July 30, 2001

The Honorable John Boehner  
Chairman  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
United States House of Representatives  
2181 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC. 20515  

Dear Chairman Boehner:

We write to inform you of EDUCAUSE's support of H.R. 1992, the "Internet Equity and Education Act of 2001." We hope that the House Committee on Education and the Workforce will approve this bill before the Congressional recess in August. Educause is a non-profit organization comprised of approximately 1,800 colleges, universities and corporations. Our individual members include college and university chief information technology officers, faculty, and distance education directors seeking to transform higher education via information technologies.

Effectively using information technology as a tool to provide expanded access to high quality education is a significant goal of our members. This legislation takes important steps toward enabling institutions to offer more innovative, flexible educational opportunities and allowing student access to more educational opportunities. In the rapidly changing world of distance education, it is critical that federal regulations encourage, rather than hinder, new ways of offering high quality learning opportunities. By modifying the 50 percent rule and repealing the 12-hour rule, this legislation will loosen up some regulations that have stifled the expansion of educational opportunities and the transformation of higher education.

While we understand that Congress established these rules many years ago to prevent fraud and abuse among correspondence schools, we believe the rules are now having unintended, adverse consequences on legitimate, academic programs. By exempting only those institutions already in the loan program with low default rates from the 50 percent rule, this legislation will allow the expansion of educational opportunities, while maintaining some important safeguards against fraud and abuse. Also, the amendment offered by Representative Wu in the Subcommittee on 21st Competitiveness that calls for reports to be submitted to Congress will help assure that Congress and the Department of Education keep abreast of these regulatory changes and any related developments.
Many of our members are world leaders in offering high quality distance education opportunities. A significant number of these institutions currently participate in the Distance Education Demonstration Program and Learning Anytime Anywhere Partnerships administered by the Department of Education. We would be happy to provide the Education and Workforce Committee with any additional information or demonstrations as they endeavor to understand the impact that distance education has on expanding educational opportunities for all Americans. Please do not hesitate to contact Mark Luker (202) 872-4200 on our staff, if we can assist you further.

Sincerely,

Brian Hawkins
President

Cc: Representative Howard “Buck” McKeon