

December 12, 2023

The Honorable Miguel A. Cardona, PhD
Secretary of Education

The Honorable James Kvaal
Under Secretary of Education

U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona and Under Secretary Kvaal,

The postsecondary sample studies conducted by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) within the U.S. Department of Education provide invaluable insights about postsecondary pathways, affordability, and outcomes to inform policymaking, field-driven research, and ongoing efforts to promote student success. For more than 30 years, the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS), and the Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B) have yielded comprehensive insights about how students pay for college, their progress through college to degree completion, and their employment and loan repayment experiences after graduation. Unlike other data sources, these studies are nationally representative and allow data to be broken out by a range of student characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, gender, and financial background. Any actions to scale back or eliminate these federal surveys weaken our ability to glean data-informed insights about students' experiences and outcomes.

We, the 45 undersigned organizations and individuals, are deeply troubled by IES' unilateral decision to discontinue the Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study. B&B is the only nationally representative source for insights into what happens to students after they earn a bachelor's degree, including the value students receive from their postsecondary investment. At a time when policymakers want more information about the return on investment of postsecondary education, IES should strengthen, not eliminate, tools that help institutions, researchers, and advocates answer critical questions about graduates' experiences.

We urge the U.S. Department of Education to reinstate B&B and restart collection of data that shed light on the experiences of graduates over time. We also urge IES to preserve NPSAS and BPS, including by at least maintaining a collection frequency of the full-scale NPSAS every four years and the administrative data collection every two years.

As the Biden-Harris Administration develops its fiscal year 2025 budget proposal, we urge the agency to request sufficient funding to continue conducting—and strengthening—the postsecondary sample studies. Now is the time to protect and preserve the tools that enable robust understanding of students' postsecondary experiences. Without them, we lose a vital evidence base to inform policy development to support college access, affordability, and success for all students.

Sincerely,

Organizations:

American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Association of University Women
American Federation of Teachers
Association for Institutional Research
Association for Career and Technical Education
American Institutes for Research
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Center for American Progress
Complete College America
Data Quality Campaign
Excelencia in Education
Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce
Higher Learning Advocates
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)
Jobs for the Future
National College Attainment Network
National Skills Coalition
National Women's Law Center
New America Higher Education Program
NCHEMS
Penn AHEAD
Results for America
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association
The Century Foundation Higher Education Team
The Education Trust
The Hope Center at Temple University
The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS)
The McBee Institute of Higher Education
Third Way
UnidosUS
Veterans Education Success
Young Invincibles

Individuals:

Amanda R. Tachine, Assistant Professor, Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College-Arizona State University
Andre M. Perry, Senior Fellow, Brookings
Angela Boatman, Associate Professor of Higher Education, Boston College
Charlie Eaton, Associate Professor of Sociology, University of California, Merced Co-founder, Higher Education, Race, and the Economy (HERE) Lab
Christian Michael Smith, Postdoctoral Fellow, University of California, Merced
Donald Heller, Retired Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, University of San Francisco
Eric Bettinger, Professor, Stanford University School of Education
Jason Houle, Associate Professor of Sociology, Dartmouth College
Judith Scott-Clayton, Professor of Economics & Education, Teachers College-Columbia University
Laura Hamilton, Professor and Chair of Sociology, University of California, Merced
Lindsay Page, Annenberg Associate Professor of Education Policy, Brown University
Nicholas Hillman, Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Susan Dynarski, Patricia Albjerg Graham Professor, Harvard University

CC: The Honorable Robert Aderholt, Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
Senate Appropriators

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin, Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Virginia Foxx, Chair
House Education and Workforce Committee

The Honorable Robert C. Scott, Ranking Member
House Education and Workforce Committee

The Honorable Bernie Sanders, Chair
Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, Ranking Member
Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee

Neera Tanden, Director
Domestic Policy Council
The White House

Shalanda Young, Director
Office of Management and Budget
The White House

Mark Schneider, Director
Institute of Education Sciences
U.S. Department of Education