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**HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 707**

Offered January 23, 2015

*Recognizing the quality and value of diversity and innovation in the institutions of higher education in the United States and strongly disagreeing with the proposal of the President of the United States to create and administer a Postsecondary Institution Ratings System.*

Patron—Landes

Referred to Committee on Education

WHEREAS, the diverse higher education system of the United States, which includes community colleges, public and private four-year colleges, faith-based colleges, research universities, career training schools, work colleges, land grant universities, historically black colleges and universities, women's colleges, Hispanic-serving institutions, institutes for the arts, and many other specialized institutions, offers opportunity and innovation in postsecondary education and for lifelong learning that is unmatched anywhere in the world; and

WHEREAS, this diversity of institutions reflects the plurality and history of the people and the diversity of the ideas and ideals of the United States;

WHEREAS, many of these institutions are the intellectual homes to great traditions of faith, social service, research, arts, and humanities, all flourishing in the free marketplace of ideas in the United States; and

WHEREAS, public and private nonprofit and for-profit institutions all compete in the marketplace for students, compelling postsecondary institutions to constantly innovate and adapt in order to meet the evolving needs of students; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Education already collects large amounts of data and metrics each year from postsecondary institutions, and much of this raw data is made publicly available to prospective students without interpretation; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth is better equipped to distribute meaningful information regarding the postsecondary institutions within its borders; and

WHEREAS, the federal government has focused its investment in higher education on providing grants, loans, and work-study funds to assist low-income and middle-income students who are academically qualified for college and who are willing to work hard, but has left the choice of institution up to students and their families; and

WHEREAS, institutions of higher education are accountable for the appropriate use of financial aid funds and must already go through various accreditation, authorization, and certification processes to be eligible to participate in federal student aid programs; and

WHEREAS, the amount of federal aid a student receives is determined by Congress through need analysis formulas and the annual federal appropriations process and may be adjusted only on a case-by-case basis by a campus financial aid officer; and

WHEREAS, the the President of the United States (President) has proposed the development of a Postsecondary Institution Ratings System to rate and compare the value of institutions of higher education and base the amount of financial aid that a low-income student receives on both need and institution's rating; and

WHEREAS, the President has suggested that this ratings system will put a particular emphasis on the earnings of graduates, suggesting that institutions that produce graduates who go into public service, the military, ministry, or nonprofit work or stay at home to care for family are less worthy of support than institutions that produce graduates who pursue more lucrative jobs; and

WHEREAS, the President has stated that the ratings system will also give consideration to graduation rates of traditional students, thereby placing at a disadvantage institutions whose missions are to serve first-generation students, students with learning disabilities, students who are veterans, and students who are resuming their educations while also working and caring for families; and

WHEREAS, a ratings system based on factors chosen by the U.S. Department of Education is likely to lead to greater standardization, less choice, and less innovation and will overlook many of the qualitative benefits of a degree from an institution of higher education, including greater civic participation, better health, greater appreciation of the arts and culture, and critical reasoning skills; and

WHEREAS, a federal ratings system will appear valid but mislead prospective students who are making choices about college attendance, decrease the ability of colleges to openly compete with each other in the marketplace, and replace the free choices of students and their families, informed by their values, with monetary measures determined by the federal government; now, therefore, be it

INTRODUCED

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59       RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly recognize  
60 the quality and value of diversity and innovation in the institutions of higher education in the United  
61 States, and strongly disagree with the proposal of the President of the United States to create and  
62 administer a Postsecondary Institution Ratings System; and, be it  
63       RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit a copy of this resolution  
64 to the Virginia Congressional Delegation and the U.S. Secretary of Education in order that such persons  
65 may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter during their  
66 deliberations.