

Federal Policy Developments Digest

August 21, 2025

Education Department Ends Federal Work-Study (FWS) Funding for Jobs Related to Voter Registration Activities (8.19.25)

The Education Department [rescinded](#) previous Biden-era guidance that allowed Federal Work-Study (FWS) funds to support student jobs focused on nonpartisan voter registration activities and other voting activities, issuing [new guidance](#) stating these prior allowances were inconsistent with regulations. The new guidance also notes that when institutions distribute voter registration forms, they are encouraged to remind students of voting eligibility criteria. The agency also does not interpret the “good faith” provision in the Higher Education Act as requiring institutions to distribute voter registration information to students who the institution has reason to believe are ineligible to vote, such as international students. Noncitizen voting is [already](#) extremely rare.

Implications/next steps: About 700K [students](#) earn income via FWS annually, but it is unclear how many FWS jobs involve election-related work. Lynn Pasquerella, President of the American Association of Colleges and Universities, expressed concern that the “...disallowing of federal funds for nonpartisan activities to promote civic engagement undermines the strength of American higher education and our democracy.”

Education Department Proposes Changing Public Service Program Rules (8.18.25)

The Education Department [issued](#) a [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#) (NPRM) that would prevent “borrowers whose employers are engaged in activities with a substantial illegal purpose” from qualifying for Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF). The agency would [use](#) a “preponderance of evidence” standard to decide ineligibility. This [change](#) would mark a departure from the law, which defines PSLF-eligible employers and does not grant the Secretary of Education the ability to disqualify employers without a court ruling or input from other agencies. This notice comes on the heels of Trump’s [Restoring Public Service Loan Forgiveness](#) Executive Order from March 2025.

Implications/next steps: This move could disqualify thousands of public service workers employed in areas such as advocacy and legal aid from qualifying for PSLF, as it appears to target activities that do not align with the administration’s ideology. Critics argue that this change [risks](#) turning PSLF into a political tool. Comments on the proposed rule must be submitted by Sept. 17. To [implement](#) the final rules by July 1, 2026, the ED would need to publish final rules by Nov. 1, 2025.

State Department Announces Revocation of 6,000+ Student Visas in 2025 (8.18.25)

The State Department announced they have [revoked](#) 6,000+ international student visas this year, as first [reported](#) by Fox News. The agency stated that 4,000 of the visa revocations were due to law violations, such as supporting terrorism (accounting for 200-300 visa revocations), assault, driving under the influence, and burglary. It has not been clear if students whose visas were revoked due to allegedly breaking the law were convicted of any crimes.

Implications/next steps: This news suggests that the State Department is continuing to use different tactics to target international students. Given these tactics, the number of new international students planning to enroll in US institutions seems likely to [drop](#). The State Department suspended student visa appointments from May 27-June 18, and the visa process is now much slower due to stricter

scrutinization of applicants' social media. Students who have not cleared the interview process may miss the fall semester.

Federal Court Strikes Down Trump Administration's Anti-DEI Guidance (8.14.25)

U.S. District Judge Stephanie Gallagher ruled that the Education Department acted unlawfully in issuing its Feb. 14 [Dear Colleague Letter](#) and a related certification requirement, which threatened institutions with the loss of federal funding if they maintained DEI programs. A prior April 25 injunction had already [paused](#) enforcement of the guidance. Judge Gallagher ruled that the Education Department failed to follow proper procedures when issuing the guidance and that the guidance violated constitutional rights of free speech and due process, failing to provide clarity on what DEI practices are illegal. Please [note](#) that the Department of Justice's July 30 [memo](#) regarding types of DEI efforts the administration views as discriminatory is separate from this rule and remains in effect. The memo offers nonbinding guidance but threatens federal funding. It has yet to be legally challenged.

Implications/next steps: The Education Department has [shared](#) that this ruling won't impact the agency's ability to "enforce Title VI protections for students at an unprecedented level," but it has not [stated](#) if it plans to appeal the ruling. Civil rights advocates have stated that the path forward for institutions is not clear cut. Beth Gellman-Beer, a former regional director for the Education Department's Office for Civil Rights, noted that institutions will be unlikely to bring back DEI programs they terminated earlier this year given continued threats to federal funding, noting that the administration's guidance had "the intended chilling effect."

Education Department Provides Further Clarity on Admissions Reporting Requirements (8.14.25)

Following Trump's Aug. 7 [memo](#) on expanding IPEDS reporting requirements, the Education Department [provided](#) more details about the proposed change to reporting requirements via a [notice](#) filed in the Federal Register. Under the proposed plan, institutions would be required to submit six years' worth of application and admissions data (i.e., a one-time backfill of five prior academic years plus 2025-26 data), disaggregated by student race and sex, as part of the 2025-26 IPEDS reporting cycle. Data points that must be shared include: admissions test scores, high school GPA, time of application (e.g., early decision), family income, Pell Grant eligibility, and parents' educational level. The purpose is "to establish a baseline of admissions practices" prior to the Supreme Court's 2023 ruling against affirmative action. The additional questions are entitled the Admissions and Consumer Transparency Supplement (ACTS), designed to create "greater transparency," "expose unlawful practices" and better enforce Title VI laws.

Implications/next steps: The Education Department has not provided clarity regarding how they will handle this increase in reporting requirements, particularly given its reduction in workforce. Data and higher education experts [note](#) that the new data is likely to be inaccurate, difficult to interpret, and misused by policymakers because the agency does not have enough funding, expertise, or time to create this new dataset. Additionally, the data that the administration is requesting does not exist at every institution; for example, some institutions do not require students to report standardized test scores. The [public](#) will have 60 days (i.e., until Oct. 14) to submit comments on this notice; in particular, the agency wants feedback on which institutions should be required to submit ACTS data and the anticipated administrative burden on university staff. This change is estimated to create over 740,000 hours of new work across the higher ed sector.

Labor, Commerce, and Education Departments Release America's Talent Strategy Report To Address Workforce Needs and Training (8.12.25)

The Trump administration [released](#) an economic strategy [report](#) focused on how the federal government will approach workforce development. While the report is produced by the three agencies, the administration [says](#) that the Labor Department will be the convening agency for cross-agency workforce efforts. The plan prioritizes addressing the workforce needs of employers, improving workforce development systems, providing accountability for workforce training, upskilling American workers, and developing alternatives to four-year degrees. It centers on five strategic pillars:

1. Industry-Driven Strategies: Work-based learning models are expanded, and education programs are aligned to career pathways.
2. Worker Mobility: In-demand skills and credentials are identified to bring more Americans into the labor force.
3. Integrated Systems: Workforce development programs are streamlined for both workers looking for opportunities and employers looking for talent.
4. Accountability: Measures are put into place for transparency and accountability of federally funded workforce programs.
5. Flexibility and Innovation: AI literacy, AI jobs, and rapid reskilling are prioritized.

The report specifically calls out that the American labor market has overfocused on the traditional four-year college model, stating the market has “relied on the university system to develop new generations of workers. But this ‘college-for-all’ approach has failed, and the patchwork of non-college programs targeting occupation-specific skills is inadequate to replace it.” Additionally, the report makes it unclear how much of a role community colleges should play in addressing labor market challenges.

Implications/next steps: Veteran officials from both sides of the aisles at the three agencies see the report as reasonable and well-articulated but note that the stated goals will be hard to achieve due to DOGE-led workforce cuts within the Labor and Education Departments. This report arrives on the heels of the Trump administration’s larger pressure campaign against universities and [appears](#) to align with Trump’s push to pit traditional college and workforce programs against each other.