

Federal Policy Digest

November 21, 2025

Trump Administration Transfers Management of Six Education Department Programs to Other Departments (11.18.25)

The Education Department (ED) has signed interagency [agreements](#) transferring management of six programs to four other federal agencies, reflecting the administration's ongoing push to shutter the ED. The Labor Department will [administer](#) the Office of Postsecondary Education's institution-based grants and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. The Interior Department will administer international education and foreign language studies programs. The Health and Human Services Department will administer on-campus childcare support for parents in college and foreign medical accreditation. These moves follow Trump's executive order in March directing Secretary McMahon to oversee the ED's closure to "the maximum extent appropriate and permitted by law." Under a May interagency agreement, the Department of Labor has already been handling management of career and technical education. Because federal law [requires](#) many of these programs be housed within the ED, the administration is using interagency agreements as a workaround. These types of arrangements have been used before, but using them to lay the groundwork for dismantling the department is [unprecedented](#).

Implications/next steps: Democrats in Congress and advocacy groups argue that this plan is unlawful, as only Congress has the power to abolish the ED. Critics have also warn that distributing education programming across multiple agencies could create inefficiencies and increase administrative complexity, while supporters have said these relocations should streamline services. Secretary McMahon also recently [cited](#) the shutdown as evidence that the ED could be eliminated. ED officials expect the six program transitions to take time. The Office for Civil Rights, the Office of Federal Student Aid, and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services remain under the ED for now, though a senior official [stated](#) that Secretary McMahon is "exploring the best plan" for those offices.

Institute of International Education Report Shows 17% Drop in New International Student Enrollment (11.17.25)

The Institute of International Education (IIE) released its [Fall 2025 Snapshot on International Student Enrollment](#), based on responses from 828 U.S. higher education institutions. The snapshot revealed a 1% overall decline in total international students from Fall 2024 to Fall 2025. By academic level, from Fall 2024 to Fall 2025, there was a 14% increase in Optional Practical Training, a 2% increase in undergraduate enrollment, a 12% decrease in graduate enrollment, and a 17% decrease in non-degree enrollment. Relatedly, *Inside Higher Ed* has [reported](#) that graduate programs have reported declines in STEM and business master's programs, which may help explain the decrease in graduate enrollment described by IIE. Additionally, IIE's snapshot showed a 17% decline in new international student enrollments from Fall 2024 to Fall 2025. New international student enrollments represent those studying at their college or university for the first time. Approximately 57% of reporting institutions noted that new international enrollments fell in Fall 2025, 29% reported new international enrollments rose, and 14% reported that enrollments were roughly the same.

Implications/next steps: Based on enrollment trends from IIE's annual [Open Doors Reports](#) and from IIE's Fall 2025 Snapshot, new international student enrollments have dropped by an estimated 24% from Fall 2015 to Fall 2025, indicating that the pipeline of new international students may continue to shrink. The total number of international students has increased by an estimated 12% from Fall 2015 to Fall 2025, largely driven by OPT growth. While the Fall 2025 Snapshot only includes data from a subset of U.S. institutions, IIE releases its annual Open Doors Report each November, so next year's report will provide a fuller picture of international students for the 2025-2026 academic year.

Open Access Institutions Not Required to Submit Disaggregated Student Data to Education Department (11.12.25)

The Department of Education clarified via a [notice](#) published to the Federal Register that the new requirement for disaggregated admissions reporting will not apply to two-year colleges and open-enrollment institutions that only award aid based on need. For context, in August, the administration had [proposed](#) that institutions would have to disaggregate data for applicants/admittees/enrollees by race and sex, and cross reference the data with each individual's test scores, GPA, family income, Pell Grant status, and parental educational level. Institutions that are not excluded will still need to [provide](#) six years' worth of this data as part of the next IPEDS reporting cycle.

Implications/next steps: This update comes after institutional leaders [expressed](#) concern about the notice's heavy administrative burden on admissions offices, especially given the rapid timelines. However, the updated notice did not address other issues related to the proposal's unclear language, student privacy concerns, and the possibility that the administration may construe the data to further attack higher ed institutions.