

President Trump's Executive Orders (EOs) and Executive Actions Impacting Higher Education

Note: This is not an exhaustive list but rather the EOs and executive actions that impact higher education. The list will be updated regularly.

EOs and Executive Actions Related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity (01/21/25)

The EO directs all federal agencies to end DEI preferences, mandates, policies, programs, and activities. It revokes EO 11246, which has required federal contractors to have affirmative action plans since 1965. The EO directs the Attorney General and Secretary of Education to issue guidance to state and local educational agencies and institutions of higher education that receive federal funds or participate in the Title IV federal student loan assistance program on “the measures and practices required to comply with *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*.” The EO also mandates investigations of institutions with endowments of at least \$1 billion.

Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing (01/20/25)

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) director, assisted by the attorney general and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) director, must end all discriminatory programs, including DEI and “diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility” (DEIA) mandates, policies, programs, preferences, and activities in the federal government, under whatever name they appear (including in relation to “environmental justice”).

Initial Rescissions of Harmful Executive Orders and Actions (01/20/25)

This broad EO rescinds 78 EOs from the Biden administration, including those aimed at increasing equity and economic opportunity for underrepresented students, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Hispanic-Serving Institutions. The EO also pulls back EO 14124 (2024), which established a White House initiative to increase educational access through HSIs. That initiative supported HSIs in building educational capacity, improving student economic mobility, and enhancing federal recruitment efforts on their campuses. *Note: This EO is also referenced below in other categories.*

U.S. Department of Education Letter to Institutions of Higher Education re: DEI and SFFA decision (02/14/25)

The letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary of the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) to colleges and universities to “clarify and reaffirm nondiscrimination obligations of schools and other entities that receive federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education” (ED). The letter states that the Supreme Court decision regarding *Students for Fair Admission (SFFA)* has clarified that “Federal law thus prohibits covered entities from using race in decisions pertaining to admissions, hiring, promotion, compensation, financial aid, scholarships, prizes, administrative support, discipline, housing, graduation ceremonies, and all other aspects of student, academic, and campus life.” It also encourages the public to file complaints with OCR if they believe a “covered entity” has unlawfully discriminated.

EOs on Higher Education and Antisemitism/Title VI

Additional Measures to Combat Anti-Semitism (01/29/25)

This EO directs the federal government to combat antisemitism vigorously, “using all available and appropriate legal tools, to prosecute, remove, or otherwise hold to account the perpetrators of unlawful anti-Semitic harassment and violence.” Within 60 days, agency heads must report on civil and criminal actions related to campus antisemitism,

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including pending complaints and legal cases. The Attorney General is encouraged to pursue civil rights enforcement, and ED must review all Title VI complaints related to antisemitism in K-12 and higher education. Additionally, the secretaries of State, Education, and Homeland Security must develop recommendations for monitoring and reporting alien students and staff who may be inadmissible under U.S. immigration laws. This EO builds on the Trump administration first term, [Executive Order 13899](#), which required federal agencies to use the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism and its examples when enforcing Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

Justice Department Announces Formation of Task Force to Combat Anti-Semitism
U.S. Department of Education Probes Cases of Antisemitism at Five Universities
HHS' Civil Rights Office Acts Swiftly to Combat Anti-Semitism (02/03/25)

Following the January 29 EO, the Department of Justice announced the formation of a new multiagency taskforce “to root out anti-Semitic harassment in schools and on college campuses.” In addition, ED announced on the same day it was launching five investigations at institutions of higher education “where widespread antisemitic harassment has been reported” and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) would investigate four medical schools over “protests taking place during their 2024 commencement ceremonies.”

EOs Impacting Higher Education and Immigration

Protecting the United States from Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats (01/20/25)

This EO authorizes increased vetting and screening of individuals seeking admission and already present in the United States. The EO also directs agencies to enhance vetting for those coming from countries with identified security risks, as well as, identifying admitted aliens and aliens otherwise already present in the United States “do not bear hostile attitudes toward its citizens, culture, government, institutions, or founding principles, and do not advocate for, aid, or support designated foreign terrorists and other threats to our national security.”

America First Policy Directive to the Secretary of State (01/20/25)

This EO directs the Secretary of State to “issue guidance bringing the Department of State’s policies, programs, personnel, and operations in line with an America First foreign policy, which puts America and its interests first.” It could impact programs that are funded by the State Department.

Protecting the American People Against Invasion (01/20/25)

This EO directs executive departments and agencies to enforce final deportation orders and directs the Secretary of Homeland Security to ensure the efficient and expedited removal of individuals who have not been admitted or paroled into the United States and do not qualify for asylum. The EO establishes Federal Homeland Security Task Forces, limits sanctuary jurisdictions’ funding, and restricts public benefits for undocumented individuals.

Following this EO, on February 25, the [Trump administration announced](#) that it will enforce a provision of the [Immigration and Nationality Act](#) that requires all undocumented immigrants age 14 or [to register and be fingerprinted](#) with USCIS. Failure to comply will result in criminal and civil penalties. According to [DHS Secretary Kristi Noem](#), enforcing this requirement is part of a broader effort to “compel illegal aliens to self-deport.”

Ending Taxpayer Subsidization of Open Borders (02/19/25)

This EO directs federal departments and agencies to identify all federally funded programs that currently “permit illegal aliens to obtain any cash or non-cash public benefit” and improve eligibility verification systems to prevent benefits from going to individuals unlawfully present in the United States. The order mandates federal funds to states and localities not be used to support “sanctuary” policies to shield illegal aliens from deportation. Within 30 days of the date of this order, the director of OMB and administrator of DOGE, in coordination with the assistant to the president for domestic policy, will identify sources of federal funding for illegal alien and recommend additional agency actions to align federal spending with the purposes of this order and enhance eligibility verification systems.

EOs Impacting Title IX

Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government (01/20/25)

This EO recognizes two sexes, male and female, and directs agencies to use "sex" instead of "gender" in federal policies and documents. The order also directs the U.S. Education Department to rescind several pieces of guidance, including a 2021 memo that said discriminating against gay or transgender individuals would violate Title IX, which bars sex discrimination in federally funded education programs.

Keep Men Out of Women's Sports (02/05/25)

This EO mandates federally funded educational institutions to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 by prohibiting male participation in women's sports. The order directs the Secretary of Education and the Attorney General to enforce policies that preserve all-female sports and locker rooms, rescind funding from non-compliant programs, and prioritize legal actions against institutions allowing male participation in women's categories. It also rescinds U.S. participation in people-to-people sports exchanges or other sports programs that classify female sports based on identity rather than biological sex. Additionally, it promotes international policies to protect sex-based sports categories, restricts U.S. entry for male athletes attempting to compete in women's sports, and urges the International Olympic Committee to ensure eligibility for women's sports is based solely on biological sex.

EOs Impacting Sustainability

Initial Rescissions of Harmful Executive Orders and Actions (01/20/25)

This EO revokes the following Biden-era EOs related to higher education's effort to combat climate change. The order ceases the White House Office of Domestic Climate Policy within the Executive Office of the President. It would also end the Justice40 Initiatives and other HBCU- and MSI-related environmental justice programs.

Protecting American Energy from State Overreach (04/08/25)

This EO directs the Attorney General, in consultation with the heads of appropriate executive departments and agencies, to identify and act against state and local laws that burden domestic energy production and may be unconstitutional, preempted by federal law, or otherwise unlawful, particularly those tied to climate change, environmental justice, greenhouse gas emissions, and carbon penalties. The attorney general must "expeditiously take all appropriate action to stop the enforcement of State laws that the Attorney General determines to be illegal." A report from the attorney general on recommended executive and legislative actions is due in 60 days.

EOs and Executive Actions Impacting University Endowments

America First Investment Policy (02/21/2025)

The memorandum instructs the federal government to use all necessary legal instruments, including the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), to restrict People's Republic of China-affiliated investments in critical sectors such as technology, critical infrastructure, healthcare, agriculture, energy, raw materials, or other strategic sectors. It directs agencies to establish a fast-track process for investments from allied partners while ensuring these investors do not collaborate with foreign adversaries in corresponding areas. Investments exceeding \$1 billion will undergo expedited environmental reviews, and mitigation agreements must include concrete, time-bound actions. Restrictions on foreign investors' access to U.S. assets will be eased based on their independence from PRC-aligned predatory investment practices, while passive investments without governance influence will still be encouraged.

The administration will consider new or expanded restrictions on outbound U.S. investments in critical sectors such as semiconductors, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, biotechnology, aerospace, and advanced manufacturing. The review will also consider restrictions on investment types—including private equity, venture capital, corporate expansions, and public securities—funded by pension funds, university endowments, and other

limited-partner investors, to prevent U.S. financial resources from supporting China's Military-Civil Fusion strategy. The memorandum specifically states that "it is past time for American universities to stop supporting foreign adversaries" and "stop granting university access to supporters of terrorism."

EOs Impacting Student Loan Forgiveness

Restoring Public Service Loan Forgiveness (03/07/2025)

This EO directs the Secretary of Education, in coordination with the Secretary of the Treasury as appropriate, to revise the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program to prevent eligibility for organizations engaged in illegal activities from qualifying for loan forgiveness. Specifically, it would prohibit PSLF funds from subsidizing through loan forgiveness activities that advance illegal immigration, terrorism, child abuse, discrimination, and public disruptions. The [White House fact sheet](#) claims to refocus PSLF on "encouraging Americans to enter essential public service roles, such as nursing, rather than activist groups."

EOs and Executive Actions Impacting Government Operations

Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid (01/20/25)

This EO orders a 90-day pause on all U.S. foreign development assistance, in order to perform an "assessment of programmatic efficiencies and constituency with U.S. foreign policy." Within 90 days, the heads of the agencies, along with the OMB Director, will determine whether or not these programs will continue. This EO led to the initial stop-work orders at USAID, the restructuring of the agency, and efforts to embed a greatly reduced foreign development assistance program [into the U.S. Department of State](#).

Office of Management and Budget Memo on "Temporary Pause of Agency Grant, Loan, and Other Financial Assistance Programs" (01/29/25)

This memo to the heads of federal agencies, instructs those agencies to pause all and review all external funding and programs to ensure they are "consistent with the President's policies and requirements" including the EOs issued on DEI, gender, sustainability and foreign policy. This memo was rescinded the same day after a court ruling blocked its implementation. Additional court orders have been issued as the administration has continued to stop, delay, or pull down programs not aligned with the executive orders.

Unleashing Prosperity Through Deregulation (01/31/25)

This EO mandates that for each new federal regulation issued, at least 10 prior regulations be identified for elimination. The heads of all agencies are directed to ensure that the total incremental cost of all new regulations, including repealed regulations being finalized in the fiscal year 2025, shall be significantly less than zero. The order also rescinds the Biden administration's update to the document known as OMB Circular A-4, which provides guidance to all executive branch agencies about how to assess the desirability of proposed regulations, particularly in how to measure costs and benefits.

Supplemental Guidance to the 2024 NIH Grants Policy Statement: Indirect Cost Rates (02/07/25)

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) issued an update to grant policy imposing an across-the-board 15 percent cap on indirect costs for NIH funded research. This went against previously negotiated rates at institutions of higher education, where the rates were often over 50 percent. This action was quickly challenged in the courts, including in a suit brought against the action [by ACE along with AAU and APLU](#). As of February 10th, the courts [issued a Temporary Restraining Order \(TRO\)](#) against this cap on indirect costs.

Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative (02/11/25)

This EO mandates the OMB director to submit a plan in reducing federal workforce, requiring agencies to hire only one employee for every four departures. Agency heads must follow the federal hiring plan outlined in the EO on [Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit to Government Service](#). Agency heads must develop a data-driven plan on new highest-need appointment hires and consult with the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) to implement reductions-in-force targeting non-essential functions and DEI programs. The OPM will

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initiate a rulemaking process within 30 days to revise federal hiring suitability criteria and agency heads must submit reorganization plans to OMB. The DOGE Service administrator must submit a report within 240 days to the president on the implementation of this order.

Following this order, [a February 26 memo](#) from OMB and OPM instructed all federal agencies to begin preparations for large-scale layoffs and restructuring. Agencies must submit initial cuts and reduction plans for Phase 1 by March 13, 2025, and a Phase 2 outline detailing their vision for more productive and efficient operations by April 14, 2025. Law enforcement, border security, national security, immigration enforcement, public safety, military personnel, and uniformed officers, including the U.S. Coast Guard, Public Health Service, and NOAA officers are exempted. Agencies providing direct citizen services, including Social Security, Medicare, and veterans' health care, must obtain OMB or OPM approval before restructuring.

Keeping Education Accessible and Ending COVID-19 Vaccine Mandates in Schools (02/15/25)

This EO states that discretionary federal funds (such as grants) cannot be used to directly or indirectly support or subsidize “an educational service agency, State educational agency, local educational agency, elementary school, secondary school, or institution of higher education that requires students to have received a COVID-19 vaccination to attend any in-person education program.”

Radical Transparency about Wasteful Spending (02/18/25)

This memorandum directs the heads of executive departments and agencies to disclose all details of every terminated program, cancelled contract, terminated grant, and any other discontinued obligation of Federal funds “to the maximum extent permitted by law.”

Ensuring Lawful Governance and Implementing the President’s “Department of Government Efficiency” Deregulatory Initiative (02/19/2025)

This order directs agency heads, in coordination with their DOGE team lead and the OMB director, to review and rescind all agency regulations that are deemed unconstitutional, unlawful, lack clear statutory authority, impose excessive costs, or hinder economic and technological development. Within 60 days, agency heads must provide the administrator of OMB’s Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) a list of all regulations identified for modification or rescission. OIRA will consult with agency heads to develop a unified regulatory agenda to rescind or modify identified rules. For new regulations, agency heads must adhere to the procedures outlined in EO 12866 and consult with their DOGE team leads and the OIRA administrators to ensure alignment with the principles of this order.

Implementing the President’s “Department of Government Efficiency” Cost Efficiency Initiatives (02/26/25)

This EO directs agencies, with the assistance of their DOGE team lead, to establish centralized systems to track payments issued by the agency under each of its covered contracts and grants. Once the system is in place, agencies must issue guidance to require written justifications prior to the employee’s approval of a payment under covered contracts and grants. Within 30 days, agency heads must review existing covered contracts and grants to identify those that can be terminated or modified to reduce or reallocate federal spending and pause review payouts that have not had written justifications submitted. The order requires the process to commence immediately and prioritize review on “funds disbursed under covered contracts and grants to educational institutions and foreign entities for waste, fraud, and abuse.”

The order also mandates that non-essential travel must be justified and imposes a 30-day credit card freeze, the maximum period permitted by law. Agencies must assess real property holdings, identify lease termination options, and submit a plan for disposing of unneeded government property. Exemptions apply to law enforcement, national security, and critical services.

In follow up from this EO, the HHS Payment Management System [introduced](#) a new mandatory field in the payment request screen to capture a justification from the grant recipient explaining the purpose of each draw down.

Continuing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy (03/14/25)

The order directs the continuation of reductions “in the element of the Federal bureaucracy that the President has determined are unnecessary.” The reductions include the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, the United States Agency for Global Media, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in the Smithsonian Institution, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund, and the Minority Business Development Agency.

Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities (03/20/25)

The order mandates the Secretary of Education to take all necessary steps to facilitate the closure of the Department of Education and return authority over education to the States and local communities while maintaining uninterrupted services, programs, and benefits. It also mandates that any remaining federal education funding strictly comply with federal laws and administration policy, prohibiting programs under federal assistance that promote "diversity, equity, and inclusion" or similar terms and programs promoting gender ideology.

Adjusting Department of Energy Grant Policy for Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) (04/11/25)

In a memorandum, the Department of Energy (DOE) announced that they will limit financial support of “indirect costs” of DOE research funding to 15 percent. Consistent with this memo, “the Department is undertaking action to terminate all grant awards to IHEs that do not conform with this updated policy.” On April 14, a suit was filed by ACE, AAU, and APLU, along with a group of institutions and a TRO was issued.