

Revisit the Higher Education Act: Make College More Affordable, Improve Teacher Preparation



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First passed in 1965 to ensure that every individual has access to higher education, regardless of income, the Higher Education Act (HEA) governs the nation’s student-aid programs, federal aid to colleges, and oversight of teacher preparation.

NEA PRIORITIES

- ▶ **Make college more affordable.** The student debt burden stands at \$1.2 trillion and exceeds total credit card debt. Two out of three students must borrow money to attend college. Many graduate with crushing debt that is also hurting America’s economy—they cannot afford to buy homes or cars, start businesses, support families, invest, or contribute to economic growth in other ways.
- ▶ **Americans deserve degrees, not debt.** NEA recently launched a nationwide campaign, [Degrees Not Debt](#), to make higher education accessible to all segments of America’s increasingly diverse student population, including adult learners. We urge Congress to:
 - Help students get their degrees faster by reinstating year-round Pell Grants
 - Allow federal student loans to be refinanced when interest rates decline
 - Encourage students to pursue careers in education or other forms of public service through loan forgiveness programs governed by the Higher Education Act
 - Enable more students to earn college credits during high school by expanding access to dual enrollment and early college programs
 - Streamline federal loan repayment plans to create a single income-based option with affordable monthly payments for struggling borrowers
 - Restore federally subsidized loans for graduate students
 - Make all contingent faculty eligible for public service loan forgiveness, not just full-time faculty
 - Permit private student loans to be discharged in bankruptcy
 - Provide incentives for states to reinvest in public higher education to enhance quality as well as affordability
 - Help students begin a pathway to a postsecondary degree by eliminating community college tuition
- ▶ **Improve teacher preparation.** To help ensure teachers are profession-ready from the first day they enter the classroom, encourage comprehensive residencies that go beyond traditional student teaching and require teacher candidates to demonstrate that they have the skills and knowledge necessary for effective practice—for example, by completing a classroom-based performance assessment.
- ▶ **Recognize educators as stakeholders.** Under traditional principles of shared governance in higher education—principles that NEA advocates—faculty and staff participate in the governance of their institutions. Faculty should have primary responsibility for determining curricula, methods of instruction, and subject matter; establishing requirements for degrees and certificates; reviewing institutional budgets; and making recommendations on financial issues that impact academic programs.