



PROGRESS REPORT:

Cutting Waste, Ridding Radicalism,
and Returning Education
to the States



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Cutting Waste, Ridding Radicalism, and Returning Education to the States

MAY 2026



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US Senator Barack Obama
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PROLOGUE

The modern-day Department of Education (ED) was created in 1979 through the Department of Education Organization Act, which consolidated the separate education functions of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (now Health and Human Services) into its own cabinet-level agency.

At the time, ED was [intended](#) to reduce bureaucracy in federal grantmaking, get parents more involved in their children's education, conduct education-related research and expand educational opportunities, particularly to disadvantaged groups.

Nearly 50 years later, ED has instead empowered school districts to exclude parents from their children's education; funded research ranging from unhelpful to harmful to student success; and overseen plummeting rates of student success across demographics. Nevertheless, agency funding has reached new heights, rising 749% from 2000 to 2024.

ED has become the quintessential unnecessary, bloated bureaucracy; but the agency is a progressive darling with a large cottage industry of advocates it has itself funded over the decades. Eliminating ED for good will take courage and resolve, but such a victory would strike at the very heart of the progressive ideology that relentlessly and uncritically seeks to expand the size and scope of the federal government. Indeed, accomplishments in this arena can help provide proof of concept for eliminating, consolidating, and downsizing other agencies.

President Trump promised during his 2024 election campaign to dismantle ED and he appointed Education Secretary Linda McMahon to undertake the daunting task. Activities so far include winding down and cancelling wasteful grants and transferring more critical activities to other agencies. Congress, however, must partner with the Administration for the progress to become durable.

The following report addresses two research topics. **Part 1** breaks down staff and spending trends, while **Part 2** outlines major Trump administrative actions related to ED since assuming office in January 2025. Together, they offer a progress report on the potentially historic task of returning education to the states in keeping with our Founders' vision.

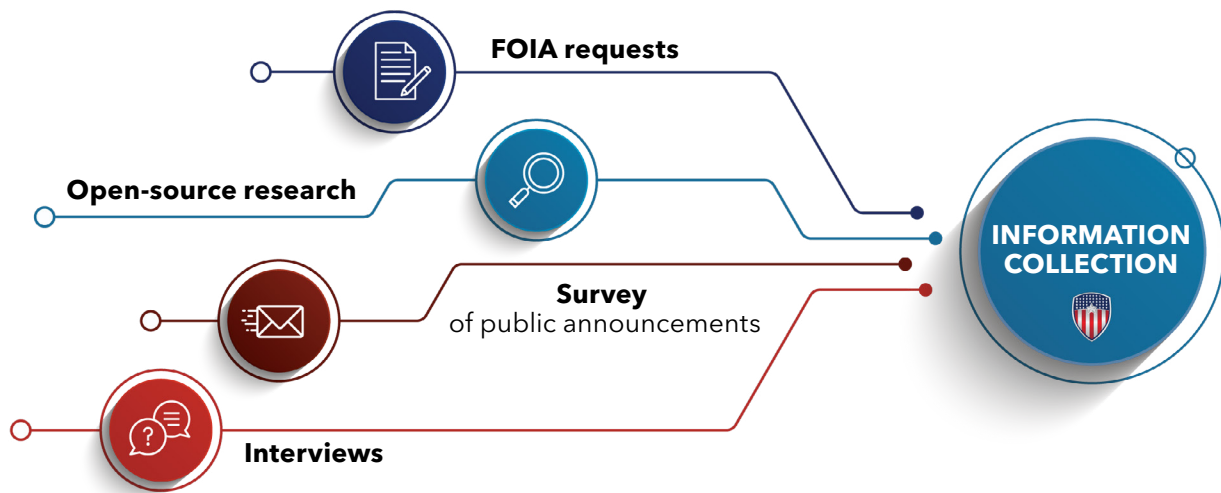
SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Open the Books used spending data gathered from federal checkbook database USASpending.gov, and salary data obtained via agency FOIA request. Salary data for federal agencies, states, and local governments is posted on OpenTheBooks.com.

The report primarily covers fiscal years 2017-2025, with a particular focus on FY 2021-2025. Other information regarding agency spending or activities was collected via online resources. Citations are provided as hyperlinks within the text.

Spending figures are not adjusted for inflation.

Journalists, nonprofit organizations, oversight committees, politicians and watchdogs are encouraged to review the facts delineated in our report and continue to investigate.



TOP TAKEAWAYS

01 The Department of Education employed 4,245 staffers in 2024, down from 4,930 in 2000 but up from 4,031 in 2020. Through reductions in force, voluntary leave incentives, and return-to-office requirements, the Trump administration claims at least 1,950 staffers have left the agency in 2025.

02 During the Biden administration, about \$560 million a year was spent on salaries for 4,245 staffers. Although reporting was delayed by several months, new figures from OPM confirm the Department shrank in FY25 to 2,670 (net -1,518 staff or 36%). Payroll dropped to \$391,264,523, a decrease of roughly 30%.

03 Over a trillion dollars in grants have been awarded by ED since fiscal year 2017, peaking during the COVID era with \$313 million in 2021.

04 FY 2025 saw more ED spending than in FY 2024: \$96 billion versus \$92 billion. This is largely due to massive increases in Pell grant spending, which increased \$6 billion year over year. The FAFSA Simplification Act of 2021 baked in new Pell grant spending, so reducing overall ED spending will be difficult without reforming this program.

05 COVID-era Education Stabilization Funds (ESF) to American universities cost \$276 billion, and schools with huge endowments raked in billions of that funding. For example: Massachusetts Institute of Technology (beginning of 2021 endowment: \$18 billion), and University of Pennsylvania (beginning of 2021 endowment: \$18 billion).

06 Spending on diversity, equity, and inclusion-related grants soared under Biden. Grants containing the words “social justice” or “equity” cost taxpayers between \$144 million and \$174 million between FY 2021 and 2024. Although Trump took an aggressive anti-DEI stance, \$62 million in such funding was still spent in FY 2025.

07 Contract spending at ED has held relatively stable since FY 2017, at around \$2.5 billion a year. Over half of that spending, \$12.5 billion, went to student loan servicing. The Trump administration is attempting to spin off such services to the Small Business Association.

08 Almost \$300,000 was spent on weapons and armor for ED’s law enforcement division from FY 2021-2025, including \$76,000 in 2025.

09 ED has initiated partnerships with Department of Labor, Department of Interior, Health and Human Services, and Department of State to move functions away from ED as the agency sets about dismantling itself.

THE EXECUTIVE ORDER DISMANTLING ED

Adapted from an Open the Books [report](#) published March 2025.

Trump's executive order (EO) on [Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities](#), which aims to dismantle the Department of Education, has a couple of key prongs:

First, Trump argues that the Department as it stands today is a failure, citing ever-decreasing test scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), known as America's Report Card.

“Unfortunately, the experiment of controlling American education through Federal programs and dollars - and the unaccountable bureaucracy those programs and dollars support - has plainly failed our children, teachers, and our families.”

Trump says the \$200 billion spent during Covid, added to \$60 billion in routine annual spending, did little to staunch learning loss and nothing to boost student outcomes.

“While the [department] does not educate anyone, it maintains a public relations office that includes over 80 staffers at a cost of more than \$10 million per year.”

He also points out that ED manages \$1.6 trillion in student loans, about the same amount of debt as a major national bank like Wells Fargo, with less than 1% of the manpower.

All of this, he concludes, means the department's core functions can and should be housed elsewhere in the federal government, or at a more local level.

Second, Trump draws some boundaries in the sweeping order. In returning authority to states and local communities, the Secretary should ensure “effective and uninterrupted delivery of services, programs, and benefits on which Americans rely.”

In other words, protections for students with disabilities, special needs or those in protected classes would remain within the federal purview.

Per the EO, the Secretary should also ensure all future allocations remain both legally compliant and comport with Trump administration policies (i.e. no more spending for “diversity, equity and inclusion”).

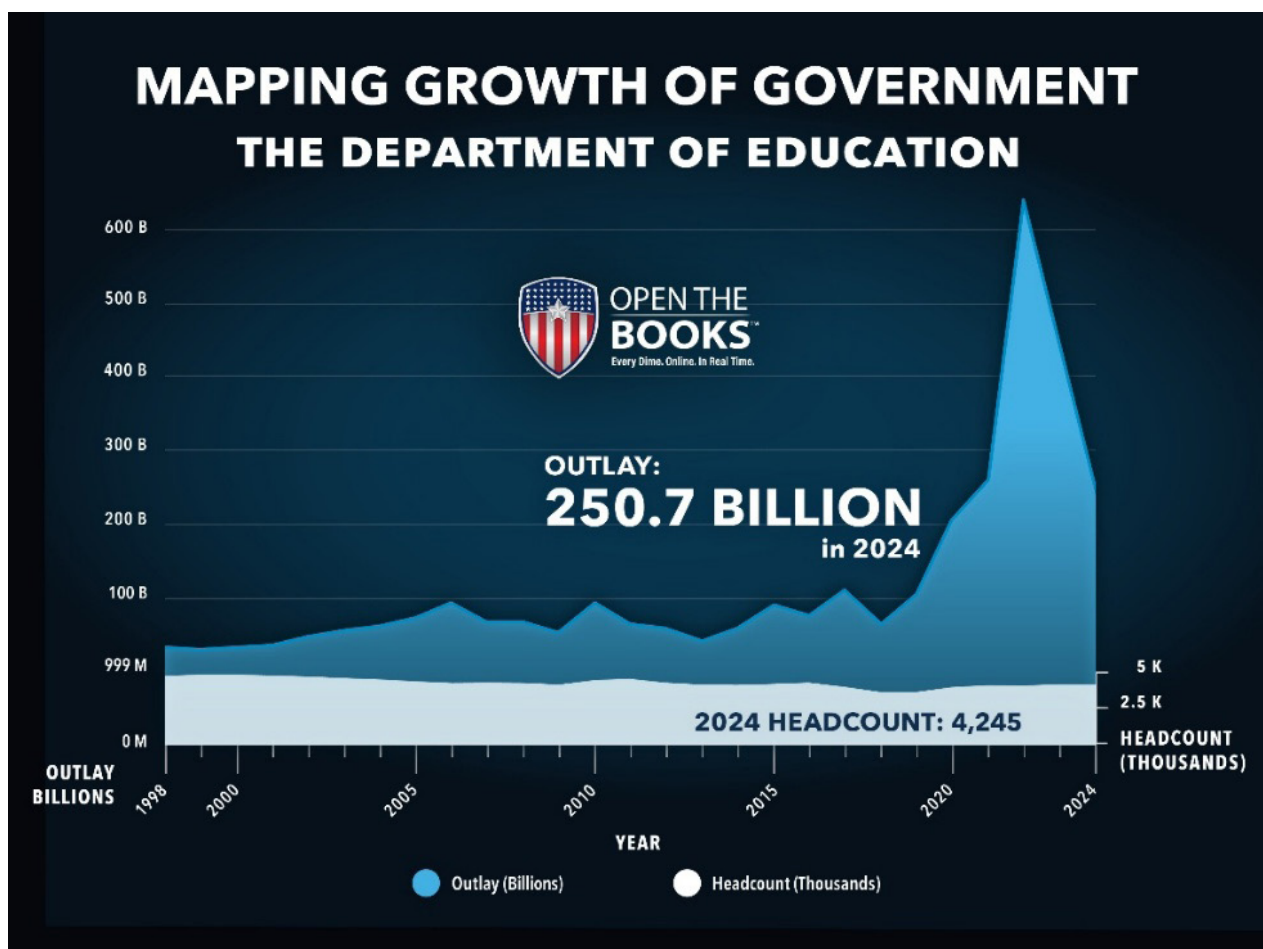
Further clarifications in the EO make plain that sweeping changes will also depend upon Congress' appropriations, decisions and existing limits on Article I authority.

PART 1: SETTING THE STAGE: STAFF, SALARIES, AND SPENDING

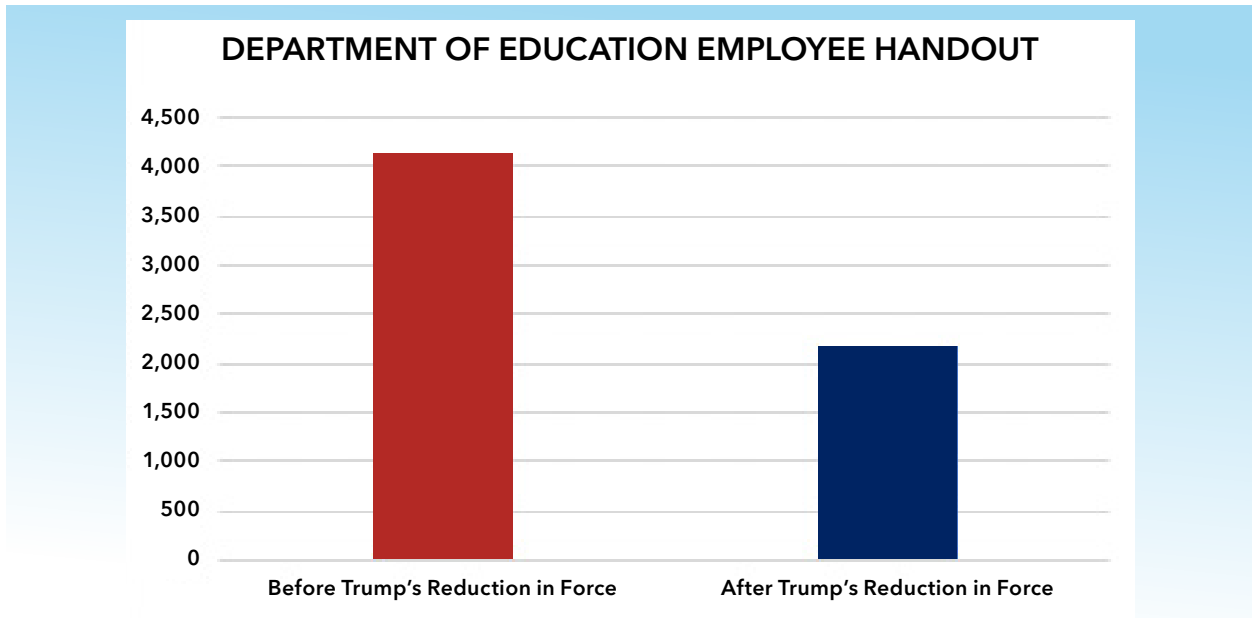
A brief overview of the raw numbers in the creation and dismantling of the Department of Education:

STAFF

Staff numbers at the Department of Education have decreased steadily from the year 2000, when headcount was about 4,900. In 2024, 4,245 employees drew a salary.



As a part of the Trump administration’s initiative to dismantle the Department of Education, the agency initiated a reduction in force of about 50%. According to an agency [press release](#), at the beginning of the Trump administration there were 4,133 workers. Starting March 21, 2025, 1,950 employees were put on administrative leave. Of those, about 600 had accepted voluntary resignation opportunities.



Employees were also compelled to return to the office, a move meant to increase productivity and encourage less motivated employees to find other jobs. A 2024 [report](#) found telework-eligible ED employees spent about 42% of their working time in-office.

In [2025](#), 70% of employees had to be in office by February, and all employees had to be back in office by June.

Although reporting was delayed by several months, new figures from the Office of Personnel Management, obtained by Open the Books in April 2025, confirm the Department shrank significantly in FY25. Headcount dropped by 1,517 to a total of 2,670 (a 36% decrease). Payroll dropped to \$391,264,523, a decrease of roughly 30%.

Salaries and Staff from 2021-2024

During the Biden administration, about \$560 million a year was spent on Department of Education staff salaries. An additional \$2.7 million was also spent on staff bonuses, with average annual totals between \$350,000 and \$440,000 annually in 2021, 2022, and 2024, but spiking to \$1.58 million in 2025.

The largest bonus in that time, \$74,235, went to the highest-paid staffer in 2023; budget director Larry Kean, who earned \$286,335 that year.

In 2025, 4,245 employees drew a salary and, of those, 86% or 3,686 staffers received over \$100,000. Nearly 150 staff received over \$200,000 (not including bonuses).

About 65% of Department of Education employees, or 2,745, worked in D.C., Maryland, or Virginia in 2024, with the next most working in Georgia (173), Texas (155), and California (149).

The highest frequency job title—and therefore highest salary expense—is “management and program analysis;” 933 employees collectively earned \$133 million.

JOB TITLE	EMPLOYEE COUNT	SUM OF SALARY
Management & Program Analysis	933	\$133,515,317.95
General Attorney	588	\$86,613,848.25
Miscellaneous Administration & Program	572	\$85,054,222.02
Education Program	306	\$42,652,343.89
Information Technology Management	303	\$49,779,797.31
General Business and Industry	264	\$34,995,360.00
Contracting	109	\$15,696,018.00

Top job titles by count of employees and salary expenses at Department of Education in 2024

Other notable titles include Human Resources Management (93 staffers, \$13.4 million), Human Resources Assistance (7 staffers, \$500,000), and Public Affairs (27 staffers, \$4.1 million).

Case Study: Kelisa Wing

Read the Open the Books report [Diversity Whack-a-Mole: Controversial DOD Employee Pops Back Up at Education Department](#)

In November 2024 Open the Books broke the story that Department of Defense Education Activity’s former Chief Equity Officer Kelisa Wing had been transferred to the Department of Education. Wing was reassigned from her Chief Equity Officer role in 2023 to another administrative DoDEA position that the agency said was not related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

However, later that same year, she moved to the Department of Education, with a \$152,937 salary (\$10,000 higher than at DoDEA) and a new title: senior advisor.

In 2024, using her new title, Wing gave a talk called “[The Backlash Against Equity](#)” at the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) conference. The talk was on how to pursue “equity” in education “in spite of the times we are living in.”

Although the presentation used her professional affiliation, someone familiar with the matter told us she gave the talk in her personal capacity.

When we reached out to the Department of Education for comment, a spokesperson replied:

“While the Department does not comment on personnel issues, we can confirm that Kelisa is the Senior Advisor to the Performance Improvement Officer in Office of the Deputy Secretary and **her portfolio does not include DEI work.**”


We noted that the [Performance Improvement Office](#) works on implementing the agency’s strategic plan. In his [introduction](#) to the agency’s most recent strategic plan, then-ED Secretary Miguel Cardona stated, “Equity is a cross-cutting priority integrated into every goal, objective, and strategy within the FY 2022-FY 2026 Strategic Plan.” We asked for clarification on how Wing does not work in DEI when equity is embedded in every aspect of the agency’s strategic plan, and her office oversees implementing the strategic plan. We didn’t receive a response to that question.

Wing was put on [administrative leave](#) by the Trump administration in February 2025.



SPENDING

From FY 2017 (the first, partial, fiscal year of the Trump administration) until the end of FY 2025, the federal Department of Education spent over a trillion dollars in grants and contracts to support k-12 schools, universities, and education initiatives nationwide.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GRANTS & CONTRACTS, FY17-25			
			
YEAR	GRANTS	CONTRACTS	TOTAL
2017	\$72,419,043,154.04	\$2,551,260,140.30	\$74,970,303,294.34
2018	\$76,835,661,689.37	\$2,763,261,810.88	\$79,598,923,500.25
2019	\$77,400,305,584.75	\$2,890,839,915.21	\$80,291,145,499.96
2020	\$107,362,246,414.72	\$2,964,581,660.96	\$110,326,828,075.68
2021	\$310,373,236,276.06	\$2,688,306,014.55	\$313,061,542,290.61
2022	\$96,526,674,501.64	\$2,446,941,795.30	\$98,973,616,296.94
2023	\$84,304,178,468.72	\$2,445,998,712.83	\$86,750,177,181.55
2024	\$89,566,302,581.20	\$2,225,235,935.14	\$92,291,538,516.34
2025	\$93,504,793,916.25	\$2,504,692,747.79	\$96,009,486,664.04
TOTAL	\$1,008,292,442,586.75	\$23,981,118,732.96	\$1,032,273,561,319.71

About 40% of this funding (\$417 billion) came just from COVID-response grants in 2020 and 2021.

[Read more at Open the Books report [Mapping the Growth of Government](#)]

The following sections discuss grant and contract spending at Department of Education in more detail.

Grants

Spending on grants and other forms of financial assistance was around \$75 billion from 2017-2019. During the COVID-19 pandemic, spending increased to \$107 billion in 2020 and \$310 billion in 2021. Spending dropped sharply since then but total grant spending in 2025 was \$93 billion, still elevated above 2018 and 2019 spending levels.

These massive increases were due to the \$2.2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act signed into law March 2020, and the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act signed into law March 2021.

Indeed, the largest spending category during the Biden administration (roughly fiscal year 2021-24) was from the Education Stabilization Fund, which includes all funding from the CARES Act and ARP: \$247 billion. (About \$30 billion in Educational Stabilization Funds were spent during the Trump administration in FY 2020 as well, for a total of \$276 billion).

In second place are federal Pell grants, which cost \$114 billion. A distant third and fourth are Title I grants to local educational agencies for high-poverty schools (\$70 billion), and special education grants to states (\$57 billion).

Other various programs include career and technical education state grants (\$5.4 billion), English language acquisition state grants (\$3.3 billion), and grants for “gaining early awareness and readiness for undergraduate programs” (\$1.4 billion).

CFDA TITLE (CATALOG OF DOMESTIC FEDERAL ASSISTANCE)	TOTAL SPENT
Education Stabilization Fund	\$247,073,061,851.59
Federal Pell Grant Program	\$114,656,032,051.00
Title I Grants to Educational Agencies	\$69,981,474,134.34
Special Education Grants to States	\$57,105,245,440.47
Rehabilitation Services Vocational Rehabilitation Grants to States	\$12,909,090,070.49
Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants (Formerly Improving Teacher Quality State Grants)	\$8,583,934,617.86
Student Support and Academic Enrichment Program	\$6,103,929,773.90
Impact Aid	\$5,852,018,921.35
Career and Technical Education - Basic Grants to States	\$5,436,240,848.29
Twenty-First Century Community Learning Centers	5,133,903,060.86

Top ten funding categories for Department of Education grants 2021-2024

About three and a half months of fiscal year 2025 were under the Biden administration and the rest under Trump.

Records indicate \$89.5 billion was obligated in 2024 and \$93.5 was obligated in 2025; an increase of about \$4 billion.

The increase should not be too surprising: the President and Education Secretary promised that, while ED would undergo major restructuring and excise DEI-ideology from its operations and grantmaking, major aid sources to schools would not be changed.

Indeed, most major grant categories that received over \$1 billion in 2024 continued with similar funding levels throughout 2025.

TITLE I GRANTS		FY24-25		
ENTITY	2024	2025	TOTAL	
Grants to Local Educational Agencies	\$18,177,771,404.89	\$18,219,839,102.56	\$36,397,610,507.45	
Special Education Grants to States	\$14,157,797,818.76	\$14,030,951,799.27	\$28,188,749,618.03	
Rehabilitation Services Vocational Rehabilitation Grants to States 2024	\$3,518,117,800.96	\$3,928,720,837.80	\$7,446,838,638.76	
Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants	\$2,172,428,461.84	\$2,166,396,287.95	\$4,338,824,749.79	
Impact Aid	\$1,891,268,397.81	\$1,568,467,031.30	\$3,459,735,429.11	
Student Support and Academic Enrichment Program	\$1,339,442,488.51	\$1,355,717,131.68	\$2,695,159,620.19	
Twenty-First Century Community Learning Centers	\$1,303,600,127.56	\$1,324,144,254.51	\$2,627,744,382.07	
Higher Education Institutional Aid	\$1,194,216,685.96	\$1,368,094,656.17	\$2,562,311,342.13	
Federal Work-Study Program	\$1,155,432,102.53	\$1,139,156,360.27	\$2,294,588,462.80	

Particularly notable is Pell Grant spending, which increased by over \$6 billion from FY 2024-2025. Since FY 2021, Pell Grant spending has increased by over \$13 billion. Pell Grants are used to fund low-income students in four-year college programs; it is a yearly stipend that does not have to be paid back. Aid amounts are set by Congress.

Congress passed the FAFSA Simplification Act through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 which both increased the amount recipients can get, and the number of people eligible for grants. For school year 2025-2026 the [total maximum award](#) is \$7,395. Students can now also get more aid than the cost of attending college.

The One Big Beautiful Bill of 2025 provided \$10.5 billion in funding boosts to the Pell Grant program to cover shortfalls caused in part by expansions under FAFSA Simplification.

Congress would have to act to repeal Pell's authorization in Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to end the Pell Grant program. As it stands, even as the Trump administration snipes and spins off various programs, Pell will remain a major and growing part of the ED budget. The Trump administration has not tried to move to another agency so far.

CASE STUDY: EDUCATION STABILIZATION FUNDS

According to the Department of Education website, the \$276 billion Education Stabilization Fund was an "investment" into "COVID-19 recovery and rebuilding efforts, managed by the U.S. Department of Education to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus impacts on education for our nation's students."

Of the total, \$75.2 billion was spent on the Higher Education Emergency Relief program, which funded colleges and universities. Institutions had to spend at least 50% of the funds on student grants, which could have been awarded for any component of their cost of attendance or for emergency costs like housing, childcare, and health care.

Institutions were required to prioritize grants to students with notable financial need (like Pell Grant recipients). Students of any residency status were eligible, including "citizens, permanent residents, international students, refugees, asylum seekers, DACA recipients, other DREAMers, and similar undocumented students," according to a [fact sheet](#) by the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA).

The factsheet also outlines the kinds of activities colleges and universities could have used their portion of the funds for, including:

- Lost revenue
- Reimbursement for expenses already incurred
- Technology costs associated with a transition to distance education
- Faculty and staff trainings
- Payroll
- Make additional financial aid grants to students

Colleges and universities were additionally required to spend funding on:

- Implementing evidence-based practices to monitor and suppress coronavirus in accordance with public health guidelines; and
- Conducting direct outreach to financial aid applicants about the opportunity to receive a financial aid adjustment due

Americans might expect that funds called “Higher Education Emergency Relief” would be intended for schools in need of financial “emergency relief.” Indeed, four top schools with multi-billion-dollar endowments declined to apply for these funds. Sixteen of the top 20 richest schools, however, did take funds, even as their endowments grew by billions of dollars throughout 2021.

Harvard, Stanford, Princeton, and Notre Dame did not receive Education Stabilization Funds but schools like Yale (beginning of 2021 endowment: \$31 billion), Massachusetts Institute of Technology (beginning of 2021 endowment: \$18 billion), and University of Pennsylvania (beginning of 2021 endowment: \$18 billion), did. Meanwhile, their endowments soared. For example, Yale took \$3.9 million in emergency COVID relief, while its endowment grew by \$11.2 billion in 2021.

TOP 20 UNIVERSITIES BY ENDOWMENT SIZE & GROWTH, 2021



UNIVERSITY	EDUCATION STABILIZATION FUND	2021 ENDOWMENT GROWTH
Harvard	–	\$11,271,373,000
Yale	\$3,900,511	\$11,081,166,000
Stanford	–	\$8,840,076,000
Princeton	–	\$11,082,159,000
MIT	\$15,387,630	\$9,012,521,000
UPenn	\$40,341,081	\$5,646,183,000
Notre Dame	–	\$6,065,932,000
Texas A&M - College Station	\$208,852,306	\$4,161,436,000
U Michigan - Ann Arbor	\$126,143,207	\$4,651,062,000
Columbia	\$71,415,695	\$3,092,949,000
Emory	\$39,505,911	\$3,049,655,000
Washington	\$12,958,057	\$5,178,787,000
Northwestern	\$19,565,436	\$2,876,476,000
Duke	\$22,171,253	\$4,218,401,000
Chicago	\$31,552,966	\$2,395,435,000
Virginia - Main Campus	\$58,987,461	\$3,220,102,000
Vanderbilt	\$24,341,153	\$4,011,141,000
Cornell	\$64,587,308	\$2,591,680,000
Johns Hopkins	\$32,715,578	\$2,565,187,000
Rice	\$16,854,644	\$1,913,969,000

Top 20 individual universities by endowment size in the beginning of 2021, along with the amount of Education Stabilization Fund money they received, and how much their endowments grew by the end of 2021. Data from nces.ed.gov

[Read more about taxpayer funding for top universities at the [Open the Books 2025 State of the State Schools](#) report.]

The 2023 Fiscal Responsibility Act rescinded unobligated balances from the Education Stabilization Funds. The Biden administration **estimated** this would only amount to about \$391 million compared to the hundreds of billions that had already been spent.

In March 2025 the Department of Education **attempted to recapture** Education Stabilization Funds by rescinding all prior extensions on their spending deadlines. Entities that were awarded the funds were required to liquidate those awarded via the American Rescue Plan Act by January 2025. A court injunction in June 2025 reversed the Department of Education action and the funds were allowed to be spent by their previously determined deadline.

STATE SPENDING

Most grants are given directly to state or local institutions, such as state departments of education. The California Department of Education tops the list with over \$4 billion in funding in each year of 2024 and 2025, followed by Texas Education Agency (about \$3.9 billion each year), New York State Department of Education (about \$3 billion each year).


STATE DEPT OF EDUCATION	2024 GRANTS	NUMBER OF K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS	2025 GRANTS	NUMBER OF K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS	CHANGE IN FUNDING FROM 2024-2025
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION CALIFORNIA	\$4,829,561,596.52	5,619,800	\$4,618,227,784.83	5,501,100	\$(211,333,811.69)
TX EDUCATION AGENCY	\$3,900,727,563.73	5,491,200	\$3,822,145,205.98	5,463,000	\$(78,582,357.75)
NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT	\$3,150,811,126.71	2,406,100	\$2,970,713,805.62	2,358,400	\$(180,097,321.09)
FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	\$2,585,945,646.01	2,895,500	\$2,374,423,921.27	2,902,200	\$(211,521,724.74)
ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION	\$1,691,593,329.55	1,828,400	\$1,635,209,148.01	1,806,800	\$(56,384,181.54)

Amount of funding to the top five biggest state department of education recipients, 2024 and 2025, along with projected public k-12 attendance numbers in those same years. Attendance projections are from [NCES. LINK TO DATA.](#)

Spending roughly correlates with the [number](#) of k-12 students in the state, with one exception. In the Fall of 2024 and 2025, the District of Columbia had the second fewest number of students in the nation with 91,100 and 90,500 each respective year (only Vermont was lower). Nevertheless, \$154 million in Department of Education grants were awarded to the city department of education in 2024, more than state boards of education in Wyoming (91,800 students, \$131 million) and North Dakota (120,600 students, \$131 million).

While states make up the bulk of ED grantees, universities—both public and private—received the second and third highest amounts in grant funding.

FUNDING BY ENTITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, FY24-25

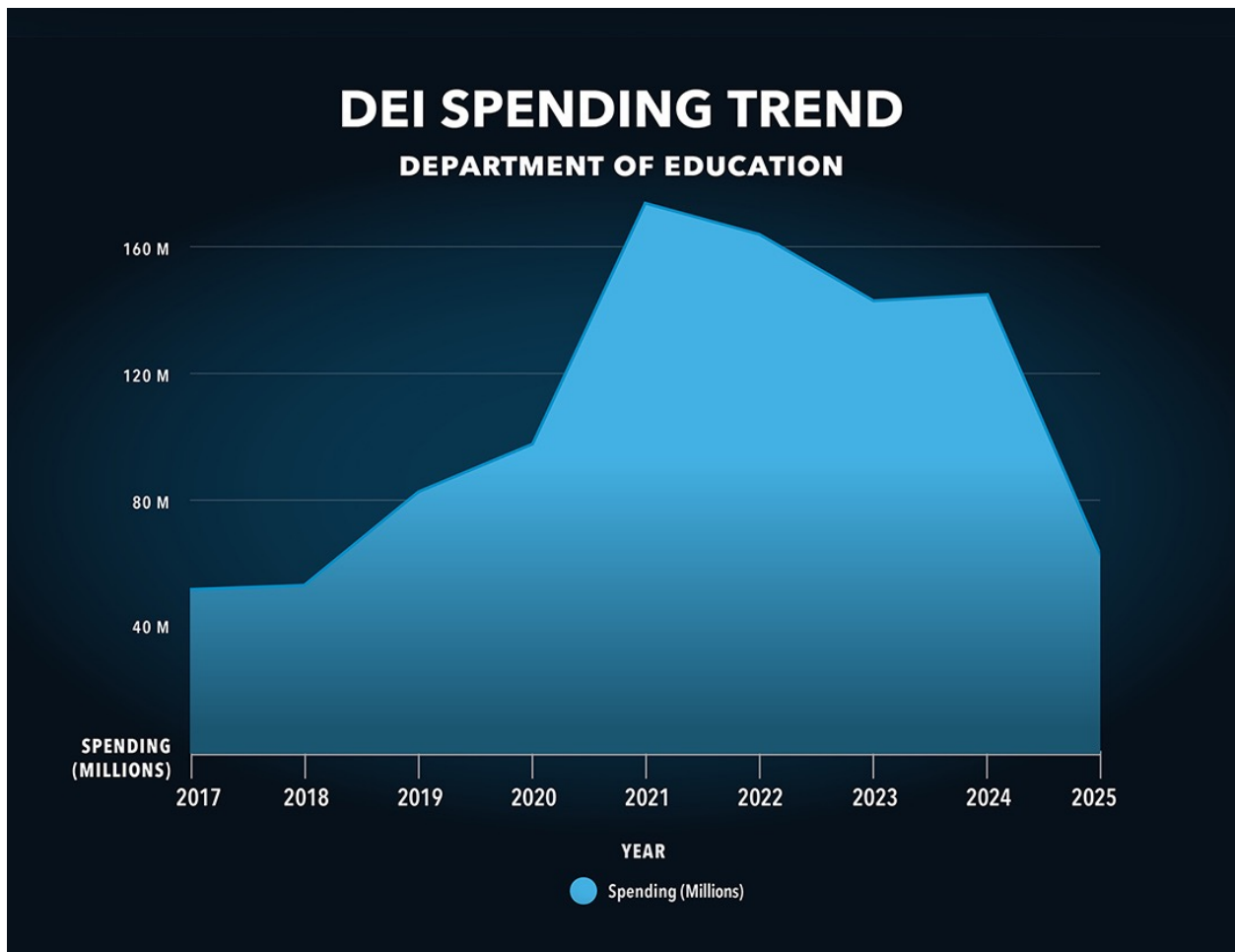


ENTITY	2024 SPENDING	2025 SPENDING
State Government	\$41,182,804,725.32	\$39,711,397,355.48
Public/State Institution of Higher Ed	\$23,541,530,434.96	\$25,661,368,367.75
Private Institution of Higher Ed	\$8,501,556,137.99	\$9,806,794,268.01
Independent School District	\$6,503,822,451.18	\$6,921,228,028.50
For-Profit Org (Not Small Business)	\$4,206,112,355.79	\$4,852,301,951.85
501C3 Nonprofit (Not Higher Ed)	\$1,583,964,049.67	\$2,057,562,956.76
City/Township	\$1,403,029,584.15	\$1,533,899,287.25
County	\$1,381,843,514.40	\$1,513,812,176.57
Other	\$529,072,013.26	\$562,667,607.10
Indian/Native Tribal Govt	\$336,400,539.56	\$452,239,537.39
Special District	\$285,013,973.85	\$284,287,490.97
Small Business	\$111,152,801.07	\$147,234,888.62

Funding by “business type description” in 2024 and 2025. [LINK TO DATA](#)

DEI SPENDING TRENDS

A search through transactions containing the words “equity” or “social justice” reveal drastic cuts to grants with these DEI-terms in 2025 compared to the Biden administration. This is not the full universe of DEI-infused grants, but these key words can reveal important trends on spending priorities. Since 2021, nearly \$700 million has been spent on such grants. In 2025 such projects received \$62 million.



Millions of dollars of such grants funded projects in 42 states, with California again taking the lead. But even more traditionally conservative states like Indiana and Ohio still received tens of millions.

DEI SPENDING BY STATE TOTAL SPENDING FY17-25



STATE	SPENDING
California	\$153,420,710.15
Indiana	\$84,806,454.79
Texas	\$77,557,195.39
Florida	\$71,360,448.96
Virginia	\$46,041,556.51
Arizona	\$37,000,291.85
Massachusetts	\$34,708,417.00
Minnesota	\$34,396,156.48
Connecticut	\$33,799,231.36
Ohio	\$30,817,745.28

States receiving grants containing the left-wing terms “equity” or “social justice” from the Department of Education, FY 2017-25.

It is difficult to discern the impact of such spending or judge completed projects, as project results are not usually described in detail on institutional websites.

But some are, including:

- **2022; \$475,000; Ohio State University; the Race, Inclusion, and Social Equity (RAISE) Initiative;** [RAISE](#) seeks to add “at least 50 tenure-track faculty members whose research can help to address racial and social disparities.” Topics covered for these faculty positions include “Critical STEM fields: Chemistry, Math, and Physics,” “Climate, Race and Place,” and “Racial Equity by Design.” The initiative’s webpage was put behind a login page in 2025.

- **2022: [\\$1.3 million](#); renewed 2024: [\\$1.9 million](#); Framingham State University; Remixing Textbooks Through an Equity-Focused Lens;** This project publishes open-source textbooks. Thirty have so far been published, including [“Overweight” Bodies, Real and Imagined](#), which endeavors to “decouple weight and health,” and [Children, Families, Schools, and Communities](#), which features the now infamous [Genderbread Person](#). All textbooks begin with a [“land acknowledgement”](#) for “the painful history of genocide and forced removal from [Indigenous Peoples’] territory, and other atrocities connected with colonization.” The land acknowledgement is a part of the grant’s overall mission.
 - One other major grant, awarded in 2022, also pays for open-source textbooks. Over [\\$1.5 million](#) to Loyola Marymount and three other colleges to, according to a [press release](#), “integrate diverse, equitable, inclusive, and anti-racist resources into high-enrollment courses across multiple disciplines.”

Others leave much to the imagination:

- 2022; [\\$1.6 million](#); Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia; Development and Validation of the Culturally- and Racial Equity-Sustaining (CARES) Classroom Assessment System
- 2023; [\\$1 million](#), The University Corporation, for “advancing equity and innovation in entertainment and information media.”
- 2022-2023; [\\$889,973](#), California State University for “pandemic recovery with equity.”

While Biden-era DEI spending would meet expectations for an administration committed to entrenching DEI into every aspect of its operations, some of the Trump-era spending may raise eyebrows, like:

- [\\$114,730](#) to “Project Oceanside: Optimizing The Capacity Of Special Educators For Inclusion Diversity, And Equity”
- [\\$247,906](#) to “Project Prism-ED (Preparing A Pipeline For Recruitment And Retention Of Social Justice And Equity-minded Deaf Educators)”
- [\\$599,125](#) for “Project TELL-Equity [Teaching English Language Learners-Equity]”
- [\\$3,519,038](#) for “Arizona Gear Up 2019-26: The Five E’s of Equity”

Trump Cuts to Woke Spending

In accordance with EOs on [Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing](#) and [Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity](#), ED announced several major changes in the first days of the Trump Administration, [including](#):

- Removing over 200 publicly accessible documents that include or promote DEI from the agency website;
- Putting employees in charge of DEI programs on paid administrative leave;
- Dissolving the Biden-era Diversity & Inclusion Council;
- Cancelling DEI training contracts worth \$2.6 million;
- Withdrawing the ED Equity Action Plan

In the weeks after Trump’s inauguration, ED also took the following actions to curb DEI spending:

- Cancelling [\\$350 million](#) in contracts and grants to Regional Educational Laboratories and Equity Assistance Centers, which, for example, had been encouraging schools to conduct “equity audits” and “equity conversations;”
- Cutting [\\$600 million](#) to grants and nonprofits training teachers and educational institutions in DEI ideology and methodology;
- Cancelling [\\$226 million](#) in grants awarded under the Comprehensive Centers Program, which, according to a press release “have been forcing radical agendas onto states and systems, including race-based discrimination and gender identity ideology;”
- Launching [EndDEI.ED.gov](#), a public portal for parents and students to submit reports on sex or race-based discrimination in public k-12 schools. The agency was forced to remove the portal by [court order](#) several months later.
- Diverting about [\\$350 million](#) in discretionary funds from several Minority-Serving Institutions grant programs that discriminated by awarding grants to institutes based on their racial or ethnic composition. The funding was given to other programs that do not practice racial and ethnic discrimination.

Funding amounts were for entire grants over their lifetimes, not yearly spending.

Unfortunately for transparency trackers, ED did not provide a list of the over \$1 billion in cancelled contracts in its press releases, so it is difficult to verify these claimed cuts.

In addition to cutting grant funding to woke spending, the Trump administration launched several new programs to promote civics education, including:

- [American History and Seminars Discretionary Grant Program](#), \$153 million residential 1776 Award, a “nationwide competition recognizing exceptional student knowledge of the American founding.” Three students will receive \$250,000 prizes for winning.
- [The America 250 Civics Education Coalition](#) a “landmark initiative... dedicated to renewing patriotism, strengthening civic knowledge, and advancing a shared understanding of America’s founding principles in schools across the nation.”
- [The History Rocks! Trail to Independence Tour](#), “to recognize excellence in civics education and promote a shared understanding of the principles that shaped the founding and history of our nation.”

Other new spending includes:

- [\\$500 million](#) to charter schools to support education choice
- [\\$495 million](#) in additional spending to Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities
- [\\$208 million](#) in Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration and School-Based Mental Health programs
- [\\$15 million](#) for the Connecting Talent to Opportunity Challenge, “a national call to action designed to strengthen the connections between learners and earners by accelerating the development of integrated, state-wide Talent Marketplaces.”

GLOBAL EDUCATION FUNDING

The Department of Education has spent millions of dollars sending Americans abroad to conduct research and to fund foreign language and area studies at American universities nationwide. The following section analyzes some of this spending.

Overseas Programs

Department of Education hosts three major Fulbright-Hays “overseas programs,” which cost \$55 million from 2017-2024. The Trump administration cancelled the applications for those programs in 2025 and clawed back some grants, with a net \$1.1 million recouped that year. In November 2025 the administration announced that ED would partner with the Department of State to administer those programs.

From FY 2017-2024, \$27.4 million was spent on the Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad program, which sends PhD students around the world to collect data for their dissertations.

Some notable projects and the country recipients were sent to during the Biden administration include:

- **Japan**, Queering Genre - Transgressing Sonic Boundaries in Anime Music
- **Costa Rica**, The International Baccalaureate and the Geopolitics of Knowledge - Insights from Teachers at a Costa Rican International School
- **Kenya**, The Female Body as a Curriculum: Rethinking Gendered Sexualities Education in Kenya through Visual Cultures and Technologies
- **Colombia**, Deconstructing the Warrior-Female Guerrilla Fighters Within the Colombian Conflict

\$2.1 million in tax dollars was spent on the Fulbright-Hays Faculty Research Abroad fellowships, which are supposed to [contribute](#) to “the development and improvement of modern foreign language and area studies in the U.S. by providing opportunities for scholars to conduct research abroad.” This program was only funded in FY 2022 and FY 2024.

Some notable projects and the country recipients were sent to during that time include:

- Taiwan, [Adaptation: Chinese Food and its Journeys](#)
- South Africa, [Interrupting Gender and Intersectional Microaggressions to Counter Gender-Based Violence at U. of the Witwatersrand](#)
- Brazil, [The Cultural Reception of Nelson Rodrigues’ Transvestite Chronicles](#)

\$15.4 million in tax dollars was spent on the Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad program, which “provides grants to support overseas projects in training, research, and curriculum development in modern foreign languages and area studies for teachers, students, and faculty engaged in a common endeavor.” Such projects could include a seminar, language immersion, or research.

In the [FY 2020 Budget Request](#) for the Department of Education, the Trump administration advocated for eliminating funding for overseas programs “to refocus Federal education investments on flexible formula grant programs serving the Nation’s most vulnerable student populations while reducing or eliminating funding for programs that are duplicative, ineffective, or more appropriately supported with State, local or private funds.” The [FY 2026 Budget Request](#) also zeroed out the overseas program budget, but it is unclear what funding levels for the Fulbright-Hays programs will be implemented now that Department of State is administering them.

Click here to download [Overseas Spending Data](#).

CASE STUDY: EARMARKS, THEN AND NOW

From [Waste of the Day: Education Earmarks Got a Failing Grade](#), first published in *Real Clear Investigations* in January 2025

According to the 2010 “Wastebook” reporting published by the late U.S. Senator Dr. Tom Coburn, two of the Department of Education’s top programs spent \$2.3 billion on “pork barrel” earmarks over 10 years.

For years, Sen. Coburn’s reports shined a white-hot spotlight on [federal frauds and taxpayer abuses](#).

Coburn, the legendary U.S. Senator from Oklahoma, earned the nickname “Dr. No” by stopping thousands of pork-barrel projects using the Senate rules. Projects that he couldn’t stop, Coburn included in his oversight reports.

[Coburn’s Wastebook 2010](#) included 100 examples of outrageous spending worth more than \$11.5 billion, including \$226 million of Department of Education earmarks from fiscal year 2010 – which would be worth \$326.2 million today.

KEY FACTS: The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education and the Fund for the Improvement of Education at one point administered nearly every education earmark passed by Congress: 5,563 of them in a 10-year span.

Coburn published a [report](#) of nearly 100 pages detailing some of the most absurd earmarks.

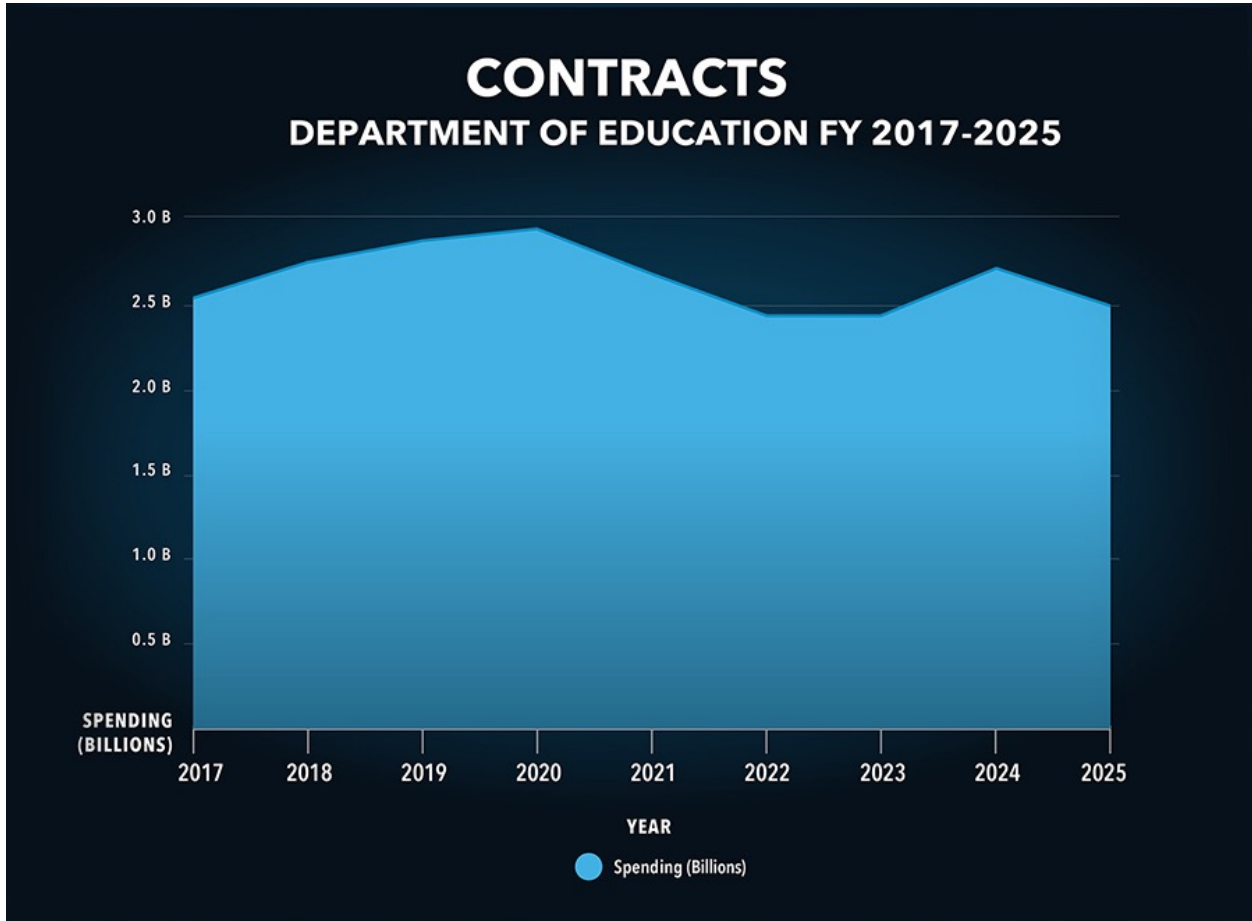
- Congress members secured \$181 million for schools and programs named after themselves.
- A \$450,000 grant went toward “educational outreach” at the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York.
- Rep. Robert Andrews sponsored six earmarks worth \$3.2 million in total to forgive student loans for graduates of Rutgers Law School, where his wife worked as the assistant dean.
- Other earmarks funded college courses about “wine studies,” mariachi music and more.

BACKGROUND: The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education still exists today and received [\\$202.3 million](#) in earmarks in 2024.

It’s no longer as easy to track its potentially wasteful spending. As of Jan. 20, clicking on the “earmarks” section of its [website](#) returns a “Page Not Found” [error](#). Open the Books reached out to ED for comment on this error page and received no response.

Contracts

Contract spending held steady from 2017-2025 at around \$2.5 billion each year, for a total of nearly \$24 billion.



Contract spending at Department of Education 2017-2025. [LINK TO DATA HERE.](#)

Over half of these contracts, \$12.5 billion, are related to student loan servicing (“credit intermediation” and “collection”). ED manages a student debt portfolio of \$1.6 trillion with 43 million borrowers. The Trump administration moved to get ED out of student loans in 2025.

The [Executive Order dismantling](#) ED states, “the Department of Education is not a bank, and it must return bank functions to an entity equipped to serve America’s students.” Trump has [stated](#) the Small Business Administration, which also administers business loans, will take over the student loan portfolio. Courts have so far issued injunctions to halt this plan and litigation is ongoing.

NOTE: In March 2026, following our initial reporting, the Department of Treasury, seen as a more natural fit for collecting loan payments, took over the administration of defaulted student loans through an interagency agreement. These loans

represent about 11% of total loans, worth about \$180 million over 7.7 million borrowers. Treasury is expected to take on more of the student loan portfolio in the coming years.”

Other top expense categories include research, IT, computer system design services, commercial banking, miscellaneous financial investment activities, and commercial banking.

NAICS DESCRIPTION	TOTAL SPENT
OTHER ACTIVITIES RELATED TO CREDIT INTERMEDIATION	\$9,612,873,784.59
COLLECTION AGENCIES	\$2,873,293,052.68
COMPUTER SYSTEMS DESIGN SERVICES	\$2,550,899,930.51
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES	\$2,068,288,613.17
ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGEMENT AND GENERAL MANAGEMENT CONSULTING SERVICES	\$1,185,497,341.69
OTHER COMPUTER RELATED SERVICES	\$1,046,164,454.31
MISCELLANEOUS FINANCIAL INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES	\$919,130,991.24
COMMERCIAL BANKING	\$794,185,421.05
CUSTOM COMPUTER PROGRAMMING SERVICES	\$737,521,726.63
EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES	\$470,921,922.96

Top 10 contract categories for Department of Education spending from 2017-2025. [LINK TO DATA](#)

Looking more narrowly over the past five years, in line with these expenditures, the top five contract recipients conduct financial aid and student loan servicing, with Nelnet Servicing, Accenture Federal Services, and Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority coming out on top with over \$1 billion in funding each.

Nelnet and Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority are involved exclusively in student loan servicing, while Accenture’s contracts include student loan servicing, computer system design services, and marketing consulting. Maximus Education (\$981M) and EdFinancial Services (\$627M) round out the top five.

FIASCO WITH FAFSA

The federal government spent millions to modernize the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which many students need to fill out to get aid packages to attend universities. About 17 million students fill out the FAFSA every year. In 2019 the Government Accountability Office (GAO) [reported](#) that the legacy systems FAFSA relied on were too expensive and outdated and that they should be updated and simplified. GAO stated that the FAFSA system was one of the top ten most critical systems in need of modernization.

The 2023 launch of the new system proved to be disastrous, as glitches and bugs in the software prevented students from submitting the applications on time. Nearly [300,000](#) fewer high school seniors completed FAFSA in 2023 compared to 2022.

The failure led to plenty of finger pointing.

Congress passed the FAFSA Simplification Act at the end of 2020. The law gave the Department of Education two years to overhaul the FAFSA system, but in 2021 Congress granted another year to the project.

As [reported](#) by GAO, agency officials did not conduct a life cycle cost estimate to inform the budget but rather gave a rough estimate of \$336 million. GAO noted that this estimate failed to include government staff costs, and that officials working on the project failed to create a reliable schedule for it.

Problems with the project flew under the radar, as [Inside Higher Ed](#) reported, in part because the Biden administration was more interested in political priorities like extending student loan forgiveness. For its part, Congress did not stipulate in the FAFSA Simplification Act that the legacy software must be updated; the Act only asked for FAFSA to be easier to fill out and have fewer questions.

In March 2022 ED awarded an initial [\\$128.8 million](#) contract to General Dynamics Information Technology to be the lead contractor developing the new FAFSA system. The award is for 10 years and could increase to as much as [\\$241.6 million](#). The new website launched on December 30 2023, but was practically unusable. The forms would not have round-the-clock availability until January 8, and more critically, the site would not be able to send data to colleges until mid-March. Typically, students can submit FAFSA as early as October, and colleges generally receive FAFSA documentation by the end of January.

The Department of Education spent an additional [\\$50 million](#) to help colleges cope with the altered timeline.

FAFSA was back on track by the 2025-2026 application year, with [50% more](#) form submissions by March 2025 than in March 2024.

ED made additional reforms to the FAFSA for the 2026-2027 application year, **including** having the form “reflect biological reality by referencing sex identifiers,” and renewing efforts to **flag** fraud and abuse in applications. Students would also be given **financial data** on the schools they elect to apply to with FAFSA. If a school’s average earnings are below that of an average high school graduate, the applicant will be notified.

By December 2025, more than 5 million FAFSA forms had been completed, a **150% increase** over the previous year, and over **\$1 billion** in fraud was prevented.

RESUMING STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENTS

Notably, the Trump administration resumed collecting defaulted student loan repayments in May 2025, **vowing** that “there will not be any mass loan forgiveness.” There was about \$1.7 trillion in unpaid federal student loan debt in 2025, and payments had not been required since March 2020.

ED also sent out **letters** to universities asking them to remind students to pay back loans, and reminded them that too many defaults could lead to their future students being ineligible for the federal student loan program.

To make sure students are getting value for their investment in education, ED’s Office of the Ombudsman worked to **better inform** students on college financing options and to create a Common Manual that “will create federal guidelines and guardrails for vendor operations, ensuring consistent borrower communications, customer service, and enforcement actions.”

Trump’s marquee legislative accomplishment in 2025, the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act*, **capped** loans for grad students at \$20,500 a year (\$100,000 aggregate limit) and \$50,000 a year for professional students (\$200,000 aggregate limit). The *OBBA* also capped Parent PLUS loans, eliminated the Grad PLUS program, and created a new Repayment Assistance Plan to simplify repayment.



NOTABLE SPENDING CATEGORIES

Agency spending in several categories like travel, fitness, and weapons could also raise questions about the effective use of taxpayer dollars.


Hotels and Air Transportation: \$3 million

Spending on travel was relatively low in 2021, given the government response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which restricted travel. However, Department of Education staffers bounced back into traveling in 2022, spending about \$800,000 more on travel the year before.

While air transportation was slightly higher in 2025 versus 2024, hotel spending was drastically curtailed under the Trump administration.

TRAVEL EXPENSES

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, FY21-25



AIR TRANSPORTATION		HOTELS & MOTELS	
YEAR	AMOUNT	YEAR	AMOUNT
2021	\$165,860.35	2021	\$1,581.75
2022	\$277,735.97	2022	\$680,958.64
2023	\$285,295.73	2023	\$525,952.54
2024	\$146,433.97	2024	\$796,043.52
2025	\$176,225.70	2025	\$1,173.80

Air transit and hotel spending 2021-2025. [LINK TO DATA](#)

Accommodation and meeting space for staff attending various board meetings, conferences, and awards ceremonies. Examples include:

- \$266,788; the 2022 Historically Black Colleges and Universities Annual Conference; contract for meeting space, sleeping rooms, and related conference support services. The description says the conference is “to be partially funded with non-appropriated gift funds” but does not specify how much such funding is provided.
- \$721,419; Cost of all HBCU conferences since 2021
- \$285,500; the 2022 Blue Ribbon Schools Awards Ceremony; sleeping rooms, meeting space, A/V, food & beverage, and related conference support.
- \$580,165; Cost of all Blue Ribbon Schools Awards ceremonies since 2021.


The event that cost the most in hotel fees in FY 2025 was held during the Biden administration, in November 2024: the National Assessment Governing Board Quarterly Meeting, costing about \$52,000. The next year the cost of this meeting shrank to \$31,000.



Furniture: \$8.4 million

Over \$8.4 million was spent on interior design or buying, installing, or renting furniture from 2021-2025. Such expenses dropped sharply in 2025, but were still nearly \$350,000

FURNITURE EXPENSES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, FY21-25	
YEAR	AMOUNT
2021	\$165,860.35
2022	\$277,735.97
2023	\$285,295.73
2024	\$146,433.97
2025	\$176,225.70
TOTAL	\$8,413,562.30



Furniture-related spending from 2021-2025. [LINK TO DATA](#)

Some notable expenses during the Biden era include:

- \$1,594,673 for furniture and installation in the Department of Education headquarters' fifth floor
- \$160,701 to "reconfigure" the same fifth floor
- \$120,847 for "glass toppers" for cubicles in the San Francisco regional office. Earlier this year the Trump administration [announced](#) the lease for the San Francisco regional office would end.
- \$23,195 to outfit the "fitness reception area" at the ED headquarters

This spending occurred between FY 2021-2023. In 2023 the Public Buildings Reform Board (PBRB), a federal agency, conducted a [study](#) on remote work in the federal government, and found the Department of Education had a building utilization rate of 15% in their Lyndon B. Johnson Building D.C. headquarters. Estimated capacity was 1,940 seats for the office's 388,044 usable square foot space. PBRB found the office had a daily average occupancy of 284.

The Trump administration ended remote work for most Department of Education employees, and a [press release](#) states 70% of workers have returned to office. All employees were expected back by June 1, 2025.

Read More:


[Feds Spent \\$3.3 Billion on Furniture During Pandemic Years](#)

[Open the Books Testifies at DOGE Subcommittee Hearing on Federal Real Estate Portfolio](#)

Fitness and Recreation: \$559,705

Various fitness subscriptions and machine purchases and maintenance, most of which went to maintaining the Department of Education’s headquarters’ fitness center in Washington, D.C.

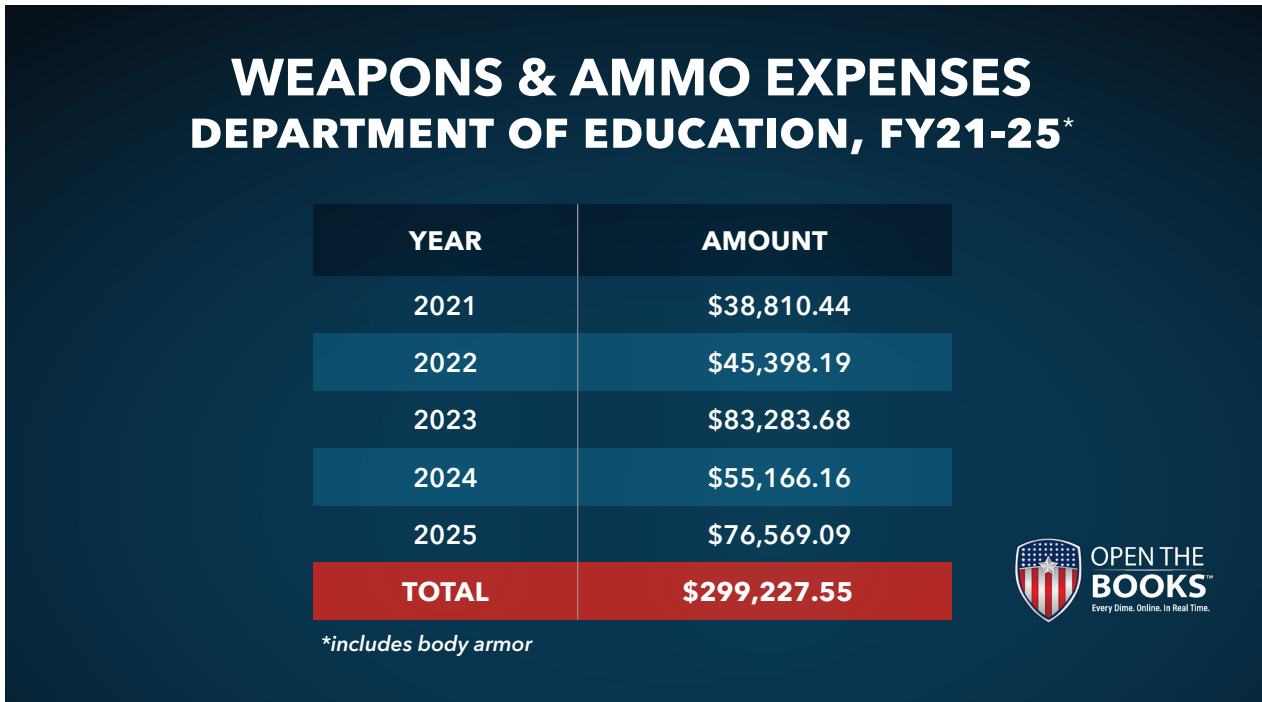
FITNESS & RECREATION EXPENSES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, FY21-25	
YEAR	AMOUNT
2021	\$151,750.00
2022	\$143,520.00
2023	\$152,790.00
2024	\$65,620.00
2025	\$46,025.00
TOTAL	\$559,705.00



Fitness-related spending FY 2021-2025. [LINK TO DATA](#)

Weapons, Ammo, and Body Armor: \$299,227

Like many federal agencies, the Department of Education has a law enforcement component that purchases weapons, ammunition, and related items. Between 2021-2025 ED spent \$299,227 on such purchases. Trump-era spending is roughly in line with Biden-era spending, coming in at \$76,569 in FY 2025.



ED spending on weapons, ammo, and armor FY 2021-2025. [LINK TO DATA.](#)

According to the ED website, the agency’s investigation services are “composed of law enforcement professionals who conduct criminal and civil investigations involving Department programs, operations, and funding.”

Read more about the militarization of the U.S. executive agencies at Open the Books’ [report](#) published December 2020.

Miscellaneous

Other notable spending categories from 2021-2025 include:

- \$19,776,230 for “marketing consulting services” (from FY21-24, these figures varied from \$1.2M to \$8.8M; in FY25, \$186,471.38 was clawed back).
- \$17,353,895 for “public relations agencies” (from FY21-24, these costs ranged from roughly \$2.4M to \$5.4M; in FY25, \$6,807.21 was clawed back).
- \$3.5 million for “parking lots and garages” (from FY21-24, these costs ranged from roughly \$794,000 to \$917,000; in FY25, they plunged to \$168,000).
- \$64,309 for “newspaper publishers,” all of which were Politico subscriptions from 2021-2024
- **\$5,000** for “potato farming” in Brooklyn, New York in FY 2024

[LINK TO DATA HERE](#)



PART 2: EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

In addition to changing spending strategy and priorities, the Trump administration has made aggressive attempts to reform higher and k-12 education through executive actions and federal law enforcement. The following section discusses some of those actions in detail, particularly regarding Title VI, Title XI and foreign university funding.

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

President Trump issued several executive orders intended to reform federal agencies and their grant-making decisions, some impacting ED, along with other agencies. Other EOs targeted ED directly.

KEY ADMINISTRATION-WIDE EOs INCLUDE:

- 14151: [Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing](#)
- 14168: [Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government](#)
- 14173: [Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity](#)
- 14248: [Protecting the Integrity of American Elections](#)

ED-SPECIFIC EOs:

- 14188: [Additional Measures to Combat Anti-Semitism](#)
- 14201: [Keeping Men Out of Women's Sports](#)
- 14214: [Keeping Education Accessible and Ending COVID-19 Vaccine Mandates in Schools](#)
- 14242: [Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities](#)
- 14279: [Reforming Accreditation To Strengthen Higher Education](#)
- 14282: [Transparency Regarding Foreign Influence at American Universities](#)

BLOCK GRANTS AND SPIN-OFFS

The most important actions the agency is taking to dissolve itself involve creating new partnerships to shift programs to other agencies, and consolidating spending to give states more programmatic discretion in their spending.

Block Grants

The EO on Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities details the Trump Administration’s plan to close ED and return authority to the states. The goal of the EO is to reduce the functions and oversight responsibilities of ED, giving states block grants so that states can administer funding and programs as they see fit.

In a follow up [press release](#), Secretary McMahon said of the EO:

“Instead of filtering resources through layers of federal red tape, we will empower states to take charge and advocate for and implement what is best for students, families, and educators in their communities.

“Closing the Department does not mean cutting off funds from those who depend on them—we will continue to support K-12 students, students with special needs, college student borrowers, and others who rely on essential programs. We’re going to follow the law and eliminate the bureaucracy responsibly by working through Congress to ensure a lawful and orderly transition.”

Along with consolidating different programs under block grants, the Trump ED [encouraged](#) states to use all legally available waivers to burdensome statutory or regulatory requirements to receive and use grant funding, reducing red tape and saving funds.

The block grant initiative was further supported through a proposed “skinny budget” for FY 2026.

A proposed “K-12 Simplified Funding Program” would consolidate 18 competitive and formula grant programs into a \$2 billion formula grant, while keeping full funding for Title I financial assistance to school districts serving low-income families. The [budget document](#) claims the move would require fewer federal staff and help states direct funding with little federal interference.

The skinny budget also slashed about \$12 billion in funding for the agency across almost all funding categories. Charter schools were the only category recommended to receive more: \$60 million over FY 2025 levels.

To promote block grants and learn about work happening in schools nationwide, Secretary McMahon launched a 50-state “Returning Education to the States Tour” in August 2025. By the end of 2025 she had [visited](#) 23 states.

Spin-Offs

Along with the moves to offload some student loans to the Department of Treasury (discussed in an early section), ED announced several new partnerships, or interagency agreements, to offload other ED functions.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

- [Elementary and Secondary Education Partnership](#), wherein DOL will be more active in administering federal K-12 programs. For this partnership, DOL will manage competitions, provide technical assistance, and integrate ED’s programs into related DOL programs. ED will provide oversight.
- [Postsecondary Education Partnership](#), wherein DOL will take on more responsibilities in administering postsecondary education grant programs, similar to the Elementary and Secondary Education Partnership. A jointly administered [portal](#) to manage and streamline related funding was also launched in 2025.

DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR

- [Indian Education Partnership](#): The Department of Interior already administers the Bureau of Indian Education, a federal school system serving Native American k-12 students. This new partnership would see DOI take a greater role in administering ED Indian Education programs.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

- [Foreign Medical Accreditation Partnership](#): This partnership will empower HHS to evaluate whether the standards of accreditation for foreign medical schools are as good as standards for U.S. medical schools.
- [Child Care Access Means Parents in School Partnership](#): This partnership will have HHS take on the administration of the CCAMPIS program, which helps provide childcare services to college students.

STATE DEPARTMENT

- **International Education and Foreign Language Studies Partnership:**
This will see the State Department take over the administration of the Fulbright-Hays grant, which had been administered by ED's Office of Postsecondary Education. The partnership allows State to oversee all foreign education programs and tailor those programs to national security and foreign policy priorities.



TITLE VI AND ANTI-DEI INITIATIVES

Donald Trump was an outspoken critic of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion ideology during his campaign, and his administration has taken a hardline stance to eradicate DEI from the federal programs and grants, including those at ED. The Administration has been able to attack DEI through spending and program reform, and Title VI investigations and enforcement.

Spending reform was discussed earlier in this report in Part 1: DEI Spending Trends. Program reform and Title VI Investigations are discussed below.

DEI Program Reform

In accordance with EOs on [Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing](#) and [Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity](#), ED announced several major changes in the first days of the Trump Administration, **including**:

- Removing over 200 publicly accessible documents that include or promote DEI from the agency website;
- Putting employees in charge of DEI programs on paid administrative leave;
- Dissolving the Biden-era Diversity & Inclusion Council;
- Cancelling DEI training contracts worth \$2.6 million;
- Withdrawing the ED Equity Action Plan

Title VI Investigations

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” In other words, organizations accepting federal assistance cannot racially discriminate against people working for that organization or benefiting from organizational programmatic activities.

DEI ideology purports oppressor-oppressed narratives that claim historic or perceived race-based grievances can and should be rectified through race-based preferencing in all aspects of society, but most pertinent to school admissions, scholarships, and hiring practices. Unfortunately for DEI proponents, discrimination against so called “privileged” groups like white and Asian people, is against Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

The Trump Administration has used Title VI investigations to restore a culture of merit in universities and schools.

In February 2025, ED's Office for Civil Rights issued a Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) [that](#) "reiterated schools' civil rights obligations to end the use of racial preferences and stereotypes in education programs and activities." A related Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) [document](#) followed the DCL. The documents were meant to inform future Title VI investigations, and built off *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*, a 2023 Supreme Court (SCOTUS) decision that ruled against race-based admissions.

Along with supporting the SCOTUS decision, DCL and FAQ documents [reportedly](#) expanded its scope beyond admissions, to include items like student housing, discipline, and student support services.

A federal court [enjoined](#) ED from enforcing or implementing either document in April 2025. However, ED could proceed with Title VI investigations. The injunction only determined that investigations could not rely on novel legal theory proposed in the DCL or FAQ documents but could proceed using existing Title VI statutes and regulations, including the *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* ruling.

THE INVESTIGATIONS

In March 2025, the Trump Administration launched Title VI investigations into 45 universities for their partnership with a nonprofit called "The Ph.D. Project." In a [press release](#), ED stated that the organization "that purports to provide doctoral students with insights into obtaining a Ph.D. and networking opportunities, but limits eligibility based on the race of participants."

Those universities are:

- Arizona State University
- Main Campus
- Boise State University
- Cal Poly Humboldt
- California State University
- San Bernadino
- Carnegie Mellon University
- Clemson University
- Cornell University
- Duke University
- Emory University
- George Mason University
- Georgetown University
- Massachusetts Institute
of Technology (MIT)
- Montana State
University-Bozeman
- New York University (NYU)
- Rice University
- Rutgers University
- The Ohio State University
- Main Campus
- Towson University
- Tulane University
- University of Arkansas
- Fayetteville
- University of California
-Berkeley
- University of Chicago
- University of Cincinnati - Main Campus
- University of Colorado
- Colorado Springs
- University of Delaware
- University of Kansas
- University of Kentucky
- University of Michigan-Ann Arbor
- University of Minnesota-Twin Cities
- University of Nebraska at Omaha
- University of New Mexico
- Main Campus
- University of North Dakota
- Main Campus
- University of North Texas - Denton
- University of Notre Dame
- University of NV - Las Vegas
- University of Oregon
- University of Rhode Island
- University of Utah
- University of Washington-Seattle
- University of Wisconsin-Madison
- University of Wyoming
- Vanderbilt University
- Washington State University
- Washington University in St. Louis
- Yale University

Six more universities were investigated for race-based scholarships or programmatic activities:

- Grand Valley State University
- Ithaca College
- New England College of Optometry
- University of Alabama at Birmingham
- University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
- University of South Florida
- University of Oklahoma, Tulsa School of Community Medicine

Fourteen other Title VI investigations followed over the course of the year:

- [Harvard University](#) and [Harvard Law Review](#) in response to [reporting](#) indicating journal submissions were selected based on the author's race and sex;
- [Chicago Public Schools](#) for its racially exclusionary "Black Students Success Plan;"
- [Evanston-Skokie School District 65](#) in Illinois, for "racial segregation and stereotyping through such policies and practices as "privilege walks" and District-sponsored segregated affinity groups;"
- [Fairfax County Public Schools](#) in Virginia for admitting students based on race to its prestigious Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology;
- [Green Bay Area Public School District](#) for allegations that the district did not give a student support for dyslexia because he was white;
- [George Mason University](#), for "preferential treatment to prospective and current faculty from 'underrepresented groups' to advance 'anti-racism;'"
- [Duke University](#) and [Duke Law Journal](#) for selecting law journal members on the bases of race, color, and/or national origin

Five of those dealt specifically with universities allegedly offering scholarships that only benefited illegal aliens, discriminating against other applicants' national origin.

Those include (according to a department [press release](#)):

- University of Louisville's Sagar Patagundi Scholarship to "subsidize the cost of higher education...for undergraduate DACA and undocumented students;"
- University of Nebraska Omaha's Dreamer's Pathway Scholarship for "students who are DACA or DACA-eligible and Nebraska residents who are seeking an undergraduate degree;"
- University of Miami's U Dreamers Program, which "is available to academically talented and admissible [DACA] and undocumented high school seniors and transfer students;"
- University of Michigan's Dreamer Scholarship, which "is intended to support undocumented students or students with DACA status;" and
- Western Michigan University's WMU Undocumented/DACA Scholarship "for undergraduate students who are ineligible to receive federal student aid due to an undocumented or DACA status."

Anti-Semitism Investigations

Many more Title VI investigations were launched in response to anti-Semitic harassment on university campuses in the wake of the October 7, 2023 attacks on Israel by Hamas. Rectifying these abuses was a priority for the Trump administration, which created a multi-agency Task Force to Combat Anti-Semitism through a January EO called Additional Measures to Combat Anti-Semitism.

The Task Force is charged with reviewing Anti-Semitism allegations, largely focusing on educational campuses. The Office of Civil Rights, within the Department of Education, additionally [announced](#) that it would prioritize resolving a backlog of complaints about anti-Semitic on-campus harassment that had accumulated under Biden.

After the Task Force was launched, the Trump administration [initiated five investigations in February 2025, into:](#)

- Columbia University
- Northwestern University
- Portland State University
- University of California, Berkeley
- University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

One month later, the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights sent sixty more universities [letters](#) warning them that they would face civil rights enforcement actions if they did not take steps to protect their Jewish students. ED announced that all universities were under investigation for Title VI violations.

These universities are:

1. American University
2. Arizona State University
3. Boston University
4. Brown University
5. California State University, Sacramento
6. Chapman University
7. Columbia University
8. Cornell University
9. Drexel University
10. Eastern Washington University
11. Emerson College

12. George Mason University
13. Harvard University
14. Illinois Wesleyan University
15. Indiana University, Bloomington
16. Johns Hopkins University
17. Lafayette College
18. Lehigh University
19. Middlebury College
20. Muhlenberg College
21. Northwestern University
22. Ohio State University
23. Pacific Lutheran University
24. Pomona College
25. Portland State University
26. Princeton University
27. Rutgers University
28. Rutgers University-Newark
29. Santa Monica College
30. Sarah Lawrence College
31. Stanford University
32. State University of New York
Binghamton
33. State University of New York
Rockland
34. State University of New York,
Purchase
35. Swarthmore College
36. Temple University
37. The New School
38. Tufts University
39. Tulane University
40. Union College
41. University of California Davis
42. University of California San Diego
43. University of California Santa
Barbara
44. University of California, Berkeley
45. University of Cincinnati
46. University of Hawaii at Manoa
47. University of Massachusetts
Amherst
48. University of Michigan
49. University of Minnesota, Twin
Cities
50. University of North Carolina
51. University of South Florida
52. University of Southern California
53. University of Tampa
54. University of Tennessee
55. University of Virginia
56. University of Washington-Seattle
57. University of Wisconsin, Madison
58. Wellesley College
59. Whitman College
60. Yale University

Two other investigations, into [Baltimore City Public Schools](#) and [Haverford College](#), were launched in August 2025.

Columbia University, Brown University, University of Virginia, Cornell University, and Northwestern University [made deals](#) with the Trump administration in 2025 to protect their federal funding.

THE COLUMBIA EXAMPLE:

Columbia University was home to the first prominent anti-Israel encampment, which disrupted campus life, particularly for Jewish students. University leadership was slow to react to the chaos and discipline the intransigent students. After participating in a contentious April 2024 Congressional hearing titled “Columbia in Crisis: Columbia University’s Response to Anti-Semitism,” President Minouche Shafik stepped down from her role leading the university.

For these reasons, reforming radicalism at Columbia became particularly important to the Trump administration.

In March 2025, the federal government [announced](#) that the Task Force to Combat Anti-Semitism would review Columbia’s federal grants and contracts due to potential Title IV violations related to anti-Semitism. Shortly after, the Task Force [announced](#) \$400 million in federal grants and contracts to Columbia would be canceled, effective immediately.

In May 2025 dozens of Columbia students and outside agitators [stormed](#) the university’s Butler Library, vandalizing property and taking over a reading room. Eighty people were arrested by the New York Police Department. Under new scrutiny from the Trump administration, Columbia disciplined 70 students for both the Butler Library incident and previous incidents surrounding the campus encampment. While administrators did not publicly list the disciplinary measures, they included multi-year suspensions, expulsions, and degree revocations.

The Task Force to Combat Anti-Semitism [praised](#) Columbia’s actions against the protestors as a positive step towards winning back their federal funding.

Nevertheless, on May 22 the Department of Education’s OCR found Columbia was in violation of Title VI, stating the university “failed to meaningfully protect Jewish students against severe and pervasive harassment on Columbia’s campus and consequently denied these students’ equal access to educational opportunities to which they are entitled under the law.”

ED [notified](#) Columbia's accreditor, Middle States Commission on Higher Education, that the university had fallen out of compliance with Title VI. Accreditors are required to make a plan with member institutions to get back into compliance, or face losing the accreditation that allows the institute to access programs like federal student loans.

In July 2025 Columbia and the Trump administration reached a deal to restore the university's funding, which included these steps:

- Pay \$200 million in penalties
- Discipline disruptive students
- Make structural changes to the Faculty Senate
- Bring viewpoint diversity to their Middle Eastern Studies program
- Eliminate race preferencing in hiring and admissions practices
- End DEI programs that confer advantages based on race

Secretary McMahon [said](#) at the time

"Columbia's reforms are a roadmap for elite universities that wish to regain the confidence of the American public by renewing their commitment to truth-seeking, merit, and civil debate. I believe they will ripple across the higher education sector and change the course of campus culture for years to come."

HARVARD

While Columbia was relatively compliant to federal demands, other universities were more defiant.

In April 2025 the ED issued a [letter](#) to Harvard, like Columbia, demanding changes to DEI hiring and admissions practices along with structural administrative alterations and various assurances that Jewish students would feel safe on campus. The university administration [stated](#) such demands violated the First Amendment and refused the terms the Trump administration laid out.

In response, the Task Force to Combat Anti-Semitism [announced](#) a freeze on \$2.2 billion in multi-year grants and \$60 million in multi-year contracts.

In [June 2025](#) Harvard was notified by the Task Force that the university was found to have violated Title VI.

In September 2025 U.S. District Judge Allison Burroughs ruled that freezing Harvard's funding was unlawful, and payments to Harvard resumed. The Trump administration appealed the decision in December 2025.

Similarly, when George Mason University was found to be in violation of Title VI, the administration sent GMU a Resolution Agreement to come into compliance. The Resolution Agreement included actions like:

- GMU will review its policies and revise any documents (e.g., instructions for hiring panels, scoring rubrics for resumes and interviews) currently used in the University recruitment, hiring, and promotion process to ensure compliance with Title VI, and remove any provisions that require or encourage the use of race to favor or disfavor any candidate;
- GMU will maintain all records necessary to demonstrate compliance with the Agreement, making them available to the government upon request, and will assign an individual to coordinate GMU's implementation of the Agreement with OCR.

GMU did [not accept](#) this Resolution Agreement and denied wrongdoing.

In addition to launching various investigations, the Trump administration aimed to curtail on-campus protests by [prohibiting](#) Federal Work Study dollars from paying for "partisan or non-partisan political activity." ED also interpreted Trump's Protecting the Integrity of American Elections Executive Order to discourage universities from giving voter registrations to those likely to be unable to vote, like foreign students.

Ending Book Ban Hoax

The Biden administration appointed a “book ban coordinator” within the Office of Civil Rights to investigate 11 complaints against schools for supposedly banning books. **In reality, books were removed or re-classified into higher age groups based on legitimate concerns that they were age-inappropriate or obscene.** The Biden administration held that removing these books amounted to Title VI and IX violations.

The Biden administration forced a Resolution Agreement on the Forsyth County School District in Georgia that included posting statements embracing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in all its middle and high schools.

The Trump administration **terminated** this agreement and ended all other investigations under this pretense.



TITLE IX ENFORCEMENT

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 states “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance[.]” In other words, organizations accepting federal assistance cannot discriminate against anyone due to their sex.

After the Biden administration expanded the definition of “sex” to include “gender identity,” women and girls have been subjected to unfair competition in sports against men and boys that have natural physical advantages, even if they “identify” as women and girls. Women and girls no longer had legal protections against men and boys in their changing rooms, bathrooms, and other single-sex spaces. In fact, they could be subject to harassment complaints themselves if they complained about it or referred to a trans-identified classmate with his or her sex-appropriate pronouns. This rule change was later [determined](#) to be unlawful after 22 Republican-led states [sued](#) the Biden administration over the changes.

In contrast, the Trump administration has vigorously defended the integrity of women’s sports and privacy through several executive orders and ED agency actions. The EOs on [Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government](#) and [Keeping Men Out of Women’s Sports](#) respectively clarified the definition of sex to exclude gender identity and asked ED to prioritize Title IX enforcement along those grounds.



The Trump administration then launched several Title IX investigations into non-compliant entities, including:

- [Denver Public Schools](#)
- [The Minnesota State High School League](#)
- [The California Interscholastic Federation](#)
- [San Jose State University](#)
- [University of Pennsylvania](#)
- [Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association](#)
- [Maine Department of Education](#)
- [Washington State School District](#)
- [Illinois Department of Education](#)
- [Chicago Public School District 299](#)
- [Deerfield Public Schools District 109](#)
- [Portland Public Schools](#)
- [Oregon School Activities Association](#)
- [Saratoga Springs City School District](#)
- [Western Carolina University](#)
- [Oregon Department of Education](#)
- [Four Kansas school districts](#): Topeka Public Schools, Shawnee Public Schools, Olathe Public Schools, and Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools

Several of these investigations yielded violations in 2025, including:

- [University of Pennsylvania](#)
- [Wagner College](#)
- [Maine Department of Education](#)
- [California Department of Education and California Interscholastic Federation](#)
- [Denver Public Schools](#)
- [Five Northern Virginia school districts](#): Alexandria City Public Schools, Arlington Public Schools, Fairfax County Public Schools, Loudoun County Public Schools, and Prince William County Public Schools
- [Minnesota Department of Education](#)
- [Minnesota State High School League](#)

The non-compliant school districts were threatened with loss of federal funds, although they continued to receive funds throughout the year due to ongoing litigation. In the case of the Virginia school districts, however, the Trump Administration [stated](#) the districts must pay for their costs up-front, and then be reimbursed by the federal government, causing administrative headaches for the districts.

The universities, however, did enter into resolution agreements with the Department of Education to remedy their Title IX violations.

University of Pennsylvania, for example, was found allowing men to compete in female athletic programs and to occupy female-only intimate facilities. As a part of their [resolution agreement](#), UPenn had to:

- Restore all individual UPenn Division I swimming records given to men allowed to compete in female categories to the women who would have won, and send a personalized letter of apology to the female swimmers impacted.
- Issue a public statement to the University community specifying that UPenn will not allow males to compete in female athletic programs or occupy Penn Athletics female intimate facilities, in compliance with Title IX. UPenn will also adopt biology-based definitions for the words 'male' and 'female'.

Along the same vein, the Trump administration [urged](#) two athletics organizations, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the National Federation of High School Associations (NFHS), to restore titles to women that had been given to men.

While NCAA did update its policies to exclude men from women's sports after Trump's executive orders, they did not update their titles. In February 2025 the NFHS [told](#) a reporter that no trans-identifying male held a record in their record book.

Other school systems, like the [Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association \(WIAA\)](#) and the [New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association \(NHIAA\)](#), updated their policies to exclude men from women's sports in response to Trump's executive orders—without an investigation.

Name, Image, Likeness Reform

Under Title IX, the Biden Administration required schools to evenly distribute funds from Name, Image, Likeness (NIL) agreements between schools and student athletes based on sex and "gender identity." The Biden Administration justified this change by arguing NIL agreements were like financial aid and therefore must be proportionately allocated between males and females.

The Trump Administration argued that "Title IX says nothing about how revenue-generating athletics programs should allocate compensation among student athletes" and [rescinded](#) the Biden-era guidance.

FERPA Enforcement

Violations against Title IX are fueled by a belief that people can defy biological reality and become members of the opposite sex by claiming to identify as such. The same belief also leads to violations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), an important piece of legislation that gives parents access to their children's education records.

Gender ideologues advocate for policies that hide a child's supposed "gender transitions" from his or her parents. In many schools, "gender diverse" children are asked to fill out a "gender support plan" which would identify "trusted adults" who can know about and support the child's "gender identity." There is no expectation that parents would be among those "trusted adults."

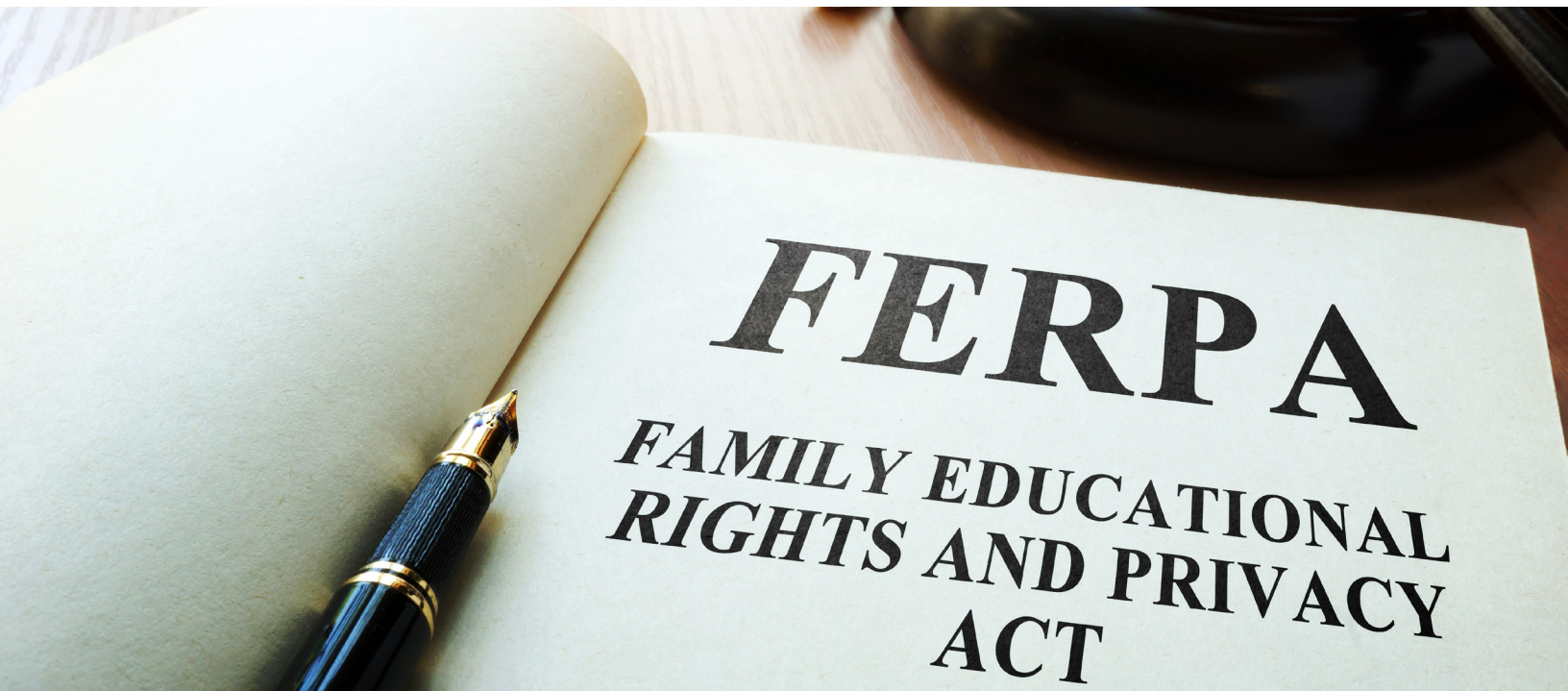
Along with the standard categories of man/boy and woman/girl, practitioners of gender ideology believe your "gender" could also be "non-binary" (neither male nor female) or any manner of animals, objects, imaginary beings, or neurological conditions.

A [report](#) by Open the Books discusses this in more detail by examining activities by the California government-funded nonprofit Gender Spectrum. A presentation by a Gender Spectrum employee on “neogenders” claimed people can identify as, for example, “foxgender,” “rockgender,” “autigender” (autism-gender). **The presentation goes on to ask teachers and administrators to help children hide these identities from their parents.**

These practices are widespread and violate FERPA. The Trump administration has opened several investigations into schools facilitating secret gender transitions:

- [California Department of Education](#)
- [Four Kansas school districts](#): Topeka Public Schools, Shawnee Public Schools, Olathe Public Schools, and Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (these districts were also investigated for Title IX violations)

In December 2025 a federal judge [ruled](#) California’s practice of hiding “gender identity” information from parents unconstitutional, a decision which was appealed by the California Attorney General Rob Bonta.



FERPA
**FAMILY EDUCATIONAL
RIGHTS AND PRIVACY
ACT**

UNIVERSITY FOREIGN FUNDING

Colleges and universities are required to report foreign gifts and contracts under Title I, Section 117 of the Higher Education Act. Institutions must disclose foreign funds over \$250,000 in a single calendar year, per foreign source. Filings are updated twice a year and posted publicly on the Department of Education [website](#).

Undisclosed foreign funding proliferated under Obama's two terms: a National Association of Scholars [report](#) indicated that 54% of reportable foreign gifts were not disclosed from 2010-2016.

The first Trump administration set out an aggressive Section 117 enforcement strategy, launching [19 compliance](#) investigations, leading to uncovering \$6.5 billion in previously undisclosed foreign funds. The Biden administration did not conduct any new investigations, although several of those that began under Trump continued under Biden.

President Biden additionally moved Section 117 enforcement responsibilities from ED's Office of General Counsel to the Office of Federal Student Aid. Critics say this shift, which was [reversed](#) under the second Trump administration, reinforced the notion that Section 117 enforcement was not important to the Biden administration.

Eliminating foreign interference on university campuses remains a priority for President Trump in his second term. Most notably, President Trump signed Executive Order 14282 "[Transparency Regarding Foreign Influence at American Universities](#)." The EO requires universities to disclose the purpose and source of funds in greater detail, and [states](#) that federal funding could be withheld from universities deemed non-compliant.

From April to July 2025, the Trump administration launched four new Section 117 compliance investigations into:

- [Harvard University](#), noting the university "has not been fully transparent or complete in its disclosures."
- [University of California, Berkeley](#), noting "foreign funding disclosures to the Department may be incomplete or inaccurate."
- [University of Pennsylvania](#), noting "UPenn has a troubling Section 117 compliance history, having failed to disclose any foreign funding until February of 2019 despite a decades-long statutory obligation to do so."
- [University of Michigan](#), noting "tens of millions of dollars in foreign funding in UM's disclosure reports have been reported in an untimely manner and appear

to erroneously identify some of UM’s foreign funders as ‘nongovernmental entities,’ even though the foreign funders seem to be directly affiliated with foreign governments.”

In December 2025, the Trump administration launched a “[new and improved portal](#)” for universities to disclose foreign funds, aimed at making the process easier and more useful for public transparency.

As a part of foreign threat mitigation, in August 2025 ED and other federal agencies released [guidance](#) to help universities create strategies that protect their research and personnel.

The press release for the guidance states in part:

“The joint bulletin and accompanying reference guides provide information about the risk environment on campuses, including steps institutions can take to mitigate dangers associated with foreign talent recruitment programs, overseas research collaborations, espionage activities of foreign intelligence services, and cyber intrusion. In addition to outlining best practices for institutions and individual researchers, the materials encourage institutions to report suspicious activities and concerns to the relevant U.S. authorities.”

Congressional Efforts in Foreign Funding Transparency

The House passed the [DETERRENT Act](#) [Defending Education Transparency and Ending Rogue Regimes Engaging in Nefarious Transactions Act] in March 2025 in a bipartisan, 241-169 vote. The DETERRENT Act would lower reportable disclosures to \$50,000, would bar “countries of concern” from providing funds without federal approval, and would ask for more details on what grants will be used for.

OTHER ACTIVITIES AND CONCLUSION

The above were only a selection of the Trump administration's activities at the Education Department under Secretary McMahon's leadership.

In the past year ED has also acted, for example, on:

- **School choice**, increasing the Charter Schools Program budget by **\$60 million** and issuing **guidance** to states on how to facilitate more school choice for k-12 students and allow children bullied in school to find **safer** alternatives.
- **University accreditation**, allowing ED to **review** new accreditors and letting institutions more easily change accreditors. ED also started to update the Accreditation Handbook, with the intention of reducing regulatory requirements and holding accreditors **accountable** "for ensuring their member institutions provide high-quality, high-value programs free from unlawful discrimination or other violations of Federal law."
- **Illegal aliens**, **disallowing illegal aliens** from accessing federal public benefits, including Pell grants, student loans, career and technical training programs under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins V), and adult education programs under Title II of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This determination was stayed by a federal court and litigation is still on-going into 2026.

The first year of the Trump administration saw an aggressive push to wield what power ED does have to eradicate divisive ideologies and discrimination from schools and universities nationwide, while setting the stage to eliminate the agency and send its functions to other parts of the government. While ED spending continues to climb (thanks largely to Congressional legislation), the agency has attempted to rein in the worst excesses and cut down on staff. Some of the most ambitious reforms have been upheld by federal courts but continue to be litigated. FY 2025 was a key year for actions taken to dismantle the agency, and FY 2026 will show how much further ED can go in making itself disappear. There are only so many executive actions the Trump administration can take, however. Congress ultimately must determine whether the department's activities can be redirected back to the states and localities where the needs of their students are best understood.

FURTHER READING



- [Mapping the Growth of the Government](#)
- [Education Department Downsizing \(or Elimination\) Begs the Question: Is Spending Improving Outcomes?](#)
- [State of the State Schools: A Look at Public University Finances Reveals DEI, Foreign Influence & Radical Ideas Thrive Far Beyond the Ivy League](#)
- [Open the Books Oversight Report: The U.S. Department of Education](#)

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Quantified the federal bureaucracy and the waste, fraud and abuse that followed Covid lockdowns. We also exposed the radical DEI ideology that had permeated the Department of Defense, National Science Foundation and the EPA.

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Identified Dr. Anthony Fauci as the top paid federal employee, quantified the staggering cost of U.S. military gear left behind in Afghanistan, cracked open California's state checkbook and Big Pharma's \$1.4 billion in third-party paid royalties—leading to four televised congressional hearings in 2022.

IN 2020...

The President's Budget To Congress FY 2021 included a first-ever chapter, "Stopping Wasteful and Unnecessary Spending," which was inspired by our oversight report, *Where's The Pork? A Study of \$600 Billion In Federal Grants*. Included in the President's Budget was our report, *Use-It-Or-Lose-It - How The Federal Government Spent \$97 Billion In September 2018*.

IN 2019...

Our Top 82 U.S. Non-Profit Hospitals: Quantifying Government Payments & Financial Assets report launched on *FOX News' Tucker Carlson Tonight* and *USA TODAY*. This report backstopped President Trump's two executive orders on healthcare price transparency by showing that wealthy charitable non-profit healthcare providers and their CEO's were making big profits. Colorado Governor Jared Polis (D) also cited this data in his state of the state address while arguing for price reforms.

IN 2018...

Open The Books' Mapping The Swamp, A Study Of The Administrative State Media report launched on *FOX News' The Ingraham Angle* and directly led to Representative Judy Hice's (R-GA) legislation on pension and bonus transparency (H.R. 2612). Furthermore, we briefed the Executive Office of the President, Office of Management & Budget regarding our policy ideas to drain the swamp.

IN 2017...

The Tax Cuts And Jobs Act 2017, passed into law and included a claw-back tax on Ivy League-style, excessive university endowments. The *Boston Globe* cited our Ivy League, Inc. oversight report as a catalyst for the legislative provision. Coverage included *The Wall Street Journal* and eight segments on *Fox New*

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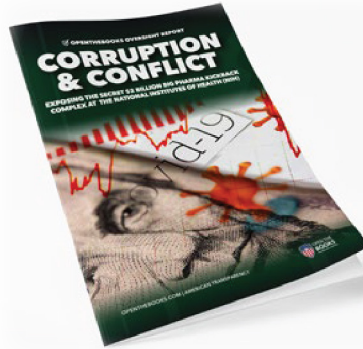


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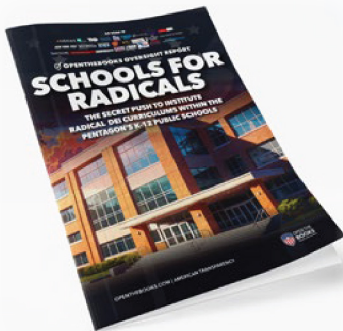
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