



May 12, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander, Chairman
The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions
430 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20010

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) followed the full committee hearing on Wednesday May 6, 2015 titled, "Reauthorizing the Higher Education Act: The Role of Consumer Information in College Choice" with interest. During the hearing a need for creating a debt-to-income calculator for graduate students was noted several times. For that reason, CGS would like to bring our online resource, GradSense.org, to the Committee's attention. This website, by connecting the data from the National Science Foundation's (NSF) National Survey of College Graduate and the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, allows students to explore median student loan amounts and annual salary figures by degree level, degree field, and occupational areas.

While the publicly available data from these two federal agencies are generally useful, because NSF and NCES do not employ common taxonomies for fields of study or occupational areas, cross-walking the datasets to develop the GradSense tool was challenging. Ability to connect various federal datasets, including those from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and U.S. Census Bureau is crucial in developing consumer information for prospective students and families. As the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act moves forward, CGS urges the Committee to explore ways to:

- better align potential consumer information available within the U.S. Department of Education and NCES, and
- facilitate better coordination and cross-walks between various federal agencies that provide education, workforce development, and labor market outcomes data.

Furthermore, CGS would like to point out that the information needed by master's and doctoral students may be different from that of undergraduate students. CGS and its member institutions are committed to making essential and useful consumer information available to current and prospective master's and doctoral students, including their families. As the Committee moves forward, please consider CGS as a resource on graduate education issues.

If you have any questions or need additional information feel free to contact me or CGS vice president Beth Buehlmann, bbuehlmann@cgs.nche.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Suzanne T. Ortega". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Suzanne T. Ortega
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