



Student Parent  
Success Initiative



Newsletter  
August 2012

## Student Parent Success Initiative (SPSI) Update

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As always, please feel free to forward this e-mail to interested friends or colleagues, or to [contact us](#) to share updates or information relevant to student parents, advocates, and service providers around the country.

Some highlights from this month's update include:

- An audiovisual file, PowerPoint presentation and fact sheet related to SPSI's recent webinar highlighting the activities of the Pregnancy Assistance Fund;
- Information on new restrictions on federal aid eligibility; and
- Title IX can protect students from academic discipline due to pregnancy-related absences: One student's story.

## Activities and Publications of the Student Parent Success Initiative

- Webinar materials: SPSI hosted a webinar on July 25, entitled, "Federal Supports for Low-Income Student Parents: Spotlight on the Pregnancy Assistance Fund." Click [here](#) to access the recorded webinar or [here](#) to download just the slides.
- New Fact Sheet: SPSI also produced a fact sheet in conjunction with the webinar, *The Pregnancy Assistance Fund as a Support for Student Parents in Postsecondary Education*, which can be downloaded by clicking [here](#).
- Blog Post: IWPR summer intern Ann Weedon wrote about her experience as a student parent, and how SPSI and similar programs are making things better for student parents today on our [blog](#).

## Student Parents and Supports in the News

- [Colleges Worry about the Elimination of the Summer Pell Grant](#), *Inside Higher Ed*, August 2, 2012.
- [Advocates protest child-care cuts](#), *Charleston Gazette*, July 23, 2012.
- [Grandma's Help Hurts College Aid](#), *Wall Street Journal*, July 28, 2012.
- [The Child Care Center in Holyoke, Mass offers humanities courses for credit to impoverished women as part of a nationwide program](#), *New York Times*, July 20, 2012.
- [A balancing act: Parenting at the U](#), *Minnesota Daily*, August 8, 2012.

## Legislative and Policy Round Up

- Sen. Tom Harkin, in his role as Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee, recently released two major reports:
  - o The first, "[Under Threat: Sequestration's Impact on Nondefense Jobs and Services](#)," analyzes the impact of budget sequestration on domestic programs, which would include 110,000 fewer low-income students receiving Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, and nearly 52,000 fewer students getting Federal Work-Study money. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* also reported on the [education implications](#) of the budget maneuver. CLASP issued its own [analysis](#) of the impact sequestration would have on programs for low-income families.
  - o The second, "[For Profit Higher Education: The Failure to Safeguard the Federal Investment and Ensure Student Success](#)," is a four-volume series assessing recruitment, retention and federal aid practices of for-profit institutions of higher education.
- The U.S. Department of Education issued clarification related to recent congressionally-mandated policy shifts around the elimination of federal aid for students without a GED or high school diploma. CLASP staff explain the "ability to benefit" modifications [here](#).
- The U.S. Senate and House of Representatives are currently adjourned and will re-convene the week of September 10th.

## Other Research and Resources

- [What Have We Learned About Learning Communities at Community Colleges?](#), MDRC, July 2012.
- [Investing in Children Early Increases Access to Education](#), Equal Justice Works blog post on Student Loan Ranger, August 1, 2012.
- [The Academic Consequences of Employment for Students Enrolled in Community College](#), Community College Research Center, June 2012.

- [\*A Stronger Nation Through Higher Education\*](#), Lumina Foundation, March 2012.

## Student Parent Programs in the Spotlight

### National Women's Law Center Helps Pregnant Student Secure her Rights

***This anecdote details the experience of a collegiate student parent who was faced with course failure stemming from a pregnancy-related absence and the positive outcome NWLC helped her achieve. The testimonial included below is quoted directly, with permission, from the "Success Stories" section of the NWLC website.***[\[1\]](#)

"When I found myself pregnant in August of 2010 it only took a quick calculation to realize the baby was due right smack in the middle of my Spring semester of my junior year of college. Everything was fine until the fourth week of class. I was 40 weeks pregnant, feeling like labor was imminent, and I had a midterm exam that night. After I finished the exam, I went home so that I wouldn't go into labor in the middle of class. Later, I realized I had received only 5 out of 25 points for "Attendance & Participation" for that day. I emailed the professor asking if she planned to dock me the full 25 points for each class I missed for the birth, and she said 'yes.' I had two options: either risk failing the course while giving birth, or withdraw. I withdrew.

Then I posted an update on Facebook complaining about having to withdraw from the class because I was having a baby. One commenter completely changed the game for me. Melanie Ross Levin, works for the National Women's Law Center in Washington DC, told me that, according to Title IX of the Education Amendments Act, my professor was required to give me time off to have my baby, and to give me the same chance to earn my 'A' as any other student. At first, I really didn't believe Melanie, so she told me to call the Center's office, which I did. The amazing lawyer on the other end of the line completely had my back, and explained all my rights to me. I found the Title IX advisor at my school who was able to help resolve my situation. The administration outlined a plan that allowed me to do written work to make up for any absences and gave me a full six weeks after the last class to submit all of my work. Six weeks after the class was over, all of my coursework was turned in, and I received my grade: an A-. Huge thanks to the National Women's Law Center for helping me restore my rights."

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The SPSI team followed up with NWLC staff to obtain their advice for other student parents, asking for recommendations about how students should proceed when faced with academic penalties stemming from pregnancy and parenting obligations. Here is a concise summary of their advice:

- ***Know your rights.*** Title IX provisions protect the rights of pregnant and parenting students, and students should understand how those protections affect them. NWLC has produced a number of fact sheets detailing these protections, including:
  - [Pregnant and Parenting Students' Rights: FAQs for College and Graduate Students](#);
  - [A Pregnancy Test for Schools: The Impact of Education Laws on Pregnant and Parenting](#)

### Students

- The Next Generation of Title IX: Pregnant and Parenting Students
- **Advocate for yourself.** Title IX requires that every school maintain a Title IX coordinator. Students concerned about Title IX rights violations should report concerns to professors, school administrators and others responsible tasked with protecting the rights of students.
- **Document, document, document.** Students who plan to protest treatment believed to be discriminatory should maintain detailed notes about absences, interactions with school officials and other pertinent specifics.

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[1] <http://www.nwlc.org/success/nwlc-helps-pregnant-student-secure-her-rights>

## About Us

The Student Parent Success Initiative (SPSI), a project of the Institute for Women's Policy Research, is designed to improve supports and services for student parents seeking postsecondary education.

Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, SPSI serves to initiate new research, raise awareness on the need for student parent supports, and foster communication and collaboration among advocates, policymakers, educators, and practitioners.

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