April 28, 2010

The Hon. Hilda L. Solis
U.S. Department of Labor
Frances Perkins Building
200 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Solis,

The integration of rigorous classroom study with real-world experiences, including internships, is a powerful way to learn. Recognizing the value of experiential learning, a growing number of colleges and universities are expanding and integrating internships into their curriculum. Some internships are paid and some, on a mutually agreed upon basis, are uncompensated.

The National Association of Colleges and Employers reports that 50 percent of 2008 graduates held internships during their undergraduate careers — many of them in government.

In this context, we are troubled by the Department of Labor's apparent recent shift toward the regulation of internships. The Department's public statements could significantly erode employers' willingness to provide valuable and sought-after opportunities for American college students.

While we share your concerns about the potential for exploitation, our institutions take great pains to ensure students are placed in secure and productive environments that further their education. We constantly monitor and reassess placements based on student feedback.

We urge great caution in changing an approach to learning that is viewed as a huge success by educators, employers, and students alike, and we respectfully request that the Department of Labor reconsider undertaking the regulation of internships.

Sincerely yours,

Joseph E. Aoun
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Robert A. Brown
President
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Susan A. Cole
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