CGS’s legislative brief on the Expanding Access to Graduate Education Act (H.R. 3334) is a new resource for CGS members to use in discussing this bill. The brief provides an overview of the legislation and its benefits in providing access to, and improving affordability of, graduate education for low-income students. Highlight the potential impacts of this bill on your graduate students and work with your government relations office to include this as part of your institution’s advocacy efforts. CGS voiced its support for the bill upon introduction.

On July 1, CGS sent a letter in support of S.1696, Student Loan Tax Elimination Act, which would eliminate origination fees on all federal student loans. Graduate students currently pay multiple origination fees that are automatically rolled into their total debt burden. A House version of this bill was introduced this week by Reps. Susan Davis (D-CA), Chair of the Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee, Lloyd Smucker (R-PA), Ranking Member of the subcommittee, and Sharice Davids (D-KS). CGS also supports this legislation.

On July 3, CGS sent a letter to Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA) in support of H.R. 3418, the Protecting Our Students by Terminating Graduate Rates that Add to Debt (POST GRAD) Act, which would again make graduate students eligible for subsidized
federal student loans. Graduate students have not been able to access subsidized loans since 2012.

**Congress Coming Up on Several Budgetary Deadlines**

Congress returned from a week-long district work period this week, with lawmakers facing deadlines over the coming months on several must-address items. Prior to the break, the House passed 10 of 12 Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 appropriations bills, including those which fund the majority of departments and agencies involved in higher education and research. However, House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) indicated that the two remaining FY 2020 bills—Homeland Security and Legislative Branch—will not be considered by the full chamber before the August recess. The latest funding levels for programs of interest can be found on CGS’s Appropriations Chart.

The Senate Appropriations Committee has yet to mark up a single FY 2020 spending bill. It is unlikely that the committee will proceed with its work until Congress and the White House agree to a two-year bipartisan budget deal that would raise the discretionary spending caps. An agreement must be reached to avoid significant cuts to both defense and non-defense programs that would go into effect early next year. As one potential compromise, Administration officials have proposed a year-long, continuing resolution, keeping funding at current FY 2019 levels. Lawmakers have voiced opposition to this proposal.

Additionally, Congress must act to raise the debt limit by the fall, with one analysis indicating that it must be done as early as September. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) said this week that a vote to increase the debt ceiling could come before the August recess.

**House Passes Bill to Increase Pre-Country Green Card Limit**

On Wednesday, July 10, the House passed bipartisan legislation that would eliminate the per-country green card limit. The *Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Acts* (H.R. 1044) would increase the per-country cap for family-sponsored green cards from seven percent to 15 percent by creating a “first-come, first-served” system, without adding any new green cards. It would also eliminate the cap for employment-based visas. While the bill has broad bipartisan support in the House, it is unclear if it would pass the Senate, where a companion measure was introduced by Senators Mike Lee (R-UT) and Kamala Harris (D-CA) earlier this year.

**Senate Committee Approves Bill to Help Veterans Pursue STEM Careers**

On Wednesday, July 10, the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee marked up a bipartisan bill which would help veterans re-entering the workforce find jobs in STEM-related occupations. The *Supporting Veterans in STEM Careers Act* (S. 153) would direct the National Science Foundation to encourage veterans to pursue STEM careers and require the Office of Science and Technology
Policy to coordinate programs across the federal government that train and transition veterans into the STEM workforce.

**Senate Confirms Top Higher Education Official**

On Thursday, July 11, the Senate confirmed Robert King to serve as the Department of Education’s next Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education. King currently serves as a senior adviser at the department. He is a former top higher education official in Kentucky and previously led the State University of New York system.

**More Data Requested on Racial Disparities in Student Debt**

Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) is asking the New York Federal Reserve to examine racial disparities in student loan debt, especially in the country's largest metropolitan areas. This could provide more research needed help lawmakers close the racial gaps in student lending. Earlier this year, CGS responded to a solicitation from a group of senators on ways to address disparities in access and cost faced by students of color.

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**Federal Departments and Agencies News**

**Department of Education**

*Actions Related to PLSF*

Last month, CGS signed onto a coalition letter to Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos urging the department to waive the requirement that borrowers who qualify for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program (PSLF) must still be working in the public sector when granted loan forgiveness. This requirement has significantly slowed the processing of PSLF for qualified borrowers.

Additionally, a lawsuit filed this week is arguing that that Department of Education has mismanaged PLSF. The suit, filed by the American Federation of Teachers, claims that the department improperly rejected the applications of teachers seeking loan forgiveness and violated their constitutional right to due process. Several reports last year, from the department’s Office of Inspector General as well as the Government Accountability Office, found that the vast majority of borrowers eligible for PLSF have not been granted forgiveness.

*New Borrowing, Enrollment, and Employment Statistics*

According to new data released by the Department of Education, the proportion of college students using loans to finance their education, as well as the average amount borrowed, has increased in academic year 2015-16 compared to eight years prior. The new data also features information on employment and income, including for graduate and professional degree holders.
Gainful Employment Rule Repealed

Last month, the Department of Education officially rescinded all gainful employment regulations. The department intends to use its College Scorecard, which recently added more program-level data, including for some graduate programs, as an institutional accountability measure.

National Science Foundation

CISE Funding Opportunity

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has issued a solicitation for grant applications to several core programs through its Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE) directorate.

Treasury Department

Guidance Issued on Endowment Tax

On July 1, the Treasury Department issued guidance around the implementation of the tax on endowments at certain private colleges and universities passed as part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Under the law, private institutions with at least 500 tuition-paying students and assets of at least $500,000 per student would be subject to a 1.4 percent excise tax on net investment income. According to the new regulations, this would apply to the interest earned on loans provided directly to students; the money earned from renting facilities, housing to faculty, office space, stadiums, or dorms in the summer to non-students; and profits earned from running a hospital, and/or alumni organizations.

State Department

International University Research Grant Opportunity

The State Department has issued a funding opportunity through the University Research Program in STEM for two- to three-year projects to improve the standards of Georgian academic research in Georgian universities.

Department of Agriculture

Funding Opportunity for Non-Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture is calling for applications to a Capacity Building Program for Non-Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture.

Department of Veterans Affairs

Updated Resource for Student Veterans
The Department of Veterans Affairs has updated its GI Bill Comparison Tool, which provides new details for student veterans to use in calculating their benefits.

**Other Items of Interest**

**Court Allows OPT Suit to Move Forward**

On July 1, a federal court ruled that a lawsuit challenging the Optional Practical Training (OPT) program can proceed. The suit contends that the Department of Homeland Security exceeded its authority by establishing the program. The ruling also allowed outside parties, including business and technology groups, to defend OPT.

**Webinar on International Graduate Recruitment**

On Thursday, July 18, Inside Higher Ed will host a webinar on “Recruiting International Graduate Students in a Challenging Environment.” It will focus on the recent data showing declines in international graduate applications and other trends impacting international enrollment in graduate programs. The webcast will air at 2:00 ET.

**Quips and Quotes**

*Inside Higher Ed* looked at “State Funding for Students' Basic Needs.”


*The Atlantic* focused on “The Education Deserts of Rural America.”

*The Washington Times*: “Chinese students at American universities caught in crosshairs of trade war”

*Inside Higher Ed* highlighted the “Trump Administration's Take on Transparency and Deregulation.”


*Scientific American*: “How to Fight STEM's Unconscious Bias against LGBTQ People”

*Forbes* looked at the “Latest On The Court Cases That Could Restrict Immigration, OPT And H-1B Spouses.”

*Inside Higher Ed* released an article, “Foreign Gifts Under Scrutiny.”
The Hill: “Scientific integrity is crumbling under Trump”

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