Advancing Higher Education in our States: The Case for Engagement

The state of higher education and state governments

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State Postsecondary Priorities
2024

*Insights from state executive and legislative branches*
Gubernatorial Priorities in 2024
“State of the State”

- FutureEd and Education Commission of the States track “state of the state” addresses
- 17 governors outlined higher education priorities in 2024
- Cost of college: Free college proposals, freeze tuition
- Accountability: Performance- or outcomes-based funding
- New programs: AI, cybersecurity, healthcare

State Legislative Priorities in 2024

• National Conference of State Legislatures Postsecondary Bill Tracker
• Education Commission of the States State Education Policy Tracker

• **Academic and Student Affairs (16):** Legacy admissions in VA, prohibiting diversity statements in ID, top X% admissions plan in WI
• **Affordability (30):** Expanding aid to summer enrollment in NJ, aid to health care workers
• **Governance (7):** Prohibiting DEI offices in UT
• **Workforce development (11):** Teacher apprenticeship in SD, Native American apprentice assistance program in WA

https://www.ncsl.org/education/postsecondary-legislation-database
https://www.ecs.org/state-education-policy-tracking/
Trends in state higher education governance and future directions

Money

- Funding institutions: Performance-based funding, tuition freezes
- Funding students: Universal FAFSA, new scholarship programs

Mission

- Admissions: Legacy (CO, VA, CT, MD, CA, MA, NY, MI), top X% plans
- DEI
- Governance / accountability

Workers

- Sports / NIL
- University employees: Retirement, unionization, federal labor laws

AI: Governance and programs of study

Skills

- HS-->College: Dual enrollment, early college
- Workforce development

Money Mission Workers Skills
How to engage with the state policymaking process

Policy actors, state timelines, and communication resources
Communicating important information to a policymaker / policy actor

• What does a policy actor need to know on this issue from you?

• Who are the policy actors:
  • **Executive Branch**: State agencies & boards, Secretaries, Governor & policy team
  • **Legislative**: Legislature members and staff, state legislative review committees
  • **Office of the Attorney General** (“state law firm”)
  • **Public**: Research organizations, membership associations, issue advocacy organizations, voters
Public actors: Crisis of confidence in higher education

How much confidence do you have in higher education?

- Very little
- Some
- Quite a lot, a great deal

Lower support for K-12 than HE
More partisan in HE than K-12 (2023)

Source: Gallup, 2023

How to engage

• Effective policy memos – about specific issues, recommend action
• Issue briefs – provide background needed to understand an issue
• Legislative forums – build relationships
• Editorials – raise awareness, outline arguments
• Legislative testimony – argue for or against specific bills
Why a college education is not a waste of time

It’s time to adopt performance-based funding for Pa. higher ed | Opinion

By Taylor Randall, Betsy Cantwell, Utah State University President

A college education remains one of the single most important indicators of a happy, healthy and economically stable society. Yet despite overwhelming evidence to the

University of Utah sociologists Asher Stewart, Nevin Huff and Anne deBroy study in the J. Willard Marriott Library at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City on Wednesday, March 12, 2024. (Krisanne Murphy, Deseret News)

Nevi Bernstapki speaks during a meeting of the Penn State Board of Trustees, Thursday, Dec. 9, 2023, in State College, Pa. The Penn State Board of Trustees named Thuive Bernstapki as president, Penn's first woman and first person of color to serve in that role for Penn State. AP Photo/Matt Rourke

College Sports Are a Treasure. Don’t Turn Them Into the Minor Leagues.

By John J. Ennis and Jack Swartick

Father Jenkins is the president of the University of Notre Dame, where Mr. Swartick is director of athletics.
Where policy comes from

Case studies of FAFSA, DEI, and workforce development
Louisiana students will no longer be required to complete the FAFSA, despite policy's success.
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Christopher Rufo’s Alarmingly Deceptive Crusade Against Public Universities

Abolish DEI Bureaucracies and Restore Colorblind Equality in Public Universities

Source: The Chronicle of Higher Education

https://www.chronicle.com/article/here-are-the-states-where-lawmakers-are-seeking-to-ban-colleges-dei-efforts
Workforce Development and Career Connections

FIGURE 1
PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS INDICATING A 2024 ISSUE IS IMPORTANT OR VERY IMPORTANT

- Align and work on a collective impact strategy
- Give industry a clear role, return on investment, and responsibility
- Prioritize messaging and outreach
- Recognize learning and assure quality
Thank you!

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