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## *POLICY STATEMENT*

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### *Higher Education Faculty and Staff Working in Learning Assistance-Related Fields*

#### TOPIC: College Access

**General Statement:** Postsecondary faculty and staff working in learning assistance-related fields (e.g., academic support, tutoring/mentoring, disability support, remediation, developmental education) strongly endorse a philosophy of universal access to postsecondary education which transcends race, gender and identity/expression, cultural background, language, disability, first-generation, veteran, or socio-economic status.

**Specifically, that:**

- Learning assistance programs and equitable educational opportunity are an integral part of historical movement toward universal access in higher education in the United States since our country was established. From the creation of early developmental education departments, such as at the University of Wisconsin, to the establishment of land grant colleges in 1862 (Morrill Act) and community colleges in the early 1900s, increased access has been supported and legislated. This trend is fully within the parameters of the U.S. Constitution and consistent with the spirit of access typified in the Civil Rights, Women’s Rights, and Disability Rights Movements.
- Elimination or underfunding of learning assistance programs inevitably restricts college access in ways that lead to blatant educational disparities, very often with patterns related to race and socio-economic status.
- Such disparities lead to larger social, cultural, political, and educational problems.
- College access is a shared responsibility among all public universities and community colleges, as well as technical schools and private two- and four-year institutions.
- Marginalized student populations continue to be left out of postsecondary opportunities due to lack of learning assistance-related resources, even as funding is maintained or increased for STEM educational initiatives or other “higher priorities.”
- So long as access to higher education remains unequal, and so long as postsecondary education is perceived as or serves as a gateway to gainful employment, these educational inequities continue to contribute to economic and social inequalities for which the broader educational system is wrongfully blamed.

**Therefore:** Organizations representing faculty and staff affiliated with learning assistance in higher education support common sense in funding decisions related to learning assistance programs, continued research into the efficacy of learning support models to fully embrace the goal of equal access, and all legislation that protects the equal access directive in higher education.