Dear Colleague:

In this unprecedented time we appreciate the feedback many of you have provided on the unfolding situations on your college campuses as you focus your first priority on your students and your communities. Here in Washington, Congress is staying in session to work on economic relief legislation but, as with you and your campus community, life as we know it has temporarily changed. We are facing restricted access to the Capitol, limited public transportation, elimination of large meetings and mass gatherings, the closing of restaurants, bars, museums, and places of worship.

The long-term economic impact of the COVID-19 virus is uncertain, and our sector and many other industries will feel the impact. It is important that Congress hear right now about the early effects of the crisis on our students and campuses so as we seek economic support, lawmakers will understand the needs of our students and institutions.

As Congress works on COVID-19 legislation, the first package of measures will focus on the immediate health and safety needs of our nation. But even as that first package is being negotiated, many in Congress are asking about the particular challenges facing American higher education and the types of assistance that might be needed to help our students and colleges weather this crisis.

With this in mind, and based on conversations with colleague associations in Washington and state associations of independent colleges and universities, we suggest you take the steps outlined below.

If talking to members of your congressional delegation, especially in your home communities, highlight the following four general public policy priorities for Congress to consider:

1. **Emergency Grant Funds for Students**: Congress should provide emergency grant funds to colleges to help students with financial need pay for emergency necessities such as transportation, food, and relocation assistance.

2. **Technology Assistance**: Students and institutions need financial assistance with costs associated with moving to distance education instruction to ensure students can continue their education.

3. **Grants or Zero Interest Federal Loans**: Broad based federal support is needed to assist institutions with lost revenue and increased costs associated with the response to COVID-19, including the loss of room and board revenue and the costs associated with moving students home.

4. **Relaxation of Reporting and Audit Requirements including temporary suspension of the Federal Financial Responsibility system**: Colleges are facing both a substantial increase in costs and a potentially devastating decline in revenues. Additionally, the volatility on Wall Street means a potential decline in the values of the endowments of college and universities. As a result, many institutions will fail the annual federal financial responsibility ratios – ratios that only apply to private colleges. Failing these ratios could have dire consequences for students and institutions. Those consequences include losing authority for students who live out of state to access distance education classes, forcing colleges to buy expensive letters of credit, and having negative effects on private credit lines.

**Help Us Make the Case**: When talking to your elected officials help make the case by including any cost estimates for the actions you are taking, even if the estimates are rough approximations. Also, your elected officials will want to hear personal stories of how your students and campus community are coping to illustrate the impact of this national emergency on your campus.
Several college presidents have provided first-person accounts of the impact of the virus on their students and campus, as well as “back of the envelope” cost estimates on the toll the crisis is having on their short- and long-term institutional budgets. These anecdotes and analyses are helpful as we talk about the physical, personal, and financial impact of the COVID-19 virus. NAICU would like to collect and summarize your stories. If you are willing to share, please send your impact stories and financial estimates to CoronaCampusEffects@naicu.edu.

I know how difficult these last days and weeks have been for you. You have shown incredible leadership in your communities and beyond. There is much work ahead of us. We will continue to provide updates and resources to you as we are made aware of them.

Thank you for your continued efforts to prioritize the health and safety of your students and campus community. And, thank you in advance for reaching out to your Members of Congress to discuss these critically important higher education policy priorities.

Regards,

Barbara

**Barbara K. Mistick, D.M.**
President
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities