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Federal Government Transition Update - 4.25.25 [1]

April 25, 2025 by Natalie Barry [2]

Dear Colleagues,

Please find a federal government update from our teams.

Student Visas Update
The Justice Department announced in federal court on April 25 that they would restore the thousands of student visa registrations that had recently been cancelled – for those studying in the United States - who had minor legal infractions, reports *Politico* [3]. We are aware of the reinstatement of some student visas across our campuses.

New Education Executive Orders
The President signed numerous executive orders on April 23 focused on education. The new directives address accreditation, foreign gift reporting, workforce training, artificial intelligence in K-12 education, and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The Secretary of Education issued statements [4] praising each of the directives.

Reforming Accreditation to Strengthen Higher Education
This executive order directs the Secretary of Education to "hold accountable, including through denial, monitoring, suspension or termination of accreditation recognition," for higher education accreditors who require institutions to "engage in unlawful discrimination in accreditation-related activity under the guise of 'diversity, equity, and inclusion' initiatives." The order also directs the Secretary of Education to realign accreditation with high-quality "value-based" education.

This executive order specifically mentions "illegal diversity, equity, and inclusion provisions" in accreditation requirements from the American Bar Association (ABA), the Liaison Committee for Medical Education (LCME), and the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), the accrediting bodies for law schools, medical schools, and medical residency programs. Following the signing of the executive order, the Higher Learning Commission [5] and Council for Regional Accrediting Commissions released statements. For more information: Executive Order [6], Fact Sheet [7].

Transparency Regarding Foreign Influence at American Universities
This executive order directs the Secretary of Education to work with the Attorney General to enforce Section 117 [8] of the Higher Education Act, which requires universities to report foreign gifts and contracts greater than $250,000 by country. The order directs the Secretary to ensure full and timely disclosure of foreign funding, increase transparency and public access to this information, and conduct audits and investigations to ensure compliance with the law. Proposals in the current Congress to expand Section 117 requirements, including lowering the reporting threshold to $50,000, have garnered bipartisan support, including H.R. 1048

[9], the DETERRENT Act, which passed the House 241-169 last month. Companion legislation may be considered in the Senate soon. For more information: Executive Order [10], Fact Sheet. [11]

Preparing Americans for High-Paying Skilled Trade Jobs of the Future
This executive order directs the Secretaries of Labor, Commerce, and Education to review federal workforce development programs to "refocus" on career preparation. It orders a comprehensive strategy within 90 days to consolidate, restructure, streamline, and modernize programs to support workforce needs for reindustrialization and emerging industries. It further orders development of "alternative credentials and assessments to the 4-year college degree" mapped to the needs of prospective employers. It directs a plan within 120 days to expand registered apprenticeships in the U.S. to more than 1 million per year. Workforce development is of bipartisan interest to Congress and policies that implement this executive order may be considered and enacted by the current Congress. For more information: Executive Order [12], Fact Sheet. [13]

Advancing Artificial Intelligence Education for American Youth
This executive order focuses on AI literacy and AI tools and training for K-12 teachers. It establishes a White House Task Force on Artificial Intelligence Education, chaired by the director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). The order directs the Secretary of Education to prioritize AI teacher training grants and the director of the National Science Foundation (NSF) to prioritize research on the use of AI in education. CU Boulder is home to the NSF National AI Institute for Student-AI Teaming [14], which has engaged over 5,000 students across six Colorado school districts to advance AI literacy and utilize AI tools to create next generation learning environments. For more information: Executive Order [15], Fact Sheet. [16]

White House Initiative to Promote Excellence and Innovation at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)
This executive order establishes a White House Initiative on HBCUs, housed in the Executive Office of the President. The White House Initiative will focus on private sector partnerships, institutional development, and workforce preparation for HBCUs. For more information: Executive Order [17], Fact Sheet. [18]

Update on Department of Education Lawsuits
Three federal judges in Maryland, New Hampshire and Washington, DC blocked the Department of Education from enforcing DEI bans in schools on April 25, reports *Reuters.* [19] These three judges granted preliminary injunctions blocking the enforcement of the ED's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) February 14 Dear Colleague Letter [20]and an April 3 memorandum [21] requiring that K-12 schools certify they are not practicing "illegal DEI" to continue to receive federal funding. A New Hampshire U.S. District Judge, a Trump Appointee, said the policy was "unconstitutionally vague" and violated educators' First Amendment free speech rights. Additionally, Colorado joined a lawsuit along with 18 other attorneys general on April 25 to block the administration from withholding federal funding from states that do not end DEI efforts in K-12 schools, reports *Politico* [22].

NSF Director Steps Down Following Priorities Announcement
National Science Foundation (NSF) director Sethuraman Panchanathan announced yesterday his resignation from the agency, effective immediately, issuing this statement. [23] His departure follows NSF's announcement [24] last week that it is freezing new awards and

terminating active research grants related to diversity, equity and inclusion and misinformation. Over 400 grants have been cancelled nationwide, including more than 10 at CU. NSF said the grants no longer “effectuate” agency priorities. While NSF’s "intellectual merit" and "broader impacts" criteria will continue to inform its funding decisions, the agency will no longer support projects that “preference some groups at the expense of others.” NSF will now consider 6 of the 7 “broader impacts” criteria required in statute, but no longer support the last metric, “expanding participation of women and individuals from underrepresented groups in STEM.” Grant reviews continue at the agency and more cancellations were announced today.

NIH Posts Notice of Civil Rights Terms and Conditions of Awards

On April 21, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) posted a notice [25] that will require recipients of NIH funds to certify that they do not have any programs advancing “ diversity, equity, and inclusion,” “diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility,” or “discriminatory equity ideology” in violation of federal anti-discrimination laws, and that they do not participate in boycotts of Israeli companies or firms doing business in Israel. The notice goes on to say that if a grantee is found to be violating these terms, the NIH can terminate the award and claw back funding that was disbursed.

Department of State Restructuring

Secretary of State Rubio announced [26] a plan to restructure the State Department on April 22. In the announcement, Secretary Rubio wrote “Region-specific functions will be consolidated to increase functionality, redundant offices will be removed, and non-statutory programs that are misaligned with America’s core national interests will cease to exist.” *Washington Post* [27] reports that this plan includes the elimination of 132 offices and 700 positions. As part of the restructuring, senior officials must submit plans to reduce U.S. based staff by 15 percent. The plan has been sent to the congressional committees of jurisdiction as they provide oversight of the Department.

We understand these potential changes are of concern to our campuses and recognize the challenges and uncertainty on our campuses during this time of unpredictable change at the national level. The Federal Relations and General Counsel teams are actively monitoring developments and are committed to keeping you informed. In this time of change, all that you do and will continue to do for CU means more than ever. Our team is 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 [28] page for up-to-date communications and federal memos.

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