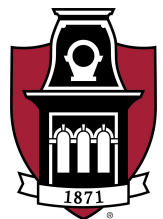


University of Arkansas
Associated Student Government

HIGHER EDUCATION
HONOR ROLL



RAZORBACK
ACTION
GROUP



Dear Readers and Supporters,

As we approached this budgetary session of the Arkansas State Legislature, student leaders at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville prepared to take the next step in student advocacy by focusing in on exactly what happens in Little Rock. As the official representation of the student voice at the state's flagship institution, we at the Associated Student Government (ASG) are determined to recognize those who have acted as supporters for higher education, and ultimately for students, across our great state.

The vision of the Associated Student Government is "to represent the common interests and voice of all students". We have taken that vision to heart. This has led to the creation of the Higher Education Honor Roll developed thanks to the hard work of ASG's student lobbying unit, the Razorback Action Group (RAG). RAG has dissected the effects that these proposals would have on students at the U of A, and it is our hope that this document will demonstrate to legislators that students are aware of issues pertaining to higher education while also increasing student awareness of issues.

We are proud to present the inaugural Associated Student Government Higher Education Honor Roll, recognizing those statewide leaders whose actions have demonstrated a true "students first" mentality to ensure that those members of the Arkansas community who pursue higher education can do so effectively. Through the Higher Education Honor Roll, we strive to foster an effective and open line of communication between students and legislators, so that the student body at the University of Arkansas can continue to be an informed electorate. In doing so, we at ASG hope that this will catalyze further involvement/work with our state's political leaders as we continue our work of prioritizing higher education in the great state of Arkansas.

Respectfully,



Tanner Bone

Student Body President



Thomas Selig

ASG Director of External Relations/Co-Chair of RAG



Rachel Spencer

Graduate Student Congress Director of Legislative Affairs/Co-Chair of RAG

About Razorback Action Group:

The Razorback Action Group is a nonpartisan advocacy group that represents the interests of the University of Arkansas student body. Members of the Razorback Action Group serve as representatives of the Associated Student Government at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville in local, state, and federal special interests. RAG works on behalf of students to ensure that government officials at all levels are aware of the most important issues to our student body. Our team explores ways to unite and excite the University of Arkansas student body when it comes to governmental relations and higher education issues.

Methodology:

The policy-making process is complex, as is evaluating policy through the lens of benefit to higher education. In compiling this Higher Education Honor Roll, members of the Razorback Action Group reviewed legislation passed during the 90th Arkansas General Assembly and the previous school year, including summer sessions. The Arkansas Department of Higher Education's Higher Education Legislation Summary was essential to this legislative review process.

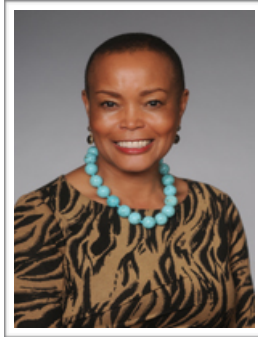
Legislation of interest was selected based upon relevance to the student body population at the University of Arkansas. Members of RAG weighed the benefits and challenges associated with each selected bill and act. The results are summarized in the following pages. The final pieces of legislation included in this report were determined by discussion and consensus within RAG. The legislators included in the honor roll have demonstrated a legislative commitment to serving and promoting the interests of students enrolled in higher education, particularly from the University of Arkansas. We are thankful for their service in support of students and the state of Arkansas.



We would like to extend thanks to **ASG President Tanner Bone, Chief of Staff Elizabeth Pittman, and Graduate Student Congress Speaker Scout Johnson** for their support of Razorback Action Group in general and this project specifically. We would also like to thank **Dr. Brett Powell and his team at the Arkansas Department of Higher Education** for their support of higher education in Arkansas and their willingness to engage with us as student advocates. Thank you to the members of the Razorback Action Group that helped author and compile this report, as well as to build our government outreach program this year:

Thomas Selig – Co-Chair
Rachel Spencer – Co-Chair
Hannah Bell
Nina Ephremidze
Alex Flemister
Stephanie Galen
Jace Motley
Wesley Prewett
Jake Smith
Davis Trice

THE HONOR ROLL - SENATORS



Sen. Joyce Elliott

(D)

District 31

Lead Sponsor: SB776



Sen. Jimmy Hickey

(R)

District 11

Lead Sponsor: HB1779



**Sen. Eddie Joe
Williams**

(R)

District 28

Co-Sponsor: HB1011

THE HONOR ROLL - REPRESENTATIVES



Rep. Kim Hendren
(R)
District 92
Lead Sponsor: HB1542



Rep. Andy Davis
(R)
District 31
Co-Sponsor: HB1779



Rep. Greg Leding
(D)
District 86
*Student Debt in Arkansas,
Interim Study Proposal
2015-139*



Rep. John T. Vines
(D)
District 25
Lead Sponsor: HB1791



Rep. Grant Hodges
(R)
District 96
Lead Sponsor: HB1892



Rep. Nate Bell
(I)
District 20
Lead Sponsor: HB1011



Rep. Warwick Sabin
(D)
District 33
Co-Sponsor: HB1892



Rep. Dwight Tosh
(R)
District 52
Lead Sponsor: HB1779

THE LEGISLATION

Legislation Title: Student Debt in Arkansas, Interim Study Proposal 2015-139

Sponsors: Representative Greg Leding

Purpose:

Requesting that the Arkansas Legislative Council and the Higher Education Subcommittee of the Arkansas Legislative Council conduct a study of student debt from higher education, including the amount of student debt, the impact of student debt on graduates, and possible solutions to reducing the student debt burden.

Benefit to Students:

This issue is of utmost importance to both undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Arkansas. Representative Leding collaborated with members of Graduate Student Congress and Associated Student Government to plan a town hall event around this topic on the University of Arkansas campus in fall 2015.

Positive Outcomes:

The interim study proposal dictates that the findings of this study will be presented to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate by July 1, 2017. This report will be helpful in providing a detailed baseline assessment of the burden of student debt in Arkansas and its impact on our student and new professional populations. Ideally, this information will provide grounds for actionable solutions toward alleviation of the Arkansas student debt issue within the state legislature, as well as give students more tools to advocate for themselves in this arena.

Author: Rachel Spencer

Legislation Title: Sexual Assault on College Campuses, Interim Study Proposal 2015-146

Sponsors: Representative Greg Leding

Purpose:

Requesting that the Arkansas Legislative Council refer to the Higher Education Subcommittee of the Arkansas Legislative Council a request to conduct a study of sexual assault awareness, prevention, and response on the four-year and two-year college and university campuses in Arkansas.

Benefit to Students:

This issue is of great importance to both undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Arkansas. Representative Leding collaborated with members of the Associated Student Government and the Northwest Arkansas Rape Crisis Center to speak at a public lecture event around this topic on the University of Arkansas campus in fall 2015.

Positive Outcomes:

Safety is foundational on college campuses, including the University of Arkansas. The threat or presence of sexual assault can seriously compromise the ability of students to live, learn, and grow during their time in school. This interim study focuses on awareness, prevention, and response

surrounding the issue of sexual assault on the four-year and two-year college campuses in Arkansas. The interim study proposal dictates that the findings of this study will be presented to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate by July 1, 2017. This study will provide helpful information about how the University of Arkansas can better prepare and educate our students, as well as potentially improve institutional systems or resources, around the goal of reducing sexual assault on our campus.

Author: Rachel Spencer

Legislation Title: HB 1542, Act 700

TO REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO REPORT TUITION AND MANDATORY FEES, INCLUDING CHANGES, FOR EACH STATE-SUPPORTED INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

Sponsors: Representative Kim Hendren

Passed by both the House and Senate with 0 nays in either.

Introduced: March 2nd, 2015; became "Act 700": March 25th, 2015

Purpose:

Annually, by July 1, the Department of Higher Education shall report the tuition and mandatory fees charged to students, including all changes to tuition and mandatory fees, for each state-supported institution of higher education to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education.

Benefit to Students:

This act advocates for transparency of state universities and colleges, and requires them to report exact costs of attendance, tuition and any mandatory fees, to benefit the state legislature in making decisions and writing legislation pertaining to higher education.

Positive Outcomes:

While it targets no specific student, it should lead to clarity and help educate students trying to make a smart college decision. It received no contest from members of the state legislature, and legislators worked across the aisle to hold state universities and the Department of Higher Ed accountable for its numbers. It moved quickly through legislature with no friction.

Author: Davis Trice

Legislation Title, number: HB 1779, Act 1250

TO AMEND THE WAY THE ARKANSAS ACADEMIC CHALLENGE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM — PART 2 AWARD AMOUNTS ARE DISTRIBUTED.

Sponsors: Representative Dwight Tosh, Senator Jimmy Hickey

Cosponsors: Representative Andy Davis

Purpose:

This act amends the manner in which the Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship is awarded and how the amounts are distributed. This bill would also allow a student to request that his or her lottery-funded scholarship be dispersed based on credit hours rather than semesters of study. This bill amends the language in which the dispersion of funds is outlined. This bill is designed to support students who are taking an accelerated course of study. Instead of outlining the fund dispersion in semesters, funds are allocated by credit hour. This could potentially effect students who were previously discouraged by the loss of funds to undertake more than 15 hours a semester, encouraging students to attempt to graduate earlier than originally planned if academically possible.

Benefit to Students:

This bill benefits students who wish to take an accelerated course of study without a loss of scholarship funds. Previously students who finished their course work early, taking more classes than required each semester, were left without scholarship funds allocated to students who undertook the same amount of credit hours over a longer period of time. This bill seeks to remedy this, proportionately awarding money by credit hour and not by semester.

Positive Outcomes:

This bill encourages students who are ahead of schedule in their coursework to graduate early and not remain in college simply to collect on scholarship funds. This could potentially benefit the University of Arkansas by moving us towards becoming a Top 50 research institution by improving our early/on-time graduation rate as the scholarship only pays through 120-130 credit hours, as opposed to 8 semesters.

Potential Drawbacks:

There was little opposition and the bill passed through both the house and senate with little traction, a single nay vote was cast in the house.

Which committees considered this legislation?

This bill was reviewed by the House Committee on Education multiple times.

Media Coverage:

The bill was mentioned in passing. Neither negative nor positive commentary was made.

Source: <http://arkansasnews.com/news/arkansas/lawmakers-ok-bills-re-homing-executions-lottery-scholarships#sthash.oORSPjef.dpuf>

Author: Stephanie Galen

Legislation Title, number: HB 1892, Act 1194

TO PROVIDE A RIGHT OF COUNSEL FOR STUDENTS DURING DISCIPLINARY APPEAL PROCEEDINGS AT STATE-SUPPORTED INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

Sponsors: Representative Grant Hodges

Cosponsors: Representative Warwick Sabin

Purpose:

This bill was created to allow students the right to representation (legal counsel if need be) in disciplinary procedures at their state-supported institution. It aims to give students rights that they are granted by the Constitution and the State, but not always by their university.

Potential Benefit:

This bill benefits all students at all state-supported institutions in “an appeal hearing or other appeal procedure conducted by the institution of higher education relating to the alleged violation by the student that has resulted in disciplinary action against the student.”

Positive Outcomes:

Students at state-supported institutions have the ability to bring in representation during disciplinary hearings, at their own expense, so that they might have an outside voice for them in the process. It enables students to have the rights that our country enabled for its citizens to extend to a university setting.

Are there any potential drawbacks of this legislation?

The legislation does not cover academic hearings and so it does not allow any representation for the student in academic hearings, unless the university allows. This is something the University of Arkansas does not allow, so it creates problems for students who are emotionally invested in their hearing to represent themselves.

Which committees considered this legislation?

House Education.

Author: Hannah Bell

Legislation Title, number: HB 1011, Act 21

TO GIVE THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION THE AUTHORITY TO APPROVE A SCHOLARSHIP HOLD FOR UP TO TWENTY-FOUR (24) MONTHS FOR MOST SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS.

Sponsors: Representative Nate Bell

Cosponsors: Senator Eddie Williams

Purpose:

Students with obligations whether they be: familial, religious, or beneficial to society now have the ability to complete their tasks and still retain their scholarship money enabling them to continue to pursue higher education. This was created to enable students who don't attend at their University or college for the duration of their degree consecutively due to extenuating circumstances to still have access to the scholarships they qualify for when applying.

Benefit:

This benefits students who need to take up to two years off for reasons as listed in the bill, allowing them to still obtain their degree without incurring debt that would have otherwise been alleviated through scholarship.

Positive Outcomes:

Students with obligations whether they be: familial, religious, or beneficial to society now have the ability to complete their tasks and still retain their scholarship money enabling them to continue to pursue higher education.

Which committees considered this legislation?

House Education.

Author: Hannah Bell

Legislation Title, number: HB 1581, Act 544

TO CREATE THE LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE REALIGNMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

Sponsors:

Representatives Gillam, Eubanks, Cozart, Lampkin, Leding, Ratliff, Lowery, Harris, M.J. Gray, Bell, Baltz, McElroy, Murdock, C. Douglas, G. Hodges, Walker, Deffenbaugh, Sabin, C. Armstrong
Senators A. Clark, J. English, J. Hendren, U. Lindsey

Purpose:

To examine realigning the standards of higher education. The committee will meet once every two months or more depending on the chair of the committee. The committee will consist of: Chair of the House committee on Education (or designee), chair of the Senate committee on Education (or designee), 5 representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House, and 5 representatives appointed by the President Pro Tempore. Purpose is to look at what is in place at the moment to save universities and students money, determine what could be done to save money, improve accountability and communication with the general assembly, and review the higher education system of other successful states. The task force will report finding on or before November 1, 2016 and then dissolve on December 31, 2016.

Benefit:

This bill particularly benefits students that have state-sponsored funds and state-funded universities. This is something that could be very good to students across the state, not only students at the University of Arkansas. Also, if the task force is able to identify different policies in place within other states this could prove highly beneficial to students in the future. Last, if the task force is able to identify possible cost saving mechanisms for universities it could benefit students in the cost of college going down, although this highly unlikely.

Positive Outcomes:

The bill will serve to put together a task force that is charged with determining cost saving mechanisms to save students and universities money. They also may be able to determine a better way to distribute state funds, instead of the way they do them now. They will also identify if there are any redundancies in state alignment with funding higher education, or if there is a better way to allocate the money.

Which committees considered this legislation?

Senate and House Education Committees.

Passed in the full senate with 34 yeas and no one opposing.

Passed in the full house with 89 yeas and 11 non-voting.

Author: Jake Smith

Legislation Title, number: HB 1791, Act 1187

TO AMEND PROVISIONS OF TITLE 6 OF THE ARKANSAS CODE CONCERNING HAZING.

Sponsors: Representative John Vines

Purpose:

The purpose of this bill was to amend the definition of hazing to make it broader so that it protects more students. Previously, Arkansas law defined hazing as “A willful act... by one student...” This bill expands that definition to be “A willful act... by one student, alumnus, or volunteer or employee of a fraternal organization if the volunteer or employee is acting on behalf of, or in the name of, the fraternal organization, acting alone, or acting with others...”

Benefit:

This act benefits all students attending institutions of higher education across the state. Hazing can affect students involved in a wide range of activities, not just those participating in Greek organizations. Hazing can be performed by any individual involved in an organization, not just a student, and this bill makes Arkansas college students safer by recognizing this reality.

Positive Outcomes:

Individuals participating in acts of hazing who are not students will be held accountable for their actions. Future acts of hazing by non-students may be prevented as a result of this legislation.

Which committees considered this legislation?

Senate Committee on Education, House Committee on Education, Committee on House Journal

Passed with 0 nay votes in House and Senate. One amendment proposed by Representative Vines that addressed minor grammatical issues.

Author: Thomas Selig

Legislation Title, number: SB 776, Act 1266

TO PROVIDE FOR IN-STATE, IN-COUNTY, IN-DISTRICT, LOCAL, OR RESIDENT TUITION FOR VETERANS AND THEIR DEPENDENTS, REGARDLESS OF RESIDENCE.

Sponsors: Senator Joyce Elliott

Purpose:

The purpose of this bill is to provide in-state tuition for veterans, dependents of veterans, members of the armed forces, and spouses of members of the armed forces.

Benefit:

This legislation benefits veterans and dependents of veterans wishing to pursue a degree at an institution of higher education in the state of Arkansas. Previously, in-state tuition was only provided to active members of the armed forces stationed in Arkansas.

Positive Outcomes:

Higher education will be more accessible to veterans and dependents of veterans in Arkansas.

Potential Drawbacks:

Revenue losses for Arkansas public universities.

Which committees considered this legislation?

Senate Education Committee, House Education Committee

Media Coverage:

UALR Public Radio published an article about the bill. Vice Chancellor for Governmental Relations Randy Massanelli also said, "This is going to be odd hearing from me but this is about a million-dollar hit to the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville but we see this as an investment. We're willing to do this. We want to do it."

Author: Thomas Selig

APPENDIX

- I. Interim Study Proposal 2015-139: Student Debt in Arkansas
 - a. <http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/Interim%20Study%20Proposal%20and%20Resolution/ISP-2015-139.PDF>
- II. Interim Study Proposal 2015-146: Sexual Assault on College Campuses
 - a. <http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2015/Meeting%20Attachments/038/I14080/EXHIBIT%20B%20%20ISP-2015-146.pdf>
- III. TO REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO REPORT TUITION AND MANDATORY FEES, INCLUDING CHANGES, FOR EACH STATE-SUPPORTED INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.
 - a. HB 1542, Act 700: <http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2015/2015R/Bills/HB1542.pdf>
- IV. TO AMEND THE WAY THE ARKANSAS ACADEMIC CHALLENGE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM — PART 2 AWARD AMOUNTS ARE DISTRIBUTED.
 - a. HB1779, Act 1250: <http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2015/2015R/Bills/HB1779.pdf>
- V. TO PROVIDE A RIGHT OF COUNSEL FOR STUDENTS DURING DISCIPLINARY APPEAL PROCEEDINGS AT STATE-SUPPORTED INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.
 - a. HB 1892, Act 1194: <http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2015/2015R/Bills/HB1892.pdf>
- VI. TO GIVE THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION THE AUTHORITY TO APPROVE A SCHOLARSHIP HOLD FOR UP TO TWENTY-FOUR (24) MONTHS FOR MOST SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS.
 - a. HB 1011; Act 21
- VII. TO CREATE THE LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE REALIGNMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION.
- VIII. Higher Ed Task Force, HB 1581, Act 544
 - a. <ftp://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/Bills/2015/Public/HB1581.pdf>
- IX. TO AMEND PROVISIONS OF TITLE 6 OF THE ARKANSAS CODE CONCERNING HAZING.
 - a. <http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2015/2015R/Bills/HB1791.pdf>
- X. TO PROVIDE FOR IN-STATE, IN-COUNTY, IN-DISTRICT, LOCAL, OR RESIDENT TUITION FOR VETERANS AND THEIR DEPENDENTS, REGARDLESS OF RESIDENCE.
 - a. <http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2015/2015R/Bills/SB776.pdf>
- XI. The Arkansas Department of Higher Education’s Higher Education Legislation Summary from the 90th General Assembly proved incredibly useful in compiling this report:
 - a. <http://www.adhe.edu/publications/details/2015-2017-higher-education-legislation-summary>
 - b. https://static.ark.org/eeuploads/adhe/publications/Acts_90th_GA_Legislation_ADHE_External_PDF.pdf