



CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

April 6, 2011

Dear College and University Presidents:

During the past two years, we have witnessed the largest increase in financial aid in the history of the federal student aid programs. As a result, record numbers of students are enrolling in higher education programs, reflecting the increased accessibility of postsecondary education.

Your financial aid administrators play a vital role in ensuring students can access higher education and that your institutions remain in compliance with federal student aid program regulations. I am writing this letter to articulate my appreciation for their efforts and congratulate them on their continued success.

As you may know, President Obama signed legislation in March 2010 that called for all federal student loans to be originated by the Department of Education through a program called the William D. Ford Direct Loan Program (Direct Loan Program). This legislation required financial aid offices at many postsecondary institutions to transition to the Direct Loan Program.

At the same time many schools were working to ensure a smooth transition to the Direct Loan Program, financial aid administrators were faced with an unprecedented increase in student aid applications. In addition, your financial aid staff were responsible for ensuring that your schools were in compliance with several new student aid regulations designed to improve the integrity of the student aid programs. I acknowledge that collectively, these changes presented significant challenges for your staff.

Nevertheless, your financial aid administrators were able to quickly adapt and continued to seamlessly and effectively administer the financial aid programs on your respective campuses. Their dedication and professionalism throughout this period is commendable. As a result of their efforts, today, any student who requires federal student aid to attend a participating institution of higher learning in this country can generally receive it.

Current regulations governing the administration of the federal student aid programs require schools to supply an adequate number of qualified persons to administer the federal student aid programs (Section 668.16(b)) and to provide adequate financial aid counseling to eligible students who apply for student aid through these programs (Section 668.16(h)).

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I encourage you to provide your financial aid offices with the necessary support to ensure that they are properly trained and staffed. This will ensure that your financial aid professionals can assist all students as they seek the financial aid assistance required to make their post secondary educational dreams a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William J. Taggart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "W" and a long, sweeping underline.

William J. Taggart
Chief Operating Officer
Federal Student Aid

cc: Financial Aid Administrator