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Postsecondary Equity & Economics Research Project

Here are some updates about the Postsecondary Equity & Economics Research (PEER) Project!

PEER Research Contributes to Debate on State Authorization

The U.S. Department of Education recently [assembled a negotiated rulemaking committee](#) on a range of topics, including state authorization, which requires colleges that wish to participate in federal student aid programs to be legally authorized in each state where they enroll students. Central to the debate was the question of whether the Department should amend aspects of a rule that permits schools that enroll out-of-state online students to satisfy this requirement without gaining approval in each online student's state by joining a reciprocity agreement.

In a PEER report, [Professor Rebecca Natow examined the experiences of state agencies](#) with implementing the only reciprocity agreement in place—the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). While respondents to Natow's survey expressed overall satisfaction with SARA, they raised concerns about capacity to implement the agreement, SARA's student complaint process, and a policy that prevents a state's ability to enforce its higher education-specific consumer protection laws against out-of-state schools that enroll its students.

Want to know more about state authorization? In a two-part series, higher education legal experts [Robyn Smith and Libby Webster take a deep dive into the consumer protection role of state authorizers](#) and SARA's impact on states' ability to hold online institutions accountable, protect the integrity of federal student aid programs and shield students and taxpayers from fraud.

PEER Brief Highlights the Role of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the Educational and Economic Outcomes of

Black students

[Ashely Edwards, Justin Ortagus, Jonathan Smith, and Andria Smythe authored a PEER policy brief](#) based on research from their academic paper on "HBCU Enrollment and Longer-Term Outcomes." They describe how enrollment at HBCUs positively impacts the lives of Black students and why policymakers should pay attention. The research makes use of the hundreds of thousands of self-identified Black students who took the SAT and graduated high school between 2004 and 2010. Collectively, the data suggest that enrolling in an HBCU improves Black SAT-takers' economic and financial circumstances around age 30. The authors highlight the need for additional federal, state, and local funding for HBCUs to ensure that they can continue to support access and attainment for Black students.

PEER Leads Policy Writing Workshop at Association of Education Finance and Policy (AEFP) Conference

PEER co-director Stephanie Cellini facilitated a panel of experts to discuss how academic researchers can engage in the policy process and write for policy impact. Cellini, Shagufta Ahmed, Jordan Matsudaira, Judith Scott-Clayton and PEER co-director Libby Webster contributed to a discussion and a workshopping session that demystified the federal lawmaking and rulemaking processes and provided tips on writing for a policy audience.

The Postsecondary Equity & Economics Research (PEER) Project is a joint initiative on accountability between academics and policy experts and attorneys. The Project fosters collaboration in developing research and policy briefs to guide federal and state policymaking on higher education issues promoting equity and ensuring positive outcomes for college students throughout the country.

If you're interested in learning more about connecting your research to relevant higher education policies and writing for a policymaker audience, please email PEER Project co-director, Stephanie Cellini, scellini@gwu.edu (George Washington University).

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