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A number of schools across the country that met with exceptional success in educating low-income students and students of color received 2006 Dispelling the Myth awards at a ceremony at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Washington, DC. U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings addressed the attendees, stating that the greatest myth of all is that the 2014 No Child Left Behind goal is impossible to achieve. She insisted that the goal is within reach and that reaching it is both a moral imperative and responsibility. Spellings added that, to keep America competitive in the 21st century, the U.S. government must ensure that every child has an effective teacher. Providing an example, Spellings described the case of Capitol View Elementary School in Atlanta. The school has one of the highest poverty rates in the state of Georgia, yet within the past year, 100% of its fifth-grade students were reading and doing math at grade level. She contended that if Capitol View Elementary could make such great strides, every school in America can attain success.

Senators seek Pell Grant increase

Urging an increase in the maximum Pell Grant award, which will be determined by the President's FY08 budget, U.S. Senators Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Susan Collins (R-ME), Norm Coleman (R-MN), and Russ Feingold (D-WI) wrote a bipartisan letter to Office of Management and Budget Director Rob Portman. The senators are seeking an increase in the maximum Pell Grant award in order to provide immediate relief to disadvantaged students. The Pell Grant is the most important need-based grant for students from low-income families. The maximum Pell Grant award is currently \$4,050 and has remained stagnant for the past five years, a period which has witnessed rapid tuition increases at higher education institutions. About 30 years ago, the Pell Grant covered approximately 80% of the average student's tuition costs; today, it covers just 33%.

IU plans to provide nearly \$10 million in financial aid

Indiana University will funnel close to \$10 million into four financial aid programs that will help nearly 1,000 IU Bloomington freshmen enrolling next fall. The programs include the IU Excellence Award, which will witness a cash flow of \$2.9 million toward payment of all tuition expenses for 400 top-achieving students across Indiana; the Research Scholar Program, a new initiative worth \$2.4 million that will provide full scholarships to 160 students showing "strong academic potential;" the Hudson-Holland Scholar Supplement, an already-existing program which will receive \$1 million to help underrepresented minorities; and the 21st Century Scholars Covenant program designed to ease the burdens of costs associated with room, board, and books for almost 200 students. Indiana University hopes the money will provide incentives for the best and brightest students to stay in Indiana.

MOHELA board names new members

Karen Luebbert has resigned as Chairman of The Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority (MOHELA); Vice Chairman John Greer will take on the post of Interim-Chairman on October 26. The MOHELA board met on November 4 and elected its new Chairman, John Smith, a public representative from St. Charles. St. Louis lawyer Gregory Upchurch will serve as Vice Chair; Tom Reeves, President of Pulaski Bank in St. Louis, will serve as Treasurer; and Randy Etter, Executive Director of the Advanced Technology Center in Mexico, MO, will serve as Secretary. The board elected Executive Director Raymond Bayer, Jr., to serve as Assistant Secretary, while Controller Penny Hagan was appointed Assistant Treasurer. The appointments were made by Governor Matt Blunt. Although he is the longest-serving board member, Greer was not offered a post as an officer. Both Greer and Luebbert opposed Blunt's plan to sell a large portion of MOHELA's loan portfolio to finance construction projects on state college and university campuses.

Survey shows preference for financial aid administrators

A survey conducted by the nonprofit Access Group revealed that despite increased use of web-based research to seek financial aid information, most students still opt to visit financial aid administrators for education and advice regarding their borrowing needs. Conducted between February and April 2006, the market survey questioned previous, current, and prospective student loan borrowers and concluded that nearly 50% of students preferred to visit their financial aid administrators, whereas 35% preferred to use the Internet. Even in this era of web-based research, students have more faith in their financial aid administrators because they provide them with personal and unbiased guidance, which apparently is not found on the Internet.

RMASFAA honors Shoemaker

Mountain Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (RMASFAA) in Salt Lake City, UT, honored Clarence N. Shoemaker, Jr., at its fall regional conference by inducting him into the by RMASFAA Hall of Fame and presenting him with a Special Achievement Award from the Department of Education. Shoemaker first began serving as a financial aid officer at Yankton College in 1977 and moved to the University of South Dakota in 1981. He helped students by creating a federal income tax form that is now used by a number of institutions to ensure that correct information has been provided in the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). In 1990, Shoemaker was appointed President of the South Dakota Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (SDASFAA). The highest honor granted by RMASFAA, Hall of Fame induction is awarded to those who have dedicated considerable years to the financial aid profession and have made significant contributions through their work.