

## Serve America Act: What It Means for Higher Education

### KEY PROVISIONS OF THE EDWARD M. KENNEDY SERVE AMERICA ACT

#### Background

Passed in March 2009 and signed by President Obama on April 21, the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act reauthorizes and expands the National and Community Service Trust Act and the programs and services of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).

The following is a summary of provisions that are of special interest to and provide potential opportunities for higher education. At this point, the programs and provisions listed below are authorized, however funds have not yet been allocated. Specific regulations for each of the programs and how funds will become available have yet to be determined. Campus Compact has played a pivotal role in designing and advocating for the role of higher education in the Act and will continue to be involved in the appropriation of funds by Congress and the development of the regulations and details of programs and services with CNCS.

#### SUMMARY OF KEY PROVISIONS

##### Learn and Serve America

##### Campuses of Service

Campus of Service is a designation by CNCS, in consultation with the Secretary of Education, of institutions of higher education that have demonstrated a commitment to service, service-learning and community engagement. Nominations will come through the state commissions and must include a diverse group of types of institutions -- public, private, 4-year and 2-year. Information required about nominees for this designation may be determined by the state commissions but must include number of service-learning courses, percentage of federal work study placements in the community, percentage of students engaged in community service, and programs that encourage or assist students to pursue careers in public service.

No more than 25 institutions will be designated each year. CNCS will award funds for these institutions to be used by them to develop or disseminate service-learning models and information on best practices regarding service-learning to other institutions of higher education.

##### Higher Education Learn and Serve Grants

Retains 25% of funds for institutions of higher education, either as individual institutions or as a consortium. Institutions must meet the minimum Federal Work Study requirements regarding community-based placements, now at 7%, in order to qualify for these funds.

##### Youth Engagement Zone Program

A Youth Engagement Zone is a service-learning program in which members of an eligible partnership collaborate to provide coordinated school-based or community-based service-learning opportunities. Eligible partnerships include

community-based entities, local educational agencies, local government agencies, institutions of higher education, state commissions or state education agencies.

Authorized activities may include Summer of Service programs, youth mentoring, STEM programs and energy conservation.

#### Service-Learning Impact Study

CNCS is authorized to procure an independent entity to conduct a 10-year longitudinal study on benefits/impact of service-learning programs including the impact on academic achievement, student engagement and graduation rates.

#### Service Corps Programs

Increases the National Service Education Award to \$5,350 immediately and ties its value to being equal to the maximum amount of the federal Pell Grant as it increases over time.

Allows individuals age 55 years and older to transfer their education award to a child or grandchild.

Increases service opportunities under AmeriCorps from 75,000 positions annually to 250,000 by 2017. Supports the following new national service programs to address unmet community needs.

#### Education Corps

Authorized activities include tutoring, mentoring, assisting students in being prepared for college-level work, assisting economically disadvantaged students in navigating the college admission process, and conducting a pre-professional training program for students enrolled in an institution of higher education.

#### Healthy Futures Corps

Authorized activities include providing translation services, improving literacy of patients regarding health, addressing childhood obesity, and assisting in health promotion interventions.

#### Clean Energy Service Corps

Authorized activities include weatherization, building energy efficient housing units, conducting energy audits, educating students on home energy use, and assisting in the development of local recycling programs.

#### Veterans Corps

Authorized activities include recruiting veterans into service opportunities and promoting efforts within the community to service the needs of veterans.

#### Opportunity Corps

Authorized activities include teaching financial literacy, construction and rehabilitation of housing units, working toward the elimination of hunger, and providing access to job placements.

#### Support for Nonprofits and Social Innovation

Creates a Social Innovation Fund to:

- 1). Recognize and increase the work of social entrepreneurs and nonprofit community organizations in addressing national and local challenges.
- 2). Stimulate the development of a network of social innovation funds and leverage public and private investment in nonprofit community organizations. Strengthen the infrastructure and support for effective solutions to community challenges.

Establishes nonprofit capacity-building program to make grants to intermediary nonprofits to assist small and mid-size nonprofits with organizational development.

Establishes a National Service Reserve Corps, made up of former participants of national service programs and veterans, who will assist in disaster relief.

Authorizes a Civic Health Assessment comprised of indicators relating to volunteerism, voting, charitable giving, and interest in public service in order to evaluate and compare the civic health of communities.

#### Other Provisions

Gives CNCS the authority to merge funding streams, expands the use of simplified, fixed amount grants, and gives more flexibility to consolidate application and reporting requirements. Increases the support for State Commissions and enhances the capacity of responsibilities of the Board of Directors of CNCS.

Establishes one or more clearinghouses for information regarding the national service laws that includes information on service-learning.