
Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions

FAQs for Students and Institutions of Higher Education about the White House Executive Order on Accreditation

On April 23, the White House issued an executive order (EO) titled "[Reforming Accreditation to Strengthen Higher Education](#)." As a group that represents seven federally recognized institutional accrediting commissions, the [Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions](#) (C-RAC) is sharing responses to Frequently Asked Questions that both students and leaders at institutions of higher education will have about this EO and its impact on them.

C-RAC also issued a [statement](#) in response to the EO and a [deeper dive](#) on C-RAC's positions on directives in the EO along with background information on accreditation.

Note: *The Executive Order includes content that pertains to different types of accreditors. This document focuses on responding to policies that would be carried out by institutional accreditors represented by the [Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions](#) – not programmatic or specialized accreditors. This document is based on information available to the public as of May 12, 2025. C-RAC's position and insight on these matters may evolve as additional details about the objectives of the Executive Order are released by the Trump Administration.*

Does this EO mean that student access to federal financial aid, including Pell grants, is in jeopardy?

This EO would not jeopardize the current access of students to federal financial aid.

Can this EO remove my accreditor's recognition or my institution's accreditation?

No. The Executive Order is directing the Secretary, in accordance with the authority granted by law to take steps in certain areas. An entirely different process occurs for the recognition of accreditors. The Higher Education Act, plus related regulations and case law, provide due process for the federal recognition of accreditors. This means that this EO cannot remove the federal recognition of an accreditor without this system of due process that involves several steps and takes time. As a result, institutions accredited by current accreditors recognized by ED will not lose their accreditation status nor their access to federal financial aid for students with the announcement of this EO. Accreditors also have opportunities to appeal decisions relating to its federal recognition as necessary.

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What does this EO mean for my institution's work on DEI, including through curriculum, governance practices, student activities, and more?

The White House has issued Executive Orders and actions on DEI outside of this EO on accreditation. Specifically, on January 20 the President signed an EO titled "[Ending Radical And Wasteful Government DEI Programs And Preferencing](#)," followed by an EO titled "[Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity](#)," Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education issued a [Dear Colleague Letter on February 14](#), followed by [FAQs on March 1](#), to institutions of learning including higher education, pertaining to the use of race preferences and stereotypes as a factor in their programs, policies, and activities. Institutions must determine the impact of these Executive Orders and guidance; however, no C-RAC member is directing institutions to take action that conflicts with existing laws. This includes any standards tied to diversity, equity, and inclusion for the accrediting commissions that may have them.

Is this EO prohibiting our collection and reporting of student outcomes data broken down by race, sex, and ethnicity?

The EO focuses on *program-level* student outcomes, by calling to "mandate that accreditors require member institutions to use data on program-level student outcomes to improve such outcomes, without reference to race, ethnicity, or sex." Regarding institutional student outcomes, federal higher education law requires colleges and universities to disaggregate and report student outcomes data broken down by race, sex, and ethnicity. The EO does not appear to change this requirement.

My institution is considering changing accreditors or is in the process of changing accreditors. How would this EO impact this process?

This EO would seek to make an institution's change to a new accreditor easier and faster overall. Specifically, the EO calls to "streamline the process for higher education institutions to change accreditors to ensure institutions are not forced to comply with standards that are antithetical to institutional values and mission." Subsequently, the U.S. Department of Education released a [Dear Colleague Letter](#) aligned with this goal to expedite the process to change accreditors. As long as there is no lapse in accreditation, the process of changing accreditors should occur without interruption to Title IV funding.

FAQ's Specific to Section 3, "New Principles of Student-Oriented Accreditation:" Most of these principles are not new. No member of C-RAC is encouraging violation of laws and discrimination or inhibiting innovative practices or intellectual diversity.

Section 3 (i): Do some accreditors allow higher education institutions to engage in unlawful discrimination or other violations of Federal law?

No. No C-RAC member is directing or enabling institutions to engage in unlawful discrimination or other violations or conflicts with existing Federal law.

Section 3 (ii): Do some accreditors impose barriers to limit institutions from adopting practices that advance credential and degree completion and spur new models of education?

C-RAC members do not impose barriers limiting institutions from practices to advance credential and degree completion, or to spur new models of education. On the contrary, C-RAC consistently encourages and facilitates innovative practices, with more recent examples including the leveraging of Artificial Intelligence to improve the ability of students to transfer credits, supporting 3-year degrees, and working with institutions to embed workforce-driven micro credentials into their programs.

Section 3 (iii): Are accreditors inhibiting or discouraging intellectual diversity amongst faculty?

C-RAC unanimously supports institutional autonomy and academic freedom. While individual accrediting commissions set its own standards, each commission has standards aimed at preserving and protecting intellectual freedom and ensuring institutions welcome and encourage diverse backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives among students and faculty.

Section 3 (iv): Are some accreditors encouraging or forcing institutions to violate State laws?

C-RAC members work with their member institutions to ensure that they are meeting or exceeding the standards for accreditation while also abiding by relevant State laws, so long as any State laws do not violate Federal law.

Section 3 (v): How do accreditors engage in practices that result in credential inflation, and what will now change?

C-RAC members do not engage in practices that result in credit inflation and all have standards that require rigor and attention to student outcomes and cost.