



Fixing the Path to Higher Education

Priorities for the Biden Administration's First 100 Days

As both President Biden and Vice President Harris made clear in their post-election remarks, the tasks of uniting our country, addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and associated economic downturn, and continuing the fight for equity and social/racial justice in America are immense. As the lens of each of those issues tightens on education, NACAC stands ready to offer its perspectives and expertise on the importance of helping all who seek it find a path to higher education.

We encouraged the administration to prioritize two major actions as it considers the agenda for its first 100 days. Here's where it stands:

Provide economic relief to students, schools, and colleges facing COVID-19 financial difficulties.

- ✓ **Funding for K-12 schools:** Schools and the students they serve [are hurting](#). [Additional investments are needed](#) to ensure educational opportunities remain open to all amid a pandemic that has hit minority communities particularly hard.
- ✓ **Financial aid for students:** The pandemic's economic impact [has increased](#) the need for student financial aid. This impact will extend beyond the current academic year. NACAC encourages the administration to increase Pell grant funding and begin to rethink college affordability in conjunction with Congress over the long term.
- ✓ **Relief for postsecondary institutions:** Postsecondary institutions are similarly [suffering](#) from the economic downturn and from [declining enrollments](#). NACAC, through the American Council on Education, has [called for](#) at least \$120 billion to begin to repair the economic damage to institutions.
- ✓ **Student loan relief for borrowers:** NACAC and 76 organizations recently [called for](#) an extension of federal student loan relief until September 2021 due to the financial hardships associated with the pandemic.
- **Flexibility for schools:** Allow states the flexibility under ESSA to waive final accountability assessments if the public health situation remains too precarious for students to participate in the tests.

Undo the damage from the Trump administration's executive policies.

- ✓ **DACA/Undocumented Students:** Each year that passes without a federal DREAM Act means another [100,000 undocumented students](#) cannot access federal aid—either grants or loans—to afford college. In some states, undocumented students cannot be admitted to public colleges or universities. The Trump administration's attempt to end DACA was a step backward. NACAC encourages the Biden administration to redouble DACA protections for undocumented students during the first 100 days and, during the next Congress, pursue legislation that would grant these students eligibility to attend college and apply for federal student aid.
- ✓ **International students:** The Trump administration's xenophobic policies along with its sluggish response to the COVID-19 pandemic have [significantly diminished](#) US higher education's prospects for recruiting international students. This administration can roll back harmful regulations, including [travel bans](#), investigation of visa applicants' [social media accounts](#), and the recent "duration of status" (D/S) [rule](#), that have made America a less-than-welcoming destination for international students.
- ✓ **Protect students and taxpayers from predatory colleges:** The Trump administration [rolled back regulations](#) intended to protect students from predatory colleges and failed [to provide relief](#) to hundreds of thousands of borrowers who were defrauded by predatory for-profit colleges. NACAC encourages the new administration to reinstate the gainful employment rule and restore the borrower defense rule.
- ✓ **Diversity training and punitive measures against colleges:** The Trump administration used the machinery of government to attempt to [censor colleges and universities](#) from offering professional training that promotes racial sensitivity and understanding. NACAC urges the administration to terminate such actions. NACAC further urges the Biden administration to withdraw Department of Justice support from lawsuits against universities over race-conscious admission policies.



As the administration looks toward longer-term education policy, NACAC offers our [Roadmap for Change: Reimagining Higher Education as a Public Good](#) as a starting point.