March 18, 2013

The Honorable Charles T. Hagel  
Secretary of Defense  
100 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20310-1000

Dear Secretary Hagel:

On behalf of the associations listed below, representing two- and four-year public and private colleges and universities across the country, we write to express our concern with the recent decision by the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps to suspend new applications for the Military Tuition Assistance (TA) program. We ask you to reconsider the decision to end this important benefit for service members.

The TA program provides members of the military with up to $4,500 of tuition assistance per fiscal year to earn college credit, or complete a certificate or degree. The program is a critical investment in our service members and allows them to continue their education and develop their skills while still on active duty. We recognize the difficult decisions that the Defense Department leadership must make in dealing with the spending cuts required by the sequester. However, we believe that a complete elimination of TA benefits for new enrollees places a disproportionate share of the burden of budget reduction on these important education benefits.

Military leaders have consistently recognized the importance of education. As Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey recently put it, “Education is what feeds the hot fusion of innovation, of trust, of commerce and what makes our nation great. It illuminates the path to our greatness.”

TA benefits are an important investment in members of the military and their ability to contribute to the defense of our nation. While we appreciate the many considerations that must be taken into account as you implement the sequester, we respectfully ask that you reconsider the decision to eliminate new TA benefits.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Molly Corbett Broad  
President

On behalf of:  
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers  
American Association of Community Colleges

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Military Tuition Assistance Program
Page 2
March 18, 2013

American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Council on Education
American Indian Higher Education Consortium
Association of American Universities
Association of Community College Trustees
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators