

110TH CONGRESS }
1st Session

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

{ REPT. 110-500
Part 1

COLLEGE OPPORTUNITY AND
AFFORDABILITY ACT OF 2007

R E P O R T

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

TOGETHER WITH

ADDITIONAL VIEWS

TO ACCOMPANY

H.R. 4137



DECEMBER 19, 2007.—Ordered to be printed

COLLEGE OPPORTUNITY AND AFFORDABILITY ACT OF 2007

was added identifying the expansion of academic programs focused on traditional American history as an area of “national need.” It is the intent of the Committee that this authority be used for reinvigorating majors and graduate programs in these fields, thus creating a new pipeline for producing the scholars and teachers needed to staff these fields at the graduate and undergraduate levels and in teacher training programs.

During this reauthorization, the Committee feels strongly that the importance of graduate education overall should not be overlooked. Dr. Earl Lewis, Dean of the Rackham Graduate School, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs for Graduate Studies, and Professor of History at the University of Michigan expressed his support for graduate education programs before the Subcommittee on Select Education in 2003:

Graduate education prepares the scientists and engineers needed by industry, government, and universities to conduct the nation’s research and development. Graduate programs also educate the scholars in the humanities, social sciences, and the arts who preserve and enlarge our understanding of the history and scope of human thought and the human condition, and transmit that knowledge to succeeding generations. Moreover, graduate programs at our nation’s universities generate new knowledge and act as incubators of innovative ideas that drive new technologies and create new ways to address societal, health, security, and economic needs and challenges.

As Congress continues its work on the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, it must continue to build on the demonstrated success of these valuable graduate programs. These programs, and the amendments made within H.R. 4137, will prepare the next generation of scientists, scholars and teachers and ensure the support and effectiveness of these programs.

Urban-serving research institutions

Our nation’s cities play an important role in America’s national prosperity, driving innovation and economic growth by employing many highly-skilled workers and containing clusters of related firms and industries. However, urban areas face many challenges unique to cities. Urban secondary schools experience a higher dropout rate than the national average and urban elementary and secondary students typically score below state and national averages on academic performance exams. Urban schools often encounter teacher shortages in high need subject areas such as mathematics and science. Particular neighborhoods are stricken with poverty and struggle to attract businesses and services. A greater percentage of their citizens are uninsured or underinsured.

As anchors for our nation’s cities, urban research universities are uniquely positioned with a broad range of skills and resources—intellectual, human, technological, and social to engage in these urban challenges. Serving as an essential part of the education pipeline by enrolling large numbers of students from local school districts and specifically training them to be educators in urban areas, urban research universities are economic drivers, as they serve as prominent employers, real estate developers, and business

innovators in their cities. The community engagement by urban research universities not only provides a valuable service to the cities, but also enables these institutions to improve their own core knowledge and expertise that leads to further theories, discoveries, and advances for our nation.

H.R. 4137 updates the Urban Community Service program to authorize competitive grants for urban research universities to expand their capacity to develop initiatives geared toward improving the communities in which they are located. This updated program will help to address the unique challenges of our nation's urban communities by: enhancing teacher quality and college and workforce readiness (especially in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics); revitalizing the economies of local neighborhoods; and reducing the incidences of urban chronic diseases and health disparities. The Committee believes that supporting urban institutions of higher education in research and programmatic initiatives will help to address these challenges, bolster our nation's economic competitiveness, and make our cities better places to live.

Expanding access for students with disabilities

The Committee believes that it is important to examine postsecondary educational opportunities for students with disabilities and encourage improved enrollment, retention and completion rates for these students. Data reveal that there are low numbers of students with disabilities succeeding in college; only 12 percent of individuals with disabilities have graduated from college (as compared to 27 percent of non-disabled individuals). The number of individuals with disabilities in the workforce is also of great concern to the Committee; according to the 2005 Annual Disability Status Report, the employment rate of working-age people with disabilities was 37.9 percent compared to 77.6 percent for working-age people without disabilities. To address the need for improved education and employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, the bill establishes a National Center for Information and Technological Support for postsecondary students with disabilities. The Center will support the dissemination of best practices, provide information to students and families on higher education opportunities for students with disabilities, and review and report on the current condition of postsecondary success for these students.

Additionally, the Committee also provides for a study by the GAO on barriers and opportunities in higher education for students with disabilities to inform future efforts to address the unique challenges students with disabilities in higher education face.

The Committee also expands the allowable activities of the Projects to Ensure Students with Disabilities Receive a Quality Higher Education, including development and dissemination of strategies for successful transition to the post-secondary education environment from high school; development of accessible distance learning efforts; and improvements in curriculum development including an emphasis on universal design for learning, and accessible instructional materials. H.R. 4137 requires the Secretary of Education to review and disseminate a report of the program activities funded under this section to provide guidance and rec-