

measuring student learning in credit hours" as a way to distribute federal aid. The law said that each program had to be approved by the institution's accreditor and the Secretary of Education.

Despite this flexibility granted in the law, accreditors and the Education Department have given approval for receiving financial aid to just 6 institutions to offer one or more of these programs.

Shifting gears, a second barrier to innovation may be accreditation.

In this committee we have begun looking at the accreditation system, recognizing that it must improve, but that it also may be a barrier to innovation.

Accreditation is very old-fashioned in many ways—it is still regional, despite the fact that institutions compare themselves to peers across the country and may have little in common with those in closest proximity.

It also hasn't kept up with new ways students are learning and the new ways teachers are teaching. Today, some institutions are modifying a professor's traditional role in teaching and evaluating learning.

I'm sure there are many other examples of government discouraging institutions from innovating and I hope our witnesses can speak to some of these and ways to make policy more flexible for innovations to come.

On the second point—whether we should consider the role of new providers of higher education:

I have said that the American higher education system of today is like the American automobile industry of the 1970s.

First, it offers a remarkable number of choices of the best products in the world at a reasonable cost.

Second, it is not doing enough about challenges that will require major adjustments if, 20 years from now, it wants to be able to make that same claim of superior choices at a reasonable cost.

Like the Japanese auto manufacturers that ultimately brought the American auto industry to its knees for a time, there is an emerging market of new or upstart providers of affordable higher education.

These are organizations that aren't necessarily colleges, like we are accustomed to, but are providing higher education that may offer students a similarly high-quality education at a lower cost.

For example, students are learning technology, software-coding or product design in as little as 12 weeks at places like General Assembly, a school that hires industry experts from places like Apple and Cisco to teach adult students skills that today's employers value.

Or they're taking general education classes like college algebra from online organizations like StraighterLine under a monthly subscription fee with credentialed teachers, or attending a MOOC—a Massive Open Online Course that's free and delivered by professors at many traditional colleges.

Some organizations such as Mozilla Foundation are developing open-source "digital badges" that allow more types of organizations to identify and recognize an individual's subject matter mastery and competency.

But there's no place for any of these innovators in today's Higher Education Act or accreditation system. The definition of what is a college has largely remained consistent since 1965.

Some senators, the President and Secretary Duncan are interested in understanding how to enable an environment where these new providers of higher education can compete with traditional higher education and potentially offer students a lower cost, high quality education.

In 2013, President Obama said in documents accompanying his State of the Union

that Congress should consider "a new system . . . that would provide pathways for higher education models and colleges to receive federal student aid based on performance and results."

What he and others are proposing is that students could use federal aid at these new organizations that aren't traditional colleges.

A bill from Senator Lee would allow states to create parallel accreditation pathways to broaden the kinds of classes students could attend while also receiving federal aid. Under the bill, students could receive aid for attending specialized programs, apprenticeships, professional certifications, competency tests, even individual courses. I believe Senators Bennet and Rubio are working on legislation that has a similar goal.

RECOGNIZING THE UDALL FOUNDATION

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I wish to call attention to a remarkable foundation that has benefited thousands of young Americans. The Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation was established by Congress to honor the public service of the Udall brothers. During the past 20 years, the foundation has effectively leveraged modest Federal appropriations into unique learning experiences for over 3,000 young Americans who are committed to public service in natural resources, Native nations, and environmental areas.

The Udall Foundation has rewarded over 1,400 scholarships to college students in all 50 States, plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and 44 tribal nations, for their work in public service. One of the distinguished college students receiving a scholarship from the Udall Foundation comes from my home State of Florida. Ms. Steffanie Munguia is a junior at the University of South Florida and is receiving a scholarship for her dedication to environmental conservation.

Additionally, the Udall Foundation has provided more than 200 students, from 110 tribal nations, the opportunity to gain practical experience in the Federal legislative process, through their Native American Congressional Internship Program.

The foundation strives to educate underserved middle school youth to the joys of outdoor exploration through their Parks in Focus program. Thus far, it has introduced more than 1,500 youth to 22 national parks, monuments, and other natural areas.

The Udall Foundation benefits countless groups and many areas of our environment, and I would like to congratulate them on 20 outstanding years. The foundation has delivered real results for people in every State in the Nation since its establishment and has earned our continued support now and in the years ahead.

USHER SYNDROME AWARENESS

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I wish to bring attention to a genetic condition known as Usher syndrome. Usher syn-

drome is the most common form of combined deafness and blindness in the United States, impacting as many as 50,000 Americans, not including their families, friends, and communities. It is estimated that 82 percent of those afflicted by deaf-blindness are unemployed. In the United States, the annual economic cost of blindness alone is estimated at 145 billion dollars.

Usher syndrome results when there are mutations in genes that are important for the function of both photoreceptors in the retina and hair cells in the cochlea, or inner ear. To date, 11 genes have been identified that can cause different subtypes of Usher syndrome when mutations take place. These mutations usually lead to a deficiency of a protein that is critical for the health and function of the retina and cochlea. Usher type 1 individuals are born deaf and then learn, often before adolescence, that they are also losing their vision. Usher type 2 individuals are born with moderate to severe hearing loss and then in the prime of their adolescent lives are told that they are losing their vision. Usher type 3, usually diagnosed during adolescence, leads to the slow loss of both hearing and vision.

Life with Usher syndrome requires constant adaptation to the loss of vision, caused by retinitis pigmentosa. First is the loss of peripheral vision, when the rods are impacted resulting in the loss of night vision and the onset of tunnel vision, which shrinks over time to the size of a pinhole. Once the rods are gone, the cones atrophy. Color vision and the ability to read lips are lost, further impacting the hearing impaired Usher syndrome individual's ability to communicate with others. Often, central vision fades and the person is left completely blind.

During this time—for which there is no prediction of how long the decline to total blindness will take—individuals with Usher syndrome are constantly adapting to remain aurally and visually connected. For the hearing loss, hearing aids, cochlear implants, American Sign Language, closed captioning, assistive listening devices, and tactile sign language are among the adaptive strategies used. For the vision loss, glasses, magnification, high contrast on computer screens, screen readers, audio descriptive devices, braille, canes, and guide dogs are used to compensate for the increasing blindness.

To accelerate research, the Usher Syndrome Coalition is raising public knowledge by launching "Usher Syndrome Awareness Day" on the third Saturday in September. The theme centers on the autumnal equinox, which marks the start of days that contain more darkness than light—a powerful metaphor for the threat of Usher syndrome. This will be a global event that starts on one side of the globe—Australia—and runs around the globe to the farthest point before the international dateline in Alaska.

Like many, I too have a personal connection with Usher syndrome. A

former congressional fellow in my office, Moira Shea, has Usher syndrome. She, with her guide dog by her side, took the Metro and came to work every day. In addition, she wore hearing aids, read lips, and overcame whatever adversity came her way. Today, Moira has lost her sight but not her vision—of finding treatments and cures for Usher syndrome so that no other generation has to go through what she and tens of thousands of other Americans have.

With the acceleration of research, it may be possible for Moira and the thousands of others afflicted by this genetic disease to regain sight. The technology is there. The Casey Eye Institute at Oregon Health & Science University has started the first human study of gene therapy for Usher syndrome. I am proud that the first clinical trial for Usher syndrome is being conducted in the state that I am privileged to represent.

I am committed to working with my colleagues to raise awareness about this devastating disease, and I applaud the hard work of the Usher Syndrome Coalition to make Usher syndrome research a higher priority at the National Institutes of Health.

RECOGNIZING THE RETIREMENT OF EDWARD "SANDY" DAVIS

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, along with my colleague, the ranking member of the Budget Committee, Senator SANDERS, we wish to honor and recognize Edward "Sandy" Davis on his retirement after 36 years of distinguished service to the Congress, including 20 years with the Congressional Budget Office and 16 years with the Congressional Research Service. Sandy is held in high esteem by both Republicans and Democrats for his insight, extensive knowledge of the legislative process, and unfailing graciousness in dealing with Members and staff over those many years.

Sandy started his career at CRS in 1979 and quickly became an expert in Federal budget procedures and practices. He prepared over 150 reports and memoranda on the budget process and on budget process reform proposals, analyzed and edited draft legislation, and prepared committee and conference report language on major budget process legislation in 1985, 1987, and 1990. A few of his key achievements involve the development of two reports that are still being published today: "Points of Order under the Congressional Budget Act" and a "Manual on the Federal Budget Process." Sandy also coached CRS's softball team—another key achievement of his time there.

In 1995, Sandy joined the Congressional Budget Office, quickly employing his expertise in budget laws and in the history of the congressional budget process. He first worked in the Special Studies Division, where he authored an excellent report on the Line Item Veto

Act. He then worked in the Projections Unit, where he helped prepare CBO's budget projections and continued his work on budget process issues; for example, he wrote a section in CBO's January 2003 Budget and Economic Outlook entitled "The Expiration of Budget Enforcement Procedures: Issues and Options," which has often been cited in discussions on that topic.

Because of his extensive knowledge of the budget and his strong interpersonal skills, in 2003 Sandy was appointed CBO's first associate director for legislative affairs, to serve as the agency's key liaison with the Congress. In that capacity, he worked closely with many staff members of the House and Senate—fielding and clarifying questions, alerting them about a forthcoming CBO publication, keeping them apprised about CBO's progress in responding to a particular request, responding to concerns about a CBO analysis, and identifying potential CBO products that would aid the legislative process.

Sandy's professional accomplishments set him apart, but his personal ethic—his good cheer and thoughtful consideration of his colleagues at CBO and on congressional staffs—truly defines him. Whether giving someone a "heads-up" about a hot-button issue, helping Members or congressional staff track down a cost estimate, or just answering questions about the budget or CBO's analyses, Sandy has always been gracious, straightforward, and generous with his time and efforts.

In short, over the past 36 years, Sandy exemplified the dedication and high-quality work that is so critical to the Senate's deliberations. I know my colleagues join me in extending our thanks and appreciation to Sandy for his service to our Nation and our very best wishes for a happy and productive retirement.

I would like to now turn to my colleague, Senator SANDERS, for his remarks.

Mr. SANDERS. I thank Chairman ENZI and join him in commending Mr. DAVIS for his many years of dedicated and outstanding service to CBO, the Congress, and the American people. We wish him all the best.

We hope our colleagues will join us in thanking Mr. DAVIS—and really all of the hard-working employees at the Congressional Budget Office—for his and their service.

RECOGNIZING WAYNE AND KATHY TATMAN

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I wish to speak on behalf of Wayne and Kathy Tatman who will be inducted into the Wyoming Agriculture Hall of Fame at the 103rd Wyoming State Fair in August. Since 1992, Wyoming has recognized individuals each year who have made substantial contributions to agriculture in our State. This year I have the honor of presenting this award to Wayne and Kathy with my colleague Senator BARRASSO.

Wyoming natives, the Tatmans have each contributed greatly to the agriculture industry and their home community of Lingle. Both have served as educators for the University of Wyoming Extension, a statewide program helping Wyoming citizens and communities address a wide range of issues through education and leadership. Wayne's career focused on production and economic issues while Kathy dedicated her efforts to consumers. Gary Stone, an extension educator for the University of Nebraska, nominated the couple, and said, "they truly are the 'best of the best' when it comes to Wyoming agriculture."

For more than 30 years, Wayne contributed to the UW Extension program working on livestock and crop production, invasive plants, agricultural research, and water issues. He worked to promote agriculture to Wyoming's youth through the 4-H leadership program.

Kathy joined the UW Extension Cent\$ible Nutrition program in 2000. She focused on nutrition, food safety, and food economics, and worked with low income families to provide nutrition and meal planning. Kathy was also vital in developing a nutrition curriculum for the State of Wyoming.

Former UW President Tom Buchanan commented, "Wayne and Kathy helped literally hundreds of Wyoming residents understand the impact of agriculture on so many facets of life."

The Tatmans passed on their love of agriculture and way of life to their three sons, all of whom earned agricultural degrees from UW and are still involved in the industry. Their legacy extends beyond their family to their community, and the State as a whole.

I am proud to have the opportunity to recognize Wayne and Kathy's achievements with Senator BARRASSO as 2015 inductees into the Wyoming Agriculture Hall of Fame. Wyoming is well served by their lasting and continuing contributions to agriculture and education in our State.

RECOGNIZING SHAUN AND LACEE SIMS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, at the 103rd Wyoming State Fair, Senator ENZI and I will have the pleasure of introducing Shaun and Lacey Sims as 2015 inductees of the Wyoming Agriculture Hall of Fame. I am proud to say this dynamic husband and wife team exemplify the ideals of the Wyoming way of life and have made immense contributions to the State and national agricultural community.

The Sims family has demonstrated their deep-rooted commitment through five generations of involvement in stewardship of the land and production of high quality livestock. Shaun and Lacey have shared their passion for agriculture as parents, and now as grandparents, with their children and grandchildren.