It appears NAESP is having some impact on the Department of Education. In a statement by Secretary Duncan before the House Education and Workforce Committee, April 29, 2014, Secretary Duncan highlighted six priorities for the discretionary funding for the Department. The priorities included:

1. increasing equity and opportunity for all students;
2. strengthening support for teachers and school leaders;
3. expanding high-quality preschool programs;
4. improving school safety and climate;
5. promoting educational innovation and improvement; and
6. ensuring access to affordable and quality postsecondary education.

He did point out in his statement the funding still remains below the 2010 fiscal year level and had concerns about the long-term impact of the continuing slide in Federal education funding and the health of the economy and of the democracy. The increase he requested was for 1.9 percent or $1.3 billion over the 2014 level.

The funding includes $300 million dollars intended to continue with the administration’s Race to the Top competition centered approach to improving the academic performance of students in poverty schools. The second priority is to “provide significant support for school teachers and leaders who are implementing new college- and career-ready (CCR) standards, turning around our lowest-performing schools, and using new evaluation systems to improve their practices.” The Secretary failed to use the NAESP requested terminology (School Principal), but he is recognizing the need to include the “school leader” in the funds for professional development.

Another area covered in the funding request is for expanding high-quality preschool. The funding would “continue the President’s commitment to expanding educational opportunity for millions of children through a $75 billion mandatory Preschool for All program that would partner with States to support universal access to high-quality preschool for all 4-year-olds from low- and moderate-income families.”

Educational innovation and improvement is another area that has been proposed for increases in funding. Programs include: Investing in Innovation – and additional $23.4 million to support an evidence-based approach to scale up the most effective approaches in high-need areas and $49.5 million to pursue technological breakthroughs to improve teaching and learning. $150 million was requested for a new High School Redesign program to support the transformation of the high school experience. A STEM Innovation proposal for a total of $170 million in new funding for innovative grants has been proposed. The administration seems stuck on the “competitive grants” process – many of which ND schools wouldn’t qualify for because of various circumstances.

Funding has also been requested for improving school safety and climate as well as funding for Opportunity, Security and Growth Initiative to improve Preschool Development, ConnectEDucators initiative and Promise Neighborhoods to ensure high quality education from preschool to college.

The question is what Congress will do with the budget requests.