



STATE HIGHER EDUCATION EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

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April 30, 2008

The Honorable Hillary Clinton
United States Senate
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable John McCain
United States Senate
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Barack Obama
United States Senate
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator Clinton, Senator McCain, and Senator Obama:

The 44th President of the United States will have the greatest opportunity – and face the greatest necessity – since the 1950s to lead the nation to sustainable prosperity. In the knowledge economy of the 21st century America’s intellectual edge, creative ingenuity, and adaptive workforce are and will remain the most important components of national strength and economic security.

By the end of the next President’s first term:

- the United States will have 3 million more jobs requiring a bachelor’s degree and not enough college graduates to fill them;
- ninety percent of the fastest-growing jobs, 60 percent of all new jobs, and 40 percent of manufacturing jobs will require some form of postsecondary education; and
- global competition will demand research and innovation on a scale that even the U.S. is not yet prepared to sustain.

To achieve economic security – improved family incomes and a strong job market – is a top priority for the American people and a prerequisite for continued national security. Both will require the next President of the United States to give urgent attention to higher education.

The President and the Congress cannot create the conditions necessary for economic and national security without commitment, initiative, and creativity from the leaders of our states, communities, and schools and colleges. But as a candidate for our highest office, your leadership is essential.

In your campaign for the Presidency we urge you to:

- Emphasize that the future security and prosperity of the United States requires a broad-based, cooperative national initiative to increase the knowledge and skills of all Americans, both the young and older working adults.
- Establish a clear national goal – that the U.S. be second to no other nation in
 - the educational attainment of young adults, and
 - the discovery of new knowledge and innovative applications of knowledge.
- Commit to working with the states and colleges and universities *to increase by one million* the annual production of postsecondary degrees and certificates – the additional number required by 2025 to bring the U.S. up to the performance of today’s leading nations in the educational attainment of young adults.
- Commit to retooling federal higher education programs and policies, especially simplifying and expanding federal financial aid programs, so they more effectively advance the national priority of greater degree and certificate attainment, with no compromise on quality.
- Commit to sustaining and deepening the scientific and technological prowess of the United States by making the necessary investments in basic research, by maintaining rigorous standards of quality, and by implementing educational and immigration policies that enable us to develop and compete for the best scientific talent in the world.

The undersigned officers, members, and past members of the State Higher Education Executive Officers hold or have held responsibility for higher education policy leadership in the states. We are committed to these national goals and to working with you and the Congress to achieve them. The White Paper which follows makes the case for Presidential commitment and elaborates the specific actions we recommend.

Thank you for your willingness to offer yourself as a candidate for President at this critical time and for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

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