

THE
NEW ENGLAND
COUNCIL

March 18, 2008

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of The New England Council, I urge you to support several provisions in the Higher Education Act reauthorization legislation currently being considered by the conference committee that are important to higher education institutions throughout New England. As an organization devoted to economic development in the region, the Council recognizes the critical role that Higher Education institutions play in driving the region's economy and how these measures will benefit this important industry.

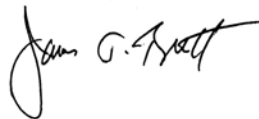
In order to help maintain the strong contributions that New England's Higher Education Institutions make to our economy, the Council is asking the conferees to support the critical provisions that improve higher education affordability and competitiveness. Studies indicate that college graduates bring an increased economic benefit to the communities they live in. In fact, tax revenue from college graduates is more than six times the government cost per college degree. In addition to the many other benefits received from a college degree, public financial support of the same more than pays for itself. Additionally, one of the primary advantages New England has over other parts of the country in attracting businesses is the high skilled workforce produced by our colleges and universities – many of whom are employed by the high tech industry.

Congress can help to increase the number of college graduates and skilled workers in New England by improving transparency in student lending and tuition costs, increasing the maximum Pell Grant, and bolstering science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education. Thus, our Higher Education Institutions will not only maintain but increase their contributions to the region's economy.

The Council also encourages the conferees to support language that would prohibit the U.S. Department of Education from regulating the Higher Education Institution accreditation process. Higher Education in the United States is recognized and respected globally for its excellence, its innovation, and its access. Centralizing or nationalizing control of this accreditation process, however, would lead to the homogenization of American Higher Education and the loss of the very qualities which distinguish our education system. Actions from the federal government could interfere with the diversity of New England's institutions, ultimately affecting the educational opportunities available for a diverse student population.

We look forward to working with you on these issues in the near future. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call on us or Jeff Turcotte of the Council's Washington, DC office at (202) 547-0048.

Very Truly Yours,



James T. Brett
President & CEO