

ACE 2025 Legislative and Regulatory Agenda

The American Council on Education (ACE) is a membership organization that mobilizes the higher education community to shape effective public policy and foster innovative, high-quality practice. As the major coordinating body for the nation's colleges and universities, our strength lies in our diverse membership of more than 1,600 colleges and universities, related associations, and other organizations in the United States and abroad.

ACE is the only major higher education association to represent all types of U.S. accredited, degree-granting institutions. Our members educate two out of every three students in all accredited, degree-granting U.S. institutions.

Division Mission Statement

ACE's Government Relations and National Engagement (GRNE) division convenes and leads the larger higher education community in policy development and strategy to effectively advocate for and enhance the fundamental principles of higher education. These principles emphasize access and success; the pursuit of knowledge; and the enrichment of the civic, democratic, and economic vibrancy of the United States.

Agenda

To further this mission, GRNE proposes a federal legislative agenda for FY 2025 focused on four key areas:¹

1. Access, completion, and success for all students
2. Protecting and strengthening institutions
3. Quality and accountability
4. Fostering innovation

Access, Completion, and Success for All Students

ACE works with Congress and the administration to advance policies and advocate for funding that maximizes federal support for all students, with a particular focus on low-income and historically underserved communities. This includes support for:

- Increasing the Pell Grant to a maximum award of \$13,000
- Legislation that addresses basic needs (food insecurity for students, student mental health, and other efforts)
- Legislation to repeal the taxability of scholarship and grant aid, including for Pell Grants
- Expansion of student support services, including emergency grants, academic support, and affordable childcare

¹ The legislative and regulatory agenda identifies key priorities for ACE's work undertaken on behalf of our members in 2025 and is not meant to represent a comprehensive summary of all issues covered. Similarly, the agenda does not represent a projection of what issues GRNE staff expect to require attention this year.

- The DREAM Act or other legislative efforts to provide permanent protections for Dreamers—young, undocumented, high-achieving individuals brought to our country as children
- Immigration policy supporting international students and scholarly exchanges, including the National Security Innovation Pathways Act and the Paul Simon Study Abroad Act
- Expanding and modernizing employer-provided education assistance (Sec. 127 of the IRS code), and legislation to strengthen the American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC) and Lifetime Learning Credit (LLC) for students and parents
- Leading and informing the higher education community regarding final Title IX regulations being implemented by the U.S. Department of Education
- Leading community efforts around proposed regulations for Sec. 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and support for student with disabilities, including the Accessible Instructional Materials in Higher Education Act (AIM-HIGH) Act
- Increasing federal support for active-duty military learners and student veteran through legislation such as The Love Lives On Act, the Student Veteran Work Study Modernization Act, and the VA Work-Study Improvement Act (VWISA)
- Legislation to expand federal support to institutions offering educational programs and other opportunities to incarcerated and justice-impacted individuals
- Legislation, including Title VI and Title IX, and regulations that protect the civil rights of all students, faculty, and staffing ways that support institutional efforts to maintain safe and productive campus learning environments while preserving the educational possibilities inherent in civil confrontation and debate
- Increasing federal investment to advance environmental justice by bringing critical resources to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and other minority serving institutions (MSIs) to support their climate change work and partnerships with underserved communities that have been overburdened by legacy pollution and environmental hazards
- Increase state adoption of legislation and/or policies that promote and increase Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion rates

Protecting and Strengthening Institutions

ACE seeks to strengthen and protect the ability of colleges and universities to conduct their educational missions by advocating for federal policies and programs that enhance institutional resources and effectiveness. ACE leads the higher education community in defending academic freedom and institutional autonomy on a national level. This includes support for:

- Increasing funding for programs such as Title III, Title V, and student success grants
- Legislation to deepen civic engagement for our students, such as the Building Civic Bridges Act
- Legislation to increase opportunities for students to use credit recommendations (i.e., for military experience and apprenticeships)

- Policies that encourage and support international student and scholarly exchanges for our institutions
- Legislation to strengthen HBCUs, Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and MSIs in their missions and address historic or systemic inequities in state or federal support
- Legislation to enhance charitable giving incentives and to repeal the endowment tax
- Legislation that strengthens sustainability practices and campus resiliency at our institutions and helps campus respond to climate change
- Expansion of federal support for institutional research infrastructure, particularly at institutions that have historically been underrepresented or inequitably resourced in this area
- Pursuing legislation and regulations that preserve institutional autonomy and academic freedom at the state and federal level
- Leading the higher education community efforts to oppose federal and state policy actions that threaten academic freedom and institutional autonomy
- Policies to ensure federal support for institutional efforts to promote public safety and ensure campuses remain safe from violence

Quality and Accountability

ACE works with Congress and the administration to advance legislation and regulations that assist institutions in enhancing quality and reducing costs while ensuring transparency and accountability for how colleges and universities serve students, taxpayers, and their communities. This includes:

- Working across federal agencies to influence the development of proposed regulations impacting higher education
- Advancing proposals to improve measures of student success and postcollege outcomes, including enactment of the College Transparency Act
- Influencing legislation, regulation, and guidance regarding research security and malign foreign influence, including Section 117 foreign gift reporting and new requirements for foreign partnerships

Fostering Innovation

ACE promotes policies that enhance academic research, promote innovative practice, allow for greater institutional flexibility, and reduce regulatory and administrative burdens. This includes:

- Supporting legislation that would extend Pell Grant eligibility to quality, short-term programs
- Advocating for increased funding for federal research agencies
- Advocating for federal support to address college student mental health challenges and to authorize the interstate use of telehealth by institutions to provide behavioral health care to students
- Advocating for College Completion Fund program

- Supporting sustainability and efforts in carbon mitigation and campus resiliency, climate research, climate-ready workforce development, cutting-edge technologies, climate literacy, and community engagement to develop practical solutions for addressing climate change
- Advocating for immigration policy which expands and protects opportunities for international students to remain in the U.S. for optional practical training (OPT) and transitions into the U.S. workforce and would simplify and streamline visa processing
- Supporting the expansion of experimental sites authority at the Department of Education to promote innovative practices at our institutions
- Supporting policies expanding access to the transfer of credits across institutions and the ability of students to apply credit for prior learning to a postsecondary degree