



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

June 6, 2017

The Honorable Susan M. Collins  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Collins:

Thank you for your letter to Secretary DeVos regarding the Upward Bound grant program applications from the University of Maine at Presque Isle which were deemed ineligible for the current Fiscal Year 2017 competition due to formatting errors. Your letter was forwarded to the Office of Postsecondary Education and I am pleased to respond. A copy of this letter will be sent to your co-signors.

On May 24, 2017, Secretary DeVos announced the Department will read and score applications for the Upward Bound grant program that were deemed ineligible under technical formatting rules issued by the previous Administration. The flexibility to consider these applications was made possible by the 2017 Omnibus spending bill. In the bill, Congress provided an additional \$50 million as well as the directive to review all applications previously deemed ineligible due to technical formatting requirements. Specifically, the language in the Omnibus states: *"The Department is strongly encouraged to provide flexibility to such applicants by permitting submission of a corrected application. The Department should include consistent formatting requirements across all TRIO competitions in the future."* This decision applies only to formatting and technical elements. Timeliness, budget and other requirements of the Notice Inviting Applications still apply.

Going forward, the Secretary has directed all Department staff to allow flexibility on formatting and other technical elements on all grant applications.

The Department is in the process of notifying all Upward Bound applicants that were previously deemed ineligible due to formatting issues that their applications are in the process of being reviewed and will send congressional notifications of those selected applicants as soon as selections are finalized.

Thank you for your continued interest in the Upward Bound grant program. If you have further concerns, please have your staff contact the Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs at 202-401-0020.

Sincerely,

Kathleen A. Smith  
Acting Assistant Secretary

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