



THE STATE  
*of* **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

**Alaska Commission on  
Postsecondary Education**

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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February 28, 2014

The Honorable Anna Fairclough  
State Capitol, Room 514  
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Letter of Support for SB195

Dear Senator Fairclough,

In my capacity as the Alaska Student Loan Corporation's (ASLC) Executive Officer and as Executive Director of the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE), I am writing to thank you for your sponsorship and express support for SB195 – an act relating to ACPE, ASLC and education loans and grants.

More than ever before in our nation's history it is critical to our citizens' economic well-being and to the overall health of our economy to focus on education and training attainment beyond high school. It is important then, to administer our state student financial aid resources in ways that not only provide access to postsecondary programming but also encourage and support student behaviors which correlate to completion.

While SB195 proposes both housekeeping and administrative changes in the ACPE, ASLC and financial aid program statutes, its key substantive components relate to Alaska's loan and grant programs. SB195 establishes, applicable to loan and grant award amount eligibility, an "on-time" student enrollment status. Under the bill, for the first time in almost 20 years, annual and aggregate state loan limits would be increased in response to the escalating cost of postsecondary programs. Similarly, there is an increase in the annual and maximum state education grant.

The combined effect of these amendments permits the Commission to set available financial aid award amounts to enrollment intensity, with the highest amounts available to students enrolled at the "on time" level; that is enrolled in sufficient credits each term to complete two-year and four-year degrees in two and four years, respectively. Analysis of college completion data shows enrollment intensity correlates strongly with student persistence and, not surprisingly, timely completion of a program of study. Unfortunately, in Alaska, a disproportionately small share of students enrolled in state, do so on an exclusively full-time basis. This no doubt is a contributing factor to Alaska's record of having amongst the lowest college graduation rates in the country.

I applaud your action and leadership in sponsoring this legislation. With its passage, the Commission will be better equipped to deliver on its mission of supporting Alaskans' access to and success in postsecondary education and training.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diane Barrans", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Diane Barrans  
Executive Officer/Director