

Federal Policy Developments Digest

August 12, 2025

White House Requests Data on the Race of Institutions' Applicants, Admits, and Enrollees (8.7.25)

The Trump administration [issued](#) a [memo](#) requiring institutions that participate in federal aid programs to share admissions data with the federal government "to verify" that they are not shaping their classes along racial lines. This memo follows similar agreements the administration made previously with Columbia University and Brown University to provide data disaggregated by race. Following the memo, the White House released a [fact sheet](#) outlining a broader accountability agenda. This includes plans to revamp the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), increase accuracy checks for submitted data, and end what it calls "discriminatory race-based education," claiming that race is still used in college admissions despite the Supreme Court's ban on race-conscious admissions practices. A corresponding [press release](#) from the Department of Education stated that institutions must now "report data disaggregated by race and sex relating to their applicant pool, admitted cohort, and enrolled cohort at the undergraduate level and for specific graduate and professional programs. This data will include quantitative measures of applicants' and admitted students' academic achievements such as standardized test scores, GPAs and other applicant characteristics." The data will be used "to ensure race-based preferences are not used in university admissions processes." Previously, institutions only submitted a racial breakdown of enrolled students. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) was actually already planning to begin [collecting](#) disaggregated data on the race and ethnicity of institutions' applicants and admits, which was to be used to provide more research on equity in college admissions; however, the data will now be used to ensure colleges are not breaking the ban on race-based admissions. In other words, the main [change](#) with this memo is how race and ethnicity data will be used.

Implications/next steps: Even before the 2023 Supreme Court ruling against affirmative action, most [institutions](#) outside of highly selective institutions stated that they did not consider a students' race or ethnicity in admissions, and since the Supreme Court ruling, institutions cannot consider a student's race when making admissions decisions. Regardless, all institutions receiving federal aid will now all be under scrutiny under this new memo. Angel B. Pérez, chief executive of the National Association for College Admission Counseling, expressed concern that the "data points won't tell the full story of a student's academic promise, as two applicants' races, test scores, and GPAs cannot fully explain why one student was admitted over another." Wil Del Pilar, senior vice president at the Education Trust, shared: "I think the endgame is to scrutinize admissions and to effectively put institutions on notice that if they have advances in diversity in their college admissions process — if a Black student gets in, if a Latino students gets in — that will be viewed and labeled as illegal discrimination." Additionally, it may be difficult for the administration to implement this policy, given that only a few staff members [remain](#) in the NCES, which operates IPEDS. Trump has [ordered](#) the department to collect this additional data from institutions as part of the existing IPEDS survey process for the upcoming 2025-2026 academic year. Completing IPEDS surveys is [required](#) as a condition for receiving federal funding. There will [likely](#) be more announcements from the Department of Education over the coming weeks with further details about institutions' reporting requirements.

White House Signs Executive Order Giving Political Appointees Control Over All Federal Grants (8.7.25)

Trump [issued](#) an [executive order](#), "Improving Oversight Of Federal Grantmaking," that gives political appointees the power to review and approve funding decisions made by federal agencies, including the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health. Under previous administrations, career civil servants and subject-matter experts have [played](#) central roles in the federal government's grant funding decisions and priorities. The Trump administration claims that political appointees will prevent

“unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats from wasting taxpayer dollars.” The directive mandates that agencies appoint senior political officials to review grant awards and funding opportunity announcements, ensuring grant decisions align with national interests and agency priorities. The order also states that discretionary awards will not be [used](#) to fund, promote, encourage, subsidize, or facilitate:

- “racial preferences or other forms of racial discrimination, including activities where race or intentional proxies for race will be used as a selection criterion for employment or program participation”
- “denial by the grant recipient of the sex binary in humans or the notion that sex is a chosen or mutable characteristic”
- “illegal immigration”
- “any other initiatives that compromise public safety or promote anti-American values.”

Appointees are also ordered to give preference to applications from institutions with lower indirect cost rates. Additionally, the directive pauses the announcement of new funding opportunities until the new oversight systems are in place.

Implications/next steps: Researchers have expressed concerns that this directive will negatively impact the integrity of American research through placing too much control in the hands of appointees who lack relevant expertise and can be easily swayed by political and business agendas. Additionally, these changes may delay grant review, approval, and disbursement, which could then slow scientific progress. The [fact sheet](#) accompanying the directive also [suggests](#) that the Trump administration may look beyond research heavyweights within the higher ed sector when awarding grants. As far as next steps, within 30 days of the order, agencies must submit reports on grant terms and update conditions to reflect these priorities. This order will likely face legal challenges.