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Federal Government Update - 4.17.26 [1]

April 17, 2026 by Riley Black [2]

Dear Colleagues,

Please find a federal government update from our teams.

ED Convenes Accreditation Negotiated Rulemaking Committee
The U.S. Department of Education (ED) convened [3] the Accreditation, Innovation and Modernization (AIM) negotiated rulemaking committee for the first of two rulemaking sessions this week. The AIM committee is tasked [4] with reforming higher education accreditation regulations with a focus on deregulation, student outcomes, merit and integrity. ED released a 151-page discussion draft [5] and summary [6] of its proposed regulations, as well as the committee list [7] last week.

The AIM committee will reconvene May 18-22. If the negotiated rulemaking results in consensus, the regulations will be published for public notice and comment. U.S. colleges and universities must be accredited by a federally recognized accrediting agency to be eligible to access federal student aid like federal student loans and Pell Grants, reports [8] *Inside Higher Ed*.

ED Issues Accountability Rule
The U.S. Department of Education (ED) issued a proposed rule [9] on April 17 to establish a new accountability framework for U.S. colleges and universities as directed by the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act* enacted last year. The proposed regulations were agreed upon in January by the Accountability in Higher Education and Access through Demand-driven Workforce Pell (AHEAD) Committee. Under the proposed rule, students who graduate with a bachelor's degree must earn more than their high school equivalents. Likewise, students with a master's degree must earn more than those with a bachelor's degree four years after graduation. Programs with graduates who "fail the earning test" may lose access to federal student loans. The proposed rule is open for public comment until May 20. CU Federal Relations is working with the campuses to assess the rule and expects to comment.

OCR Rescinds Title IX Resolution Agreements
The U.S. Department of Education's (ED) Office for Civil Rights (OCR) announced [10] on April 6 it was rescinding six Title IX resolution agreements with K-12 school districts and one community college implemented by previous federal administrations. The recissions upend longstanding norms and create new uncertainty for institutions of higher education, reports [11] *Inside Higher Ed*.

White House Nominates Dr. Erica Schwartz as CDC Director
The White House announced [12] on April 16 Erica Schwartz, MD, JD, MPH as its nominee for director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Schwartz served as deputy

surgeon general during the first Trump Administration and as chief medical officer of the U.S. Coast Guard. The position requires Senate confirmation. Until that time, Jay Bhattacharya, MD, PhD, the director of the National Institutes of Health, will continue his role as interim director [13].

DOJ Seeks to Terminate Research Grants to Harvard

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) urged a federal circuit court on April 16 to reinstate the administration's $2.7 billion freeze on federal research grants to Havard University over its response to campus antisemitism, reports [14] the *Harvard Crimson*. DOJ filed a lawsuit [15] against Harvard on March 20 alleging the university violated Title VI anti-discrimination laws and should repay all federal research awards received while out of compliance, reports [16] *Higher Ed Dive*. Harvard responded with this statement [17]. Harvard previously sued the federal administration in April 2025 for freezing its federal grants and contracts and a federal judge struck down the freeze as unconstitutional in September.

The Federal Relations and General Counsel teams are actively monitoring developments at the federal level. We are working closely with the President and Chancellors, as well as the Colorado congressional delegation to champion CU priorities. We are committed to keeping you informed. Please visit the CU System Federal Updates [18] and Actions page for up-to-date communications and federal memos.

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