



## Grantee Voices From the Field Newsletter

Education Secretary Miguel Cardona and Office of Postsecondary Education Assistant Secretary Dr. Nasser Paydar Attend Higher Education Summit



Secretary Cardona (second from left) and Assistant Secretary Dr. Nasser Paydar (first from left) meet on Capitol Hill for the Higher Education Summit, led by Senator Bob Casey (Pennsylvania), in February 2024

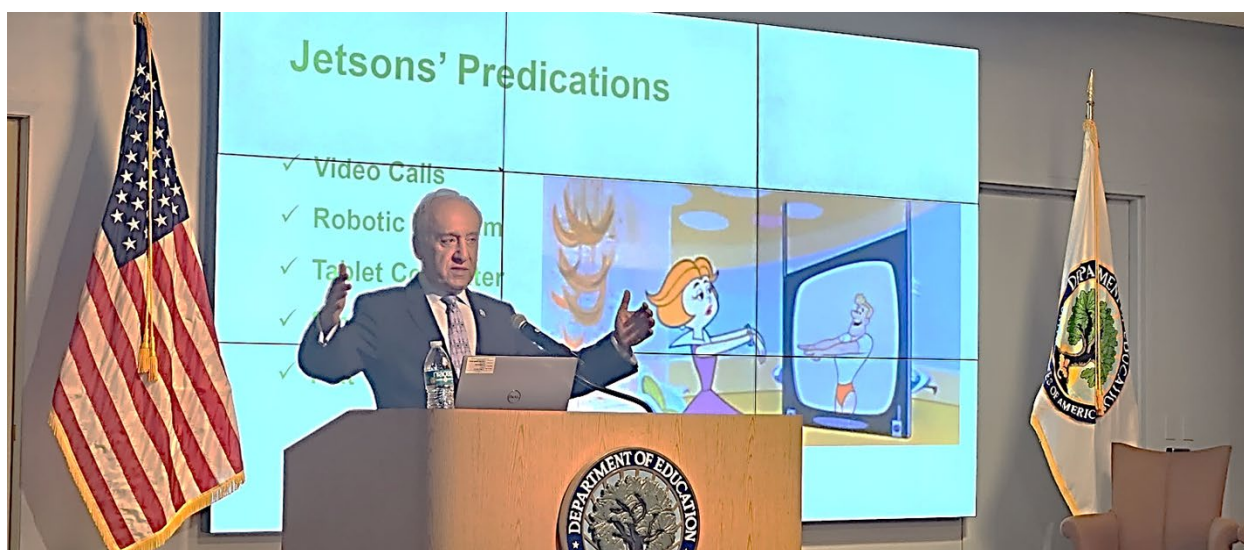
On February 7, U.S. Senator Bob Casey (Pennsylvania) hosted the sixth annual Higher Education Summit in Washington, D.C. He invited the presidents of all of Pennsylvania's

colleges and universities to hear prominent speakers and higher education policy discussions. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona gave welcome remarks, followed by a brief Q&A session.

Some of the stakeholder concerns shared related to the 2024–25 Federal Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) launch impacts on enrollment, budgets, and staffing demands; mental health needs and resources for students, staff, and faculty; and federal resources for low-income and first-generation students and students of color. Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education Dr. Nasser Paydar gave brief remarks, followed by a presentation on the administration's higher education priorities and updates, including on FAFSA, the current negotiated rulemaking process, and student debt relief.

MORE ON FAFSA

## Assistant Secretary Paydar Opens Minority Science Engineering Improvement Program Project Director's Conference



Dr. Nasser Paydar opens the MSEIP conference by highlighting the progress of MSEIP grantees in the areas of scientific innovation.

Dr. Nasser Paydar opened the Minority Science Engineering and Improvement Program (MSEIP) in February 2024 by celebrating the accomplishments of current MSEIP grantees. Dr. Bernadette Hence, director of the MSEIP program, successfully coordinated grantees while facilitating internships, research conferences, and learning opportunities for graduate students in 2023 and 2024.



MSEIP conference participants shared their success stories with colleagues.

The MSEIP grantees celebrated the graduate students' research in such fields as face and voice comman



MSEIP grantee summer interns at the Air Force Research Laboratory.

MSEIP grantees also celebrated graduate students who had summer internships at such federal agencies as the Food and Drug Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, National Aeronautic Space Agency, and Air Force Research Laboratory.

## Upward Bound Celebrates National TRIO Day at George Washington University



Upward Bound students celebrate National TRIO Day at The George Washington University. On National TRIO Day 2024, stakeholders and students of the Upward Bound Math and Science (UBMS) program celebrated at the George Washington University (GW) School of Medicine and Health Sciences Upward Bound program. This day was established by TRIO program leaders to raise awareness and gather support for programs that aim to increase the retention and graduation rates among participants.



Students gathered at George Washington University to celebrate TRIO Day.

Representatives from GW, Howard University, Morgan State University, and the College Success Foundation participated in various workshops, and student-led panels, and heard from alumni and TRIO stakeholders. Email OPE's TRIO programs at [OPE\\_TRIO@ed.gov](mailto:OPE_TRIO@ed.gov) for more information.

#### MORE ON TRIO

## International Foreign Language and Education Title VI National Resource Centers Engages with Ohio State University East Asian Studies Center



This poster from 1967 reminds citizens of China to “Vigorously support the anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America.” Credit: [chineseposters.net](http://chineseposters.net), IISH collection.

The [National Resource Centers](#) program funded an initiative in Spring 2022 with The Ohio State University’s East Asian Studies Center (EASC), in conjunction with its Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures, offering a new non-U.S.-centric course, The History of Race in East Asia (EALL 33802). This course explored how race was understood in the history of modern East Asia and how this impacted China, Japan, and Korea. By viewing the topic in the context of East Asia, the course presents a non-US-centric narrative on race, which undermines the troubling persistence of this social construct.



Dr. Melvin Barnes, Jr. is an adjunct faculty at Ohio State and teaches the new History of Race in East Asia course. EASC offered the [course again in spring 2023](#), and it was expanded to virtually include students from Spelman College, a historically black liberal arts college for women in Atlanta. All tuition and other expenses for the Spelman students were waived. As EASC grows its connection with Spelman, beginning with the fall 2023 applications, one student from Spelman will be awarded a full scholarship covering tuition and a living stipend for the first year of the Interdisciplinary Master of Arts in East Asian Studies Program

MORE ON NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTERS PROGRAM

## Negotiated Rulemaking Updates



Policy, Planning, and Innovation representative and Accreditation Group director Herman Bounds, led virtual negotiated rulemaking discussions for 2024.

In fall 2023, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) convened a negotiated rulemaking committee to develop proposed regulations about student loan debt relief for some loan programs as authorized in the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA). These negotiations focused on the authorities granted to the Secretary of Education in Section 432(a), of the HEA, which relate to the modification, waiver, or compromise of federal student loans, as well as hardship. In winter 2024, the Department convened a negotiated rulemaking committee to develop proposed regulations as authorized in the HEA. These negotiations focused on several topics, including accreditation, cash management, state authorization and distance education, return of Title IV funds, and TRIO programs.

## Employee Spotlight

Dr. Vicki Robinson, Director of Historically Black Colleges and Universities Programs



Dr. Vicki Robinson is the Department's director for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) grants and Predominantly Black Institutions grants programs, in the Office of Postsecondary Education. Her passion lies in building the capacity of institutions and cultivating untapped resources for global exposure. Recently, she established partnerships with Education USA — a U.S. State Department network of international student advising centers, Cultural Vistas, and the Stevens Initiative to provide HBCU students with international opportunities. Before joining OPE, Vicki worked in ED's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and the King Center in Atlanta. Her goal is to educate emerging leaders on how to lead from the middle with integrity and character. When faced with challenges, Robinson is inspired by civil rights leader Whitney Young, whose guiding principles were rooted in the idea that it is better to be prepared for an opportunity and not have one than to have an opportunity and not be prepared. Robinson takes pride in the legacy of students who have attended HBCUs and encourages other postsecondary students to do the same.



[MORE ON HBCU PROGRAMS](#)

## Announcements

### Grantee Satisfaction Survey

The Grantee Satisfaction Survey is now live! Each year, several grantees receive an email invitation with a link to participate in OPE's grantee survey. It is used to obtain feedback from grantees and ED staff on their interactions with one another, including what may or may not be working well and what can be improved. OPE grantees may contact their OPE program officers to learn more about the survey.

[LEARN ABOUT THE GRANTEE SATISFACTION SURVEY](#)

### BETTER FAFSA

**Learn more about the simplified FAFSA process.**



# THE BETTER FAFSA

What Colleges and Universities  
Need to Know

## Higher Education Opens Doors to Opportunity

The U.S. Department of Education is making transformational changes to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) form. The FAFSA form is an application that students and families need to complete to apply for federal student aid, such as federal grants, work-study funds, and loans. Completing and submitting the FAFSA form is free, and it gives students access to the largest source of financial aid to help pay for higher education.



The [Better FAFSA](#) is simplified, redesigned, and streamlined. It is faster and easier to fill out, with most students and families completing it in less than 15 minutes. It ensures that 665,000 more students will receive Federal Pell Grants to pay for college. Additionally, more than 1.7 million more students will receive the maximum Pell Grant.

[BETTER FAFSA](#)

## Engage with OPE

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