March 1, 2019

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary of Education
Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

On behalf of the American Psychological Association (APA), I write to express serious concerns for doctoral psychology students enrolled at eight APA-accredited programs at Argosy University institutions. Some of these students are months away from graduating and entering the workforce to provide mental health care, help address the opioid crisis, and treat our veterans, among other vital contributions to society. Argosy’s reported recklessness and alleged criminal actions showed little regard for their students. We believe that these students should not be penalized and their futures jeopardized because of Argosy University’s mismanagement.

We respectfully request that you immediately establish a Real Time Response Center within the Office of the Ombudsman, staffed by knowledgeable representatives from the Department of Education, who have the technical expertise and authority to respond to specific concerns raised by these students. In addition, we request that you provide more timely, substantive, and improved updates for all 8,800 students enrolled at Argosy University institutions on the Department’s Federal Student Aid website. APA staff have reviewed the Department of Education’s website resources, FAQ, and portal set up for students, and have called the feedback line at 1-844-651-0077. We do not believe that these resources are adequate to provide students in crisis with the roadmap or solutions they need. While the Department of Education is acting as a clearinghouse for complaints, little advice and counsel is being given the students except directing them to www.studentaid.ed.gov. Given the significant impact on students and the lack of transparency by Argosy, we believe the Department must do more to protect, serve, and guide these students now.

Students enrolled in APA-accredited programs at Argosy are preparing for careers as psychologists. Their commitment to this profession comes at a critical time as our nation faces growing shortages of behavioral health providers; and individuals, families, and communities face increasing challenges because of trauma, depression, suicide, and the devastating opioid epidemic. These doctoral psychology students are poised to enter the behavioral health workforce and contribute to meeting the urgent needs of our nation. It is critical for the
Department of Education to assist them in getting back on track with their education. APA respectfully asks that you use all means available to protect the doctoral students in psychology, and all Argosy University students, to help them back on a path of learning and degree completion.

There is an urgent need for action as many of these students are facing financial hardship, unsure about their graduation, and potentially unable to secure employment. Some students have been left without access to their federal loan dollars, putting basic needs like food and rent out of reach. Other students’ transcripts are reportedly being withheld, limiting their ability to pursue alternative educational options. We ask that you act with urgency in this matter and put the needs of these students first.

APA is the leading scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States, with more than 118,400 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants, and students as its members.

Thank you for your attention to our request. For further information, please contact Karen Studwell, JD, APA’s Associate Executive Director for Government Relations, at kstudwell@apa.org.

Sincerely,

Arthur C. Evans, Jr., PhD
Chief Executive Officer