



THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20202

June 20, 2007

Honorable Lamar Alexander
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Lamar:

Thank you for your letter of June 14. I applaud your leadership in taking up the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. Increasing access to higher education is both an economic and a moral imperative for our nation, and parents, students, and taxpayers deserve a system that promotes greater transparency and accountability. By improving the accountability of our higher education system and making it more affordable, we can ensure our citizens are prepared to meet the demands of our competitive economy.

As you noted, we recently completed negotiated rulemaking on four critical issues including accreditation. Historically, the system of accreditation has evolved to respond to major shifts in our nation's higher education system. Since 1998, when the Higher Education Act was last authorized, we have seen dramatic changes in the various types of higher education delivery models, student demographics, and student mobility. In light of the Committee's work to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, I will not publish proposed regulations regarding accreditation at this time as we work to finalize statutory language around accreditation issues.

The members of the accreditation negotiated rulemaking committee represented organizations and institutions from across all sectors of higher education. The process resulted in the identification of key issues facing the accreditation system and advice on how to effectively address them. As we strive to provide more opportunities for our nation's students, I appreciate your recognition of these important issues and your willingness to discuss how we can make improvements to the accreditation system.

I look forward to continuing to work with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Margaret Spellings", is written over the typed name.

Margaret Spellings