



Trump Issues 7 New Executive Orders Impacting Higher Ed and K-12 Schools, Ranging From DEI to Discipline to AI

Insights

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President Trump just issued a wave of education-related executive orders – seven, to be exact – impacting both higher education and K-12 schools. Educational institutions need to tune in and catch up, and we’ve compiled this roundup of the April 23 orders to make it easier for you.

1. “Reforming Accreditation to Strengthen Higher Education” (Applies to All Higher Ed Institutions)

The Trump administration is promising, among other things, to:

- “**realign accreditation** with high-quality, valuable education for students,” and
- **withhold federal recognition from accreditors that require institutions to adopt diversity, equity, and inclusion practices** as a formal standard of accreditation (and therefore as a condition of accessing federal aid).

You can read more about what schools should know about DEI issues under the Trump administration [here](#).

2. “Transparency Regarding Foreign Influence at American Universities” (Applies to All Higher Ed Institutions)

This executive order states that the administration aims “to end the secrecy surrounding foreign funds in American educational institutions,” and it directs the federal government to:

- **robustly enforce** a federal law ([20 U.S.C. 1011f](#)) that requires institutions of higher education to report significant sources of foreign funding;
- **ramp up the disclosure requirements**, obligating universities to disclose more specific details about the foreign funding; and
- **block federal grant funds** for higher education institutions that fail to comply with such law or any applicable foreign funding disclosure requirements.

3. “Restoring Equality of Opportunity and Meritocracy” (Applies to All Educational Institutions Receiving Federal Financial Assistance)

This order declares that the US will eliminate the use of disparate-impact liability in all contexts, to the maximum extent permitted by law. You can read more about it [here](#). It also directs the Attorney General to repeal or amend regulations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act for all agencies “to the extent they contemplate disparate-impact liability.”

4. “Reinstating Common Sense School Discipline Policies” (Applies to All K-12 Schools Receiving Federal Financial Assistance)

This order rescinds a cross-agency policy, which had been in place since 2014, targeting racial disparities in the administration of school discipline, claiming that the policy made classrooms less safe. You can expect more to come, as the order requires the Secretary of Labor to issue new guidance by **May 23** to local educational agencies (LEAs) and State educational agencies (SEAs) (as those terms are defined [here](#)) regarding school discipline and their obligations not to engage in racial discrimination under Title VI in all contexts, including school discipline.

5. “Advancing AI Education for American Youth” (Applies to All K-12 Schools)

Seeking to promote AI literacy and proficiency among Americans, the federal government will, among other things:

- establish an **AI education task force** involving multiple executive agencies, executive departments, and offices;
- take steps to **prioritize the use of AI in discretionary grant programs** for certain teacher training programs; and
- **develop plans for a “Presidential Artificial Intelligence Challenge”** that will be implemented by summer 2026.

6. “White House Initiative to Promote Excellence and Innovation at Historically Black Colleges and Universities” (Applies to All Higher Ed Institutions)

Trump established a new White House Initiative on HBCUs and scrapped a Biden initiative on the same. While Biden quickly announced significant (\$1B+) financial contributions to HBCUs after issuing his 2021 order, it remains unclear if Trump’s order will be followed by any new federal funding.

7. “Preparing Americans for High-Paying Skilled Trade Jobs of the Future”

This order vows that the US will invest in equipping American workers to fill the growing demand for skilled trades and other occupations and expand Registered Apprenticeships.

Conclusion

Please contact your Fisher Phillips attorney, the authors of this Insight, or any attorney on our [Education Team](#) or [Higher Education Team](#) to obtain practical advice and guidance related to these latest executive orders. Visit our [New Administration Resource Center for Employers](#) to review all our thought leadership and practical resources, and make sure you are subscribed to [Fisher Phillips' Insight System](#) to get the most up-to-date information.

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