

AJCU Statement on FY18 Budget

March 17, 2017

The Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU), representing twenty-eight Jesuit institutions across the United States, cannot support the Administration's proposed higher education budget for FY18. The proposed budget will eliminate or make cuts to critical and very successful programs including Pell Grants, the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) and Federal Work Study (FWS) programs, all of which provide opportunities for many of our nation's disadvantaged students to attend college.

At a time in which our country needs a more educated workforce, this proposed budget will make the situation worse. A \$3.9 billion cut to the Pell grant balance will erode the program's fiscal health. On our Jesuit campuses, where 22% of students are Pell grant recipients, this proposed budget leaves the amount of the maximum Pell grant award unknown.

The FSEOG program is a campus-based aid program that supports nearly 13,000 students on our campuses. It rightly gives campus financial aid officers (who know first-hand about the death of a parent, medical issues, or financial limitations such as a job loss by a student's parent) the ability to distribute funds to students. The potential impact of cuts to FSEOG, a program with great flexibility that cannot be replicated, will be felt deeply by these disadvantaged students.

The unspecified cutbacks to the Federal Work Study program trouble us much as well. FWS has long provided an excellent opportunity for students to work their way through college. In order to receive both FSEOG and FWS, colleges and universities must contribute 25% of their own money toward the funds. Jesuit institutions have invested in these programs for decades because we recognize their success and know they help students graduate from college.

It has long been a bipartisan goal to help poor students develop their talents and contribute to the nation's workforce with the help of strong financial aid programs. As we move through the budget and appropriations process, we hope to achieve a healthier approach to campus-based aid. Simply put, suggestions for program eliminations should be made during the upcoming Higher Education Act (HEA) Reauthorization, and should not be part of the Trump Administration's proposed budget.

We hope that Congress will reject these harmful proposals and instead make appropriate decisions for the sake of our nation's disadvantaged students and the future health of the U.S. economy.