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Representative Tom Petri, who supported the passage of the recent student interest rate reduction bill, plans to reintroduce the Student Aid Reward (STAR) Act in February. In a press release on his website, Petri states that both the Congressional Budget Office and President Bush's Office of Management and Budget reported that the FFEL program costs taxpayers nearly three times as much as the federal Direct Loan program. He urges members of both parties to support the Student Aid Reward (STAR) Act when it is reintroduced. According to Petri, passage of the STAR Act would encourage higher education institutions to voluntarily participate in the more cost-efficient Direct Loan program and retain 3/4 (\$10 billion) of the savings for increased Pell Grant aid for their students. He further states that the legislation could boost Pell Grants by up to \$800 per student while allocating more than \$3 billion in savings to finance deficit reduction-at no further cost to taxpayers. The bipartisan STAR Act was earlier introduced by Petri and Representative George Miller on March 17, 2005.

Democrats produce alternative plan for MOHELA assets

Although the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority (MOHELA) is on the verge of completion of its sale of \$743 million worth of student loans to finance Governor Matt Blunt's campus construction projects, Democratic senators are uniting behind an alternative plan. Blunt wants to sell off large portions of MOHELA's assets to raise the \$350 million needed for the projects. The Democrats' plan allocates 1.5% of MOHELA's annual assets to expand the breadth of the state's financial aid programs and relies on bonds to finance the college building project. Lead sponsor Senator Wes Shoemaker stated that the Democratic plan would enable MOHELA to keep nearly all of its assets, while providing access to low-cost student loans. The governor's office reacted by stating that the alternate plan is not strong financially; meanwhile, MOHELA's chairman contended that MOHELA had already made the decision to stick to Blunt's plan and that it does not foresee the board taking the alternative route.

University of Texas campuses announce new financial aid programs

The University of Texas at Dallas and the University of Texas at Arlington have announced financial aid plans that will help incoming students whose families earn less than \$25,000 per year. The UT-Dallas Tuition Promise will cover tuition and mandatory fees for newly enrolled full-time undergraduates, who will need to complete 30 credit hours each year, maintain term and cumulative grade point averages of 2.5 or higher, and continue to meet income and grant eligibility requirements. The Maverick Promise program at UT-Arlington covers the difference between the amount a student is awarded by a Pell Grant and total in-state tuition and mandatory fees. Returning students, including transfer students who are taking six semester hours or more and are financially independent or claimed as dependents on their parents' income tax filings, will be eligible for the Maverick Promise program.

Federal Student Aid announces workshop for new financial aid administrators

Federal Student Aid has introduced "Financial Aid Basics," a three-day workshop for new financial aid administrators. The program will be conducted in five cities during 2007 at Federal Student Aid training



facilities. Managed by a team of four experienced Federal Student Aid training officers, the Financial Aid Basics program will include an introduction to Title IV programs, policies, and procedures; instruct administrators on Title IV administrative and financial systems; and discuss important resources to help trainees with administering programs and finding answers to their questions. The first session will be held in Federal Student Aid headquarters in Washington, DC, from February 13 to February 15.

CASFAA honors Huber

National Sales Account Executive for American Education Services (AES) Donna Huber is the recipient of the 2006 Meritorious Service Award granted by the California Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (CASFAA). Huber has been honored for her significant contributions to CASFAA and to students. Last year, she received the CASFAA President's Award for her outstanding efforts in the financial aid industry. These awards have honored Huber for her dedicated work as California Lenders for Education (CLFE) Liaison to the CASFAA Executive Council. CASFAA's members include more than 1,600 California student aid administrators representing more than 500 colleges and universities.