

CAMPAIGN FOR ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY

Higher Education Provisions in the Energy Independence and Security Act (PL 110-140) and The Higher Education Sustainability Act (S 2444, HR 3637 – now part of HR4137, the House higher education bill)

Energy Independence and Security Act Summary: Section 471 (“Energy Sustainability and Efficiency Grants and Loans for Institutions”) of this new energy bill, enacted at the end of 2007 as Public Law 110-140, authorizes up to a total of \$750 million annually in federal assistance for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects at colleges, public schools, or local governments. This bill authorizes the Department of Energy to make up to **\$500 million** in loans and up to **\$250 million** in grants annually as follows:

- grants of up to \$250,000 each for obtaining technical assistance,
- grants of up to \$1 million each for energy efficiency improvements to facilities, and
- innovation grants of up to \$500,000 each for projects that test new techniques in energy efficiency and sustainable energy production.

At least 50 percent of the total innovation and energy efficiency improvement grant money must be awarded to institutions of higher education. Of the funds for higher education institutions:

- at least 50 percent of all the grants above must go to institutions with endowments of less than \$100,000,000, and
- at least 50 percent of the innovation grants must go to institutions with endowments less than \$50,000,000.

Furthermore, at least one energy-efficiency improvement grant and 2 innovation grants each year must be made to institutions of higher education in each State.

HESA Summary: The Higher Education Sustainability Act amends the Higher Education Act to authorize a new **\$50 million** grant program at the Department of Education. At full funding, this program will annually support between 25 and 100 sustainability projects at higher education institutions and consortia/associations.

Individual institutions are eligible for funding to:

- a) develop and implement administrative and operations practices that test, model, and analyze principles of sustainability;
- b) establish multidisciplinary education, research, and outreach programs that address the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainability;
- c) support research and teaching initiatives that focus on multidisciplinary and integrated environmental, economic, and social elements;
- d) establish initiatives in the areas of green house gas reductions, energy, waste and toxics management; purchasing; transportation; and other sustainability aspects;
- e) support student, faculty, and staff work at institutions of higher education to implement, research, and evaluate sustainable practices;
- f) establish sustainability literacy as a requirement for undergraduate and graduate degree programs; and
- g) integrate sustainability curriculum in all programs of instruction, particularly in business, technology, manufacturing, engineering, and science programs.

Associations and consortia are eligible for funding to:

- A) conduct faculty, staff and/or administrator trainings;
- B) compile, evaluate and disseminate best practices, guidelines and standards;
- C) engage external stakeholders such as business and alumni,
- D) create analytical tools to assess and measure institutional progress; and
- E) develop educational benchmarks.

HESA also directs the Secretary of Education to convene a national summit on sustainability in higher education to focus on efforts of national distinction and to create recommendations for addressing sustainability through institutions of higher education. HESA has been included in the House version of the new higher education bill (HR 4137) without a specific authorization amount, which is now (as of February 25, 2008) in conference with the Senate.

Discussion:

These two companion programs compliment and support each other by each tackling one piece of the higher education challenge. Higher education's need for assistance with making dramatic changes *in reducing its energy bills and carbon emissions* has been addressed in the **Energy Independence and Security Act** because it is an energy bill. The Act provides loans and funding for capital projects on campus to improve energy conservation and test renewable energy ideas. It will help higher education as a sector become a model for the changes in energy usage that all sectors of society need to adopt.

Higher education's need help to advance *learning, teaching, and practice* about all aspects of sustainability on campus are addressed in the **Higher Education Sustainability Act** (now embedded in HR 4137, the House higher education act) because it is an education bill. It focuses on advancing changes in the curriculum as well as changes in *all* of campus operations (e.g. food, water, waste, and transportation in addition to energy conservation and renewable energy).

HESA also funds higher education associations and consortia to help their member institutions to embed sustainability in the curriculum and make the transition to more sustainable operations. Experience has shown that engaging and supporting such associations and collaborative efforts can have a disproportionately large impact.

HESA will help insure that the next generation is literate about energy and sustainability. By doing so, it will help create the leaders, business owners and employees who will make this country more energy independent and globally competitive.

Both bills thus address different but complimentary aspects of the sustainability challenges faced by higher education. Each provides a unique and important part of the solution.

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