Plenary Session V:
The New Federalism:
Reauthorization of the
Higher Education Act, the
G.I. Bill, the Budget, and
a New President

Tuesday, November 11, 2008
9.30 - 10.45 am
Salon ABC
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Changes at the federal level may have a significant impact on state higher education policy. Or will they? The recent passage of the 2008 amendments to the Higher Education Act (HEA) will have impacts, both positive and not so much, for higher education, from both a state and institutional perspective. The recently passed changes to the G.I. Bill will also have a significant impact, providing substantially greater financial support for veterans, though doing little to address the mental and physical health issues that many will bring to campus. Although both the HEA amendments and the G.I. Bill provide more resources in theory, it is not clear that future budgets will reflect these increases. In fact the continuing resolution under which the Congress is operating for federal fiscal year 2009, which began October 1, provides the same level of dollars as last year – but this may not be enough to sustain the increased demand for Pell Grants and student loans, let alone fund the increases imbedded in the new legislation. In addition, regardless of who is elected president and what they may hope to do to make the U.S. better, it will be hard to do more than “improve government” with the fiscal hangover that will result from our nation’s current economic malaise.

The speaker (to be announced) will present their perceptions and discuss these issues with you. Don’t be surprised, however, if this session suggests that states won’t be able to count on the federal government for much more than they are getting now – except, of course, in the area of oversight and regulation.