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Federal Government Transition Update - 2.28.25 [1]

February 28, 2025 by Riley Black [2]

Dear Colleagues,

We would like to update you on new initiatives unveiled by the federal administration this week, as well as implementation of existing directives that impact the federal workforce, which have potential significant implications for CU's campuses and communities.

On February 25, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced [3]it will require noncitizens 14 and older to register with the U.S. government and carry proof of their registration "at all times." The new policy, which is based on longstanding provisions of the *Immigration and Nationality Act* [4], was created in response to the January 20 executive order *Protecting the American People Against Invasion* [5]. Failure to comply could result in civil and criminal penalties. It is unclear how the government will enforce the registration policy. USCIS said it will announce a form and process to complete the registration requirement "soon." In the meantime, individuals without legal status, that have not previously registered, have been directed to create an account online with USCIS in preparation for the registration process. Most foreign nationals already register with the government when they arrive in the U.S. This includes F-1, J-1, H-1B and other nonimmigrant visa holders. It is unclear whether the new policy is legal, according to sources at the *LA Times* [6]. CU will continue to monitor implementation and any legal challenges to the policy.

On February 26, the White House issued a new executive order, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Cost Efficiency Initiative* [7]. The directive gives federal agencies 30 days to "review all existing covered contracts and grants and,?where appropriate and consistent with applicable law, terminate or modify (including through renegotiation)"; inventory termination rights for existing leases of federally owned properties; and review agency contracting policies, procedures, and personnel. The order directs agencies to prioritize a review of contracts and grants to "educational institutions and foreign entities for waste, fraud, and abuse." According to a White House fact sheet [8], the existing system "fails to safeguard taxpayer dollars or promote merit among contractors and grant recipients." In contrast, CU's partners at AAU explain [9], America's rigorous, merit-review system, which is used to evaluate and fund scientific research grants and contracts, is the "international gold standard."

The new initiative also directs federal agencies to create a “centralized technological system” to record federal payments and include “a brief, written justification” for every payment submitted, a process that could ostensibly slow disbursement of federal funds. The order does not apply to direct assistance to individuals, immigration enforcement, law enforcement, the military, etc. CU’s Federal Relations and General Counsel teams are assessing what the order may mean for our campuses.

Finally, we would like to highlight new reporting [10]from the *Denver Post* that hundreds of employees at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) were laid off yesterday. We are currently assessing the impacts to CU and Colorado. Reportedly, probationary, or recently hired and promoted, employees were laid off, which is consistent with White House directives on the federal workforce, including a January 20 memorandum [11] from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

Yesterday, a U.S. District Court Judge for the Northern District of California ordered the administration to rescind the OPM memorandum and issued a temporary restraining order to pause related activities by the federal government. The judge noted that due to jurisdictional issues the order only applies to employees at the National Park Service, National Science Foundation, Small Business Administration, Bureau of Land Management, Department of Veterans Affairs, and Department of Defense, but urged the administration “to go a little bit further than I have ordered.” It is unclear whether the order will reinstate employees who have already been fired. The House Science Committee recently launched a website [12]to track the stories of employees laid off by federal science agencies.

We recognize the uncertainty and worry the current federal climate may have on our campus communities. We assure you the Federal Relations and General Counsel teams are monitoring developments to keep you informed. In these times, it’s critical to keep our eye on the ball. Please know we are here for you, and we are working closely with the President and Chancellors as well as the Colorado congressional delegation. We encourage you to contact your campus leadership with questions. Please visit the CU System Federal Transitions Update [13] page for up-to-date communications and federal memos.

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