**Association of Big Ten Students**

**Winter Conference 2016**

**Host: Rutgers University**

**Legislative Docket**



ABTS Winter 2016 Legislative Session

Rutgers University

Executive Director Nick Wilson Presiding

1. Call to order
2. Approval of the agenda
3. Legislative Docket
   1. ABTS 01.16.01
   2. ABTS 01.16.02
   3. 2015-2016 Federal Platform
4. Discussion
   1. Big Ten on the Hill 2016 Dates
      1. April 10-12
   2. Summer Conference Location
5. Old Business
6. New business
7. Adjournment

ABTS 01.16.01:

*A bill to adopt an officer election procedure to be added to Article II of the ABTS Bylaws as Section 8.*

Sponsor: University of Minnesota

1. The Executive Director will call a session of the ABTS on the second day of the Summer conference for the purpose of electing new officers.
2. The Executive Director will open the floor to nominations for each executive office individually, in order, as follows:
   1. Executive Director
   2. Associate Director
   3. Director of Legislative Affairs
   4. Secretary
   5. Treasurer
   6. Director of Public Relations
   7. Conference Coordinator
3. Following the nomination period, speeches from each candidate, adhering to the list order above, may be given followed by questions from the body.
4. Elections for each office will be held. The Executive Director will call the role with each member institution receiving one vote.
   1. In the event of a tie, the outgoing Executive Director will be the deciding vote.
      1. If the outgoing Executive Director is not present, the next highest ranking outgoing officer will be the deciding vote.
5. Following the election of the Executive Director, the Executive Director-Elect will chair the remainder of the election proceedings.

ABTS 01.16.02

*A Resolution Urging the United States Congress to Reauthorize the Higher Education Act*

Sponsors: Michigan State University, University of Minnesota

WHEREAS, Access to higher education is a fundamental value of the American experience; providing individuals across the country with an opportunity for success in a field of their choosing. Higher education is a catalyst for the economy and a vehicle for innovation; and

WHEREAS, Our system of higher education has been, for decades, supported by the federal government through the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA; P.L. 89-329), which authorizes a vast array of federal student aid programs (FSA) as well as programs that support institutions of higher education (IHEs); and

WHEREAS, In FY2014, HEA provided $134 billion of financial assistance to over 13 million students through FSA and an additional $2.3 billion of institutional support for universities across the country. This funding is increasingly vital as many state governments continue to cut education funding; and

WHEREAS, The Higher Education Act was last reauthorized in 2008 and expired in 2013, which has had detrimental effects on students’ access to financial stability, including the recent expiration of the Perkins Loan Program. This program was a staple of the FSA system and targeted the most disadvantaged students in the country; and

WHEREAS, Senator Lamar Alexander, Chairperson of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, repeatedly pledged to have HEA reauthorized within 2015; and

WHEREAS, It is urgent that Congress move swiftly to pursue a reauthorization that addresses issues of student debt, sexual assault, FSA, college accreditation, and affordability; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Big Ten Students urge Congress to reauthorize the Higher Education Act of 1965 by allowing for substantive dialogue between all stakeholders; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Association of Big Ten Students will lobby all relevant Members of Congress in an effort to educate legislators regarding the importance of HEA in the context of our system of education.



**2015-2016 ABTS Federal Legislative Platform**

**We support repealing the Student Unit Record Ban**

* A federal student unit record system would make use of new and existing data collected by the federal government to create an accurate representation of how well institutions serve students.[[1]](#footnote-0)
* Congress already requires institutions that choose to offer federal loans and Pell Grants to report significant amounts of data to the U.S. Department of Education. Through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) the federal government collects information from more than 7,000 colleges and universities. IPEDS, however, were not designed to provide answers to questions that students, families, institutions, and policymakers now want about how well particular colleges and universities are serving their students.
* A student unit record system (SURS) would account for non-traditional and transfer students while the IPEDS formula does not account for such shifts taking place in higher education. Additionally, a SURS would provide information from the student level rather than only the institutional level in an effort to provide accurate information about how current students at a particular institution are performing.
* The ABTS supports a federal student unit record system so prospective and current students and families can be better informed and have accurate information available about particular institutions in order to make higher education choices and investments.

**We support reform in mandating and / or providing additional funds for the following student mental health initiatives:**

* *Leaves of Absence* 
  + Current Leave of Absence (LOA) protocols in many universities establish difficult barriers for students to cross to be readmitted to the university after a mental health related LOA.[[2]](#footnote-1)
  + All policies and protocols regarding Leave of Absence, and Mandatory Leave should be exorbitantly clear. This should include providing appropriate faculty and staff with necessary training, consistency in following said protocols, regularity in review and revision of said policies, and a clear list of expectations for all students, staff, and faculty on campus.
* *University Insurance Programs*
  + Not all universities offer mental health coverage with the on-campus insurance. Federal law mandates equality between medical/surgical benefits and mental health/substance abuse disorder benefits in group health plans that offer both types of coverage.[[3]](#footnote-2) This should hold true in student health insurance plans as well to provide adequate counselors and therapists for the growing number of students seeking aid throughout the semester.



**2015-2016 ABTS Federal Legislative Platform**

**We support exempting state student loan programs from the federal preferred lender requirements.**

* The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (34 CFR 682.212 and 682.401(HEOA)) requires postsecondary institutions follow onerous procedures before they can provide information or guidance to students and parents on non-federal loan options.
* The preferred lender requirements have impaired the ability of institutions to provide parents and students with critical information and guidance about non-federal loans, leaving them to make uninformed education financing decisions.
* An exemption for state-based loan programs will restore the partnership between state and federal education programs and enable postsecondary institutions to provide students and families with information about the less costly and more flexible loans.

**We support amending the Student Right to Know Before You Go Act of 2015 to mandate disclosure of number of professors of color at institutions by college and program area.**

* The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) reported, “that structural diversity makes issues of diversity salient and increases students’ participation in diversity workshops, their likelihood of discussing racial and ethnic issues, their socializing across race, and their having close college friends from other racial backgrounds.” [[4]](#footnote-3)
* In another study conducted by the AAUP, 543 faculty members ranked the statement “Importance of faculty diversity” on a scale of “Not important/irrelevant” to “Extremely relevant” with regard to the value it brings to the classroom. The study found that well over half the respondents thought faculty diversity was “extremely important” or “important” for students’ learning outcomes. [[5]](#footnote-4)

**Proposed additions to the legislative docket**

ABTS 01.16.03

*A Resolution In Support of Refugee Resettlement in the USA*

Sponsor: Northwestern University

WHEREAS**,** 30 governors who have recently come out against allowing refugees into their state;

WHEREAS, 12 of the 14 Big Ten Schools reside in states whose governors have come out against allowing refugees in their state;

WHEREAS, President Barack Obama has reiterated his commitment to accept 10,000 Syrian refugees within the next year;

WHEREAS, although admitting refugees is a federal authority under the Refugee Act of 1980, state institutions play a crucial role in providing basic support for resettlement;

WHEREAS , the United States adopted the Universal Declaration for Human Rights, from which the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees was built in 1951, which recognizes the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution in other countries and ensures the ratifying countries are obliged to protect refugees that are on their territory;

WHEREAS, 750,000 refugees resettled in America since 9/11 and not one has been arrested on domestic terrorism charges;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Big Ten Students, that the member school’s undergraduate student body denounce the decision of the Governors from Iowa, Indiana, Michigan, Maryland, New Jersey, Illinois, Nebraska, Wisconsin, and Ohio to halt acceptance of refugees,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the ABTS urges all members of the ABTS community to contact local, state, and federal representatives to voice their support for accepting refugees.

ABTS 01.16.04

*A Resolution Opposing the Safe Campus Act of 2015 (H.R. 3403)*

Sponsor: Michigan State University

WHEREAS, Sexual assault, in any of its forms, can be a life changing and exceptionally traumatic experience for survivors, many of whom do not feel empowered to report their experience or seek help; and,

WHEREAS, Over the past decade, there has been an alarming rise in the number of sexual assault cases in the higher education setting. Generally speaking, studies show that one out of every five women that are enrolled in a college or university will be sexually assaulted during her time in school; and,

WHEREAS, Institutions of higher education (IHEs) across the country and certainly within the Big Ten have been under intense scrutiny over the past decade when it comes to the prevention, response, and adjudication of sexual assault cases; and,

WHEREAS, Under Title IX and other such subsequent legislation, IHEs that receive Federal funding are tasked with the immense responsibility of maintaining an gender-equitable environment, educating students about sexual misconduct, and ultimately creating an environment that is conducive to student success; and,

WHEREAS, In recent years, a number of policies have been proposed, at both state and Federal levels, in an attempt to help alleviate the burden placed upon IHEs, clarify IHEs role in addressing sexual misconduct, and provide guidance on best practices; and,

WHEREAS, The Safe Campus Act of 2015 (H.R. 3403) seeks to alter the manner in which IHEs and the police respond to incidents of sexual assault by establishing reporting guidelines that are intended to improve adjudication processes for claimants and respondents; and

WHEREAS, Said guidelines severely inhibit IHEs’ abilities to investigate, respond, and adjudicate, cases of sexual assault by intertwining the criminal justice system and university adjudication processes; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Education, Congress, and IHEs, must pursue policy solutions that are based upon trauma informed, victim-centric, best practices, which have been established by experts in the field; and

WHEREAS, It is imperative that Congress take substantive action that seeks to address sexual assault on college campuses responsibly, unlike H.R. 3403.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Big Ten Students opposes the Safe Campus Act of 2015 (H.R. 3403) and urges the Congress of the United States to work towards policy solutions that appropriately serve claimants, respondents, and university adjudicatory systems.

ABTS 01.16.05

*A Resolution Supporting Diversity and Inclusion Amongst the B1G Ten*

Sponsors: Pennsylvania State University , Rutgers University , Indiana University,

Michigan State University

WHEREAS, throughout the country, issues of diversity and inclusion are increasingly growing on college campuses;

WHEREAS, all students, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, or religious beliefs, deserve to be able to learn and grow in positive and safe environments at their institutions of higher education;

WHEREAS, diversity has become an integral part of the university experience; providing college campuses the opportunity to interact and learn with people from a multitude of different cultures;

WHEREAS, while each of our institutions have programs and initiatives that work to foster diversity and inclusivity, we acknowledge that there is room for improvement within each of our Big Ten universities;

WHEREAS, the Association of Big Ten Students represents 550,000+ students that come from a range of cultures and backgrounds;

WHEREAS, the Association of Big Ten Students can become national leaders in creating institutions that that celebrate and support diversity every sort on our campuses;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the ABTS charges the Executive Board to:

1. Create a database of information encompassing the available resources, current initiatives, and shortcomings at each Big Ten University.
2. Create an ABTS task force to evaluate the database and connect different ways that institutions can work together to forward diversity
3. Explore the creation of a Big Ten Diversity Day for each student government and ABTS to emphasize the positive initiatives and diverse cultures at each of the Big Ten Universities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that each Big Ten University Student Government Association will hold each of our Universities accountable in keeping an open line of communication with their student body.

1. College Blackout-Unit Record Ban [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. <https://www.jedfoundation.org/assets/Programs/Program_downloads/StudentMentalHealth_Law_2008.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. [Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008, H.R.1424, 110th Cong. § 511-512 (2008)](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/collection.action?collectionCode=BILLS) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. American Council on Education, American Association of University Professors. “*Does Diversity Make a Difference?*” [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. American Association of University Professors. “Institutional Values about Diversity.” *Does Diversity Make a Difference?*  [↑](#footnote-ref-4)