



## Hartle: Trump Education Budget an ‘Assault on College Affordability’

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If a news report on a preliminary draft of the Trump administration’s proposed education budget is accurate, the budget represents a “historic assault on college affordability,” a senior executive for the American Council on Education (ACE) said Thursday.

“Cuts of this size and scope would undermine opportunity for millions of low-income and working-class students who see higher education as the gateway to a better life,” said Terry W. Hartle, senior vice president in the division of government and public affairs at ACE, the nation’s largest organization of colleges and universities, in a statement to *Diverse*.

Terry W. Hartle is senior vice president in the division of government and public affairs at ACE.

Hartle was referring to a [news report](#) that indicated the Trump administration planned to slash spending on federal education initiatives by \$10.6 billion — \$9.2 billion of which would be from the Education Department.

Coupled with details released in President Donald J. Trump’s “skinny budget” earlier this year, the new budget would mean “massive reductions to nearly every program that helps students afford college,” Hartle said.

Hartle said the president’s budget would cut grants to low-income students; make loans more expensive; slash funding for medical and scientific research; make it more difficult for students to work their way through college; and take away childcare from students with families.

“If enacted, this budget would likely push college out of reach for millions of students,” Hartle said. “Thankfully, Congress has the ultimate responsibility for setting funding, and with the FY 2017 spending bills, they have shown a willingness to reject similarly damaging proposals from the president.”

Not everyone was so critical of Trump’s proposed education budget, which is expected to be published next week.

“Student aid programs are counterproductive, fueling vicious cycles of price inflation and empty credentialing,” said Neal McCluskey, director of the Center for Educational Freedom at Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank.

“Cutting them would be a great way to make higher education more reasonably priced and focused,” McCluskey said.

“Even if it is what the final proposal ends up looking like, the chances of it getting through Congress with the level of cuts proposed are slim,” McCluskey said.

Still, a number of organization that focus on issues of higher education levied criticisms against the administration's proposed budget and its reductions.

"The President has claimed he wants to 'take steps to help students' address their student debt, but this budget would do the exact opposite," said Reid Setzer, director of governmental affairs at Young Invincibles, an organization that focuses on issues that affect Americans age 18 through 36.

Based on the news report, Setzer said the proposed federal education budget would "leave the maximum Pell Grant amount frozen and stagnant, further eroding its purchasing power for the nearly 8 million low- and moderate-income students that rely on it."

The budget also apparently still calls for \$3.9 billion in cuts to the Pell surplus, which Setzer said would "make it harder to maintain Year-Round Pell, a bipartisan achievement."

The budget also "zeroes out" the \$15 million CCAMPIS program, which helps low-income parents in college afford on-campus childcare, Setzer said, noting that one in four students are parents.

"Young parents should be able to pursue their degree without worrying about the safety and health of their children," Setzer said. "Eliminating funding for this program fails to support parents who are working to make a better life for their families."

The budget cuts career and technical education, or CTE, by \$168 million — a 15 percent reduction — at a time when House Democrats and Republicans are trying to improve CTE, Setzer noted.

"President Trump claims his priority is strengthening our economy, but cutting CTE weakens our current and future workforce by cutting off access to marketable skills," Setzer said.

The reported budget also seeks to end the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program. Setzer said 550,000 borrowers signed up for and rely upon the program, which provides student loan relief for graduates who go into certain jobs.

"Teachers, counselors, social workers, public defenders, medical professionals and other public servants are filling essential jobs in communities nationwide," Setzer said. "Eliminating the program could have damaging effects to both rural and urban communities alike, and increase the indebtedness of our generation, to the detriment of the American economy."

The reported budget also cuts the Federal Work Study program nearly in half, by \$490 million.

While a number of reports have suggested that Federal Work Study too often favors expensive institutions with few low income students, cutting the program's funding in half is not the solution, said Iris Palmer, senior policy analyst for the education policy program at New America, a public policy think tank.

"I think because the evidence on (work-study) program says it helps low-income students persist and graduate better, I think there's an argument to put more money into it if it's allocated appropriately across higher education," Palmer said. "Unfortunately, when you propose cutting it in half, any conversation around reorganizing the formula gets drowned out."

Palmer was also critical of the budget because it “doesn’t really seem to have an overarching feeling or perspective or strategy,” although — in fairness — her remarks, like others, were based on a description of the budget, not the actual budget document itself.

Ben Miller, senior director for postsecondary education at the left-leaning Center for American Progress, had a similar impression of the budget as it was described.

While incoming presidents typically try to make improvements when they assume office, Miller said what’s striking about the budget is “how none of this is about making anything better.”

“It’s just taking billions of dollars away from students to pay for millionaire tax cuts and a border wall,” Miller said.

The news report about the budget states that the budget also “seeks to spend about \$400 million to expand charter schools and vouchers for private and religious schools, and another \$1 billion to push public schools to adopt choice-friendly policies.” U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, a staunch proponent of school choice who has been assailed by critics who say she wants to undermine public education, is expected to testify in defense of the budget before a House education subcommittee next week.

Zakiya Smith, the DC-based director for finance and federal policy at the Lumina Foundation, a nonprofit that focuses on increasing college degree attainment, said while the United States is making progress on increasing attainment, that “progress will stall without a supportive policy environment.”

“Federal decision-makers must not take their eye off of the ball when it comes to encouraging and supporting postsecondary completion, including a continued focus on access, affordability and quality, particularly for today’s students,” Smith said.