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2021 State Legislative Preview [1]

December 22, 2020 by Natalie Barry [2]

The 2021 State Legislative Session will convene on Wednesday, January 13th. Below are key pieces of anticipated higher education legislation.

ACT/SAT Test Optional - Last year, the General Assembly passed HB20-1407 [3], temporarily allowing Colorado's public institutions of higher education to waive test scores as a metric to entry for the high school graduating class of 2021. This bill is a permanent extension of that legislation, giving higher education governing bodies more flexibility in the admissions metrics used to admit students, which may or may not include test scores.

In-state Tuition for American Indian Students – CU's Board of Regents passed a resolution to work with the state legislature during the 2021 legislative session to run a bill to allow institutions of higher education to offer in-state tuition status to American Indian students whose tribal nations are historically tied to the lands that make up the state of Colorado.

A Peer Assistance Confidentiality Fix – During the process of selecting a vendor to provide peer assistance help for physicians, physician assistants, residents and medical students, the State Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA) inserted a provision that mandated that participating vendors waive confidentiality to get help for stress, burnout, substance abuse issues, physical and mental health problems. DORA awarded the contract to a vendor that agreed to require the waiver. The medical community, including the School of Medicine faculty and student leadership, objected to this approach and wrote the Governor, Executive Director of DORA and the Colorado Medical Board to urge a reversal of the DORA vendor decision. It is anticipated that legislation to require confidential treatment and peer support will be introduced in January.

Phase I: Governor's Behavioral Health Task Force Report – The Behavioral Health Task Force [4], established by Governor Polis in April 2019, met from July 2019 through August 2020 to produce a comprehensive report addressing the Governor's charge to create a Colorado Behavioral Health System that works for every Coloradan. The blueprint, " Behavioral Health in Colorado: Putting People First - A Blueprint for Reform [5]," released in September 2020, identified almost 150 recommendations to reform the state's system. The CU Anschutz Medical Campus Farley Health Policy Center [6] provided valuable support for the task force. C. Neil Epperson, MD, Chair of the Department of Psychiatry of the CU School of Medicine was one of 25 members of the task force, which issued its recommendations in three phases. Legislation implementing Phase One is expected in January. The legislation proposes (1) the creation of a Behavioral Health Administration; (2) the expansion of tele-behavioral health services; and (3) a review of current statutes and funding sources to inform the build out of the new infrastructure.



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