at a public 2-year institution completed at another institution. In 10 states—Texas, California, Kansas, South Carolina, Missouri, Iowa, Idaho, Nebraska, Maryland, and Pennsylvania—the completion rate at an institution other than the public 2-year where the student started was above one third. In California and Texas, more than 40% of all students who started at a public 2-year institution completed at another institution. The completion rate for students who started at a public 2-year institution and graduated from a 4-year institution was 15.1% nationally, but 20% or more in five states—Iowa, North Dakota, Virginia, Kansas, and Texas. For more information, read the [Community College Daily article](#).

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