



American Council on Education
Office of the President

December 13, 2005

Dear Senator/Representative:

Twelve Gulf Coast colleges and universities were severely ravaged last summer by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita to the point that they remain closed today. All of the institutions have hopes of reopening in January and of returning to some semblance of normalcy, but that will not happen without outside assistance. I am writing on behalf of the higher education associations listed below to ask you to include support in the supplemental appropriations/Katrina Relief bill for the institutions directly affected by the back-to-back hurricanes.

In the immediate aftermath of the storms, colleges around the country banded together to take in displaced students. Congress enacted legislation to relieve these students from the hardships of loan repayment, and the Department of Education worked to get them the student aid resources they required. We greatly appreciate these efforts.

Now, however, our institutions face a different need—the need for immediate institutional assistance to help offset the costs of lost tuition revenues, to meet payroll to retain the faculty and staff without whom no reopening will be possible, and to continue with the repair and clean up that is needed to make these colleges operational once more.

This is a critical time for these institutions. Every day brings news of more program closures and layoffs of tenured faculty. This week, Southern University joined the ranks of schools that are downsizing their faculty and staff and radically reducing the number and the composition of programs they offer. Last week, similar plans were announced by Tulane, Dillard and Loyola Universities.

We have never before confronted the possible permanent loss of an entire region's colleges and universities as a result of a natural disaster. If that were to happen, the consequences will be far-reaching. These institutions—the people they employ, the knowledge they generate, the goods and services they buy, the revenue their students and athletic events pour into their communities, the health care services they provide throughout the Gulf Coast region—are part and parcel of the region's economic recovery and future viability.

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We strongly urge you to include support for Gulf Coast colleges and universities in the supplemental appropriations package that will be considered before Congress adjourns for the year. We respectfully ask you to consider allocating \$500 million to aid the recovery efforts of these colleges and universities, which represents just a small fraction of the losses these institutions have incurred. We appreciate any support you are able to provide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Ward", written in a cursive style.

David Ward
President

DW/cms

On behalf of:

American Association of Community Colleges
American Council on Education
Association of American Universities
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education
National Association of College and University Business Officers
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
United Negro College Fund