

## **The Federation of Associations of Schools of the Health Professions (FASHP) Higher Education Act Reauthorization Principles**

The U.S. healthcare system is rapidly evolving, necessitating increased collaboration among our nation's health care providers. Interprofessional education, with a strong emphasis on health promotion and disease prevention, is an essential approach to improving provider collaboration and patient outcomes. To develop new and improve existing interprofessional education programs, it is imperative that we work to reauthorize the *Higher Education Act* (HEA).

The reauthorization of the HEA provides an opportunity to recognize unique challenges, including debt burdens of health professions students. Health professions students graduate with relatively high debt compared to other programs. Unlike other career paths, the debt burden of health professions education is frequently compounded by years of post-graduate residency training, which is required for certain professionals to practice independently. As a result, student total loan repayment often exceeds two to three times the amount borrowed due to the accumulated interest/high interest rates, in addition to other unavoidable costs related to pursuing a health professions education. However, existing restrictions on health professions students in federal financial aid policies do not align with the urgency of this impending reality. Given the predicted health care workforce shortages, it is critical to retain and recruit a health care workforce that will be able to collectively and collaboratively meet the growing health care needs and challenges of our nation.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that the following principles be included in the reauthorization of the HEA:

- Continue public service scholarship and loan repayment programs for health professional students and graduates to increase the health professions workforce in underserved areas.
- Support a diverse health professions workforce that mirrors and provides culturally-competent health care to the nation's patient populations.
- Encourage the delivery of high-quality, evidence-based health promotion, disease prevention, and patient care through interprofessional education.
- Strengthen the health professions pipeline education programs with equitable federal graduate and professional student loan and repayment options that do not discourage students from pursuing health professions education, and promote borrowing parity under the Federal Direct Loan program for all health professions students.
- Promote interagency collaboration to improve the effectiveness of both the student aid programs at the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) health professions and nursing workforce programs. Such collaborations can improve the supply, distribution, and diversity of the health care workforce, reduce unnecessary redundancies, and administrative inefficiencies.
- Reinforce the distinct and principal role that academic accreditors play in the nation's educational quality and institutional and programmatic education performance.
- Reduce the administrative and financial burdens that regulations place on health professions schools and the students they educate by addressing administrative burdens for health professions schools' financial aid officers, strengthening the quality of the USDE's student loan servicing programs, and improving HRSA's loan and repayment programs, among other measures.

## **About FASHP**

The Federation of Associations of Schools of the Health Professions (FASHP) was created in 1968 as a forum for representatives of health professions education institutions to address education's role in organizational patterns of health care; to encourage effective collaboration among the professions in education and practice; to prepare health professions education for the future; and to serve as liaison with other organizations sharing an interest in health professions education. FASHP is comprised of 16 associations representing a health professions education community that includes 4,786 programs, institutions, hospitals, and health systems, and more than 1.4 million students, faculty, clinicians, administrators, residents, and researchers.

In particular, FASHP advocates appropriate support for Federal programs under the Public Health Service Act's Titles VII (health professions) and VIII (nursing workforce) and loan and scholarship programs for health professions programs in that Act that educate health professionals, and motivate service in underserved communities. These programs are not a major Federal expenditure, but they provide critical support for improvements in health professions training for a more patient-centered, team-based health care system and increased access to primary care. The member organizations of FASHP stand ready to be a resource and to work individually and collectively with Federal and State leaders, policymakers and others on health professions education policy.

### **FASHP Member Organizations**

American Association of Colleges of Nursing  
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine  
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy  
American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine  
American Dental Education Association  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges  
Association of Chiropractic Colleges  
Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry  
Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions  
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health  
Association of University Programs in Health Administration  
Physician Assistant Education Association  
Council on Social Work Education

#### *Liaison Members:*

American Psychological Association  
American Physical Therapy Association