



**Legislative Priorities for the Higher Education Consortium for Special Education**  
**January 2009**

*Appropriations*

**Personnel Preparation under IDEA**

IDEA authorizes funds for personnel preparation under Part D. This account has been level funded for years, despite the persistent and pervasive shortage of highly qualified special education teachers and faculty, especially in low incidence areas. In FY 2008, the account was funded at \$88 million. **There is a possibility that the FY 2009 bill will include the \$5 million increase that the Senate has proposed in its bill, bringing the total to \$93 million. HECSE recommends adoption of this increase for FY 2009. HECSE recommends an increase in this account for FY 2010, to at least \$110 million to better address the ongoing critical shortage of special education teachers and faculty.**

**Demonstration Projects to Support Postsecondary Faculty, Staff and Administrators in Educating Students with Disabilities in the Higher Education Opportunity Act**

Since 1998, the Higher Education Act has authorized this program at \$10 million to provide technical assistance for faculty in institutions of higher education so they can provide a quality postsecondary education to students with disabilities. Currently funded at \$6.7 million, this program was an ongoing target for elimination during the Bush Administration. The recent reauthorization of this program in the Higher Education Opportunity Act expanded its authority to address retention and transition issues. **HECSE recommends funding the program at the \$10 million level.**

**Model Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities in the Higher Education Opportunity Act**

This program was newly authorized in 2008 in the Higher Education Opportunity Act. It provides for grants to develop or expand model programs that serve students with intellectual disabilities in higher education. As these students are now eligible for federal financial

assistance, there is a need to expand program options for them. **HECSE recommends funding this program for FY 2010 at \$10 million.**

**Coordinating Center for Model Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities in the Higher Education Opportunity Act.**

This program was newly authorized in the 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act. Designed to assist the model demo programs in coordination, collaboration, technical assistance and evaluation, **this center should be funded at \$1.5 million for FY 2010.**

**National Center for Information and Technical Support for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities in the Higher Education Opportunity Act**

Newly authorized in the 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act, this program is intended to provide technical assistance and information on best and promising practices to students with disabilities, their families and higher education entities to improve recruitment, transition, retention and completion rates of students with disabilities in postsecondary education. **HECSE recommends funding this National Center at \$3 million in FY 2010.**

**Model Demonstration Programs to Support Improved Access to Postsecondary Instructional Materials for Students with Print Disabilities in the Higher Education Opportunity Act**

Newly authorized in the 2008 Higher Education Opportunity act, this program is to support model demonstration programs in developing systems to improve the quality of postsecondary instructional materials in specialized formats and such materials' timely delivery to postsecondary students with print disabilities. **HECSE recommends funding this program at \$5 million in FY 2010.**

**Teach to Reach grants in the Higher Education Opportunity Act**

This new programs authorizes grants to prepare general education teachers to effectively instruct students with disabilities. Since about 50% of all students with disabilities spend about 80% of their instructional time in general education classrooms, it is critical that general educators develop the skills they need to instruct them. **This much needed programs should be funded at \$10 million in FY 2010.**

**Graduate Fellowships to Prepare Faculty in High-Need Areas at Colleges of Education in the Higher Education Opportunity Act**

This new program is intended to address the critical shortage of faculty in special education and other fields. The shortage of special education teachers has been clearly linked to the shortage of special education faculty. Today we produce 30% fewer doctorates in special education

than we did 20 years ago! This program authorizes graduate fellowships to individuals who are preparing for the professoriate in order to prepare highly qualified elementary and secondary special education teachers. **HECSE recommends funding this new program at the \$10 million level.**

### **Teacher Quality Partnership Grants in Title II of the Higher Education Opportunity Act**

These partnership grants provide funding to institutions of higher education to develop or expand clinical programs at the undergraduate level and residency programs at the Masters level in order to prepare highly qualified teachers. President Obama's goal of preparing 30,000 new teachers in residency programs should be funded under this authority. This program is authorized at \$300 million. **HECSE recommends increasing the funding from the current \$33 million to \$100 million in FY 2010.**

### ***TEACH Grants***

HECSE remains excited about the TEACH grants. The availability of \$16,000 scholarships for undergraduate students and \$8000 scholarships for Masters Students to become special education teachers is a much needed incentive. HECSE would like to see the program opened up to universities with programs in both the undergraduate and post-baccalaureate levels. **HECSE looks forward to continuing to work on the implementation of this important program.**

### ***No Child Left Behind***

#### **Ensuring Accountability for Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities should be retained as a subgroup for accountability purposes under NCLB. Because of disaggregated scores, we know that students with disabilities are making progress and are sometimes scoring with distributions similar to their non-disabled peers. HECSE recommends that the existing 2% policy for students with modified standards be reconsidered. Intensive services and support for ALL significantly low performing students across all sub groups should be provided. Students with disabilities should be included in growth models systems under development in states.

#### **Teacher Quality**

NCLB should ensure that in order to meet the definition of "highly qualified" all special education teachers have completed a state approved special education preparation program and can demonstrate both the teaching skill and content knowledge needed to be effective teachers. Increasingly people are being labeled as "highly qualified special

education teachers” when they have neither the preparation, the skill nor the curricular content knowledge to be effective special education teachers. In order for the performance of students with disabilities to improve, the students must have effective teachers. Congress should work with the Obama Administration to reverse the NCLB regulation that allows those in the midst of alternate route programs to serve as the teacher of record and be described as “highly qualified.”

**For additional information contact Chriss Walther-Thomas at [chrisswt@ku.edu](mailto:chrisswt@ku.edu) or Jane West at [jwest@aacte.org](mailto:jwest@aacte.org).**