

What the Executive Order on Accreditation Means for Your Campus

Title of Executive Order	Reforming Accreditation to Strengthen Higher Education (April 23, 2025) and corresponding fact sheet
What is the policy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undermines accrediting agencies' independence if they do not comply with the administration's weaponization of civil rights to penalize institutions for supporting diverse idea generation and equitable opportunities. Requires that accrediting agencies eliminate diversity standards for accreditation that violate the Trump administration's misinformed interpretation of <i>SFFA v. Harvard</i>, even condemning the desire to recruit minoritized populations into the medical profession. Makes it much easier to establish new accrediting agencies with lower quality standards for institutions. Makes it easier for academic institutions to change accreditors in order to avoid accountability Introduces rate of return calculations into assessing the quality of academic programs. Mandates "intellectual diversity" as an aspect of accreditation, which could muzzle higher ed workers who do not espouse Trump's ideological agenda Prevents accrediting agencies from criticizing campus policies resulting from discriminatory state law (such as educational gag orders or anti-diversity laws).
How does it affect campus communities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weakens consumer protections for students. Weaponizes accreditation as the historical gatekeeper to federal financial aid to further consolidate control of institutions of higher education. Uses the threat of derecognition of accreditation to force schools to embrace the administration's white grievance notion of non-discrimination. Encourages the proliferation of ideologically motivated accrediting agencies, creating the conditions for a wave of new low-quality or partisan academic institutions that are also eligible for federal funding (for example, Trump University or University of Austin). Requires schools to include viewpoints without regard for the scholarly merit of these ideas. Politicizes education and makes colleges more susceptible to external interference.
Who else is under attack?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minoritized populations for whom diversity programs have made higher education more accessible. Students who want to learn free from political coercion. Taxpayers whose money will be channeled into fraudulent institutions with limited oversight. Defenders of free speech, shared governance, institutional autonomy, and academic freedom. Those seeking to build a multi-racial democracy where all students feel included.
Who benefits?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideologues who want to create academic institutions that promote their preferred worldview. Corporate entities seeking to create for-profit institutions without oversight or accountability. Politicians who want to interfere in state academic universities without repercussions. Dark-money groups, like ACTA, that have sought to undermine accreditation for decades. Those who want to weaken public education. Those hostile to multi-racial democracy.
What can you do / How do we fight back?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This EO does not affect what academic institutions do. Be clear that we do not engage in so-called "unlawfully discriminatory practices." Pressure accrediting agencies to accurately interpret existing law; remember that an EO

	<p>is itself not law.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the public understands the importance of academic accreditation to ensuring academic integrity and non-interference in the learning process. • Join your campus union. If there is no union on your campus, join the AAUP as an active or associate member. • Write an op-ed in your local paper, weekly journal, or blog post to share how students, staff, and administrators are targeted by this EO and share with CDAF@aaup.org.
Additional resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “EO on Accreditation Opens the Door for Rampant Corruption and Political Interference” • “‘A huge cudgel’: alarm as Trump’s war on universities could target accreditors” • “Are College Accreditors the Next Assault on Academic Freedom?” • “Academic Freedom Is Under Attack. College Accreditors May Be the Best Line of Defense” • “AAUP Testimony to NACIQI” • “Accreditation and Academic Freedom: An AAUP and Council for Higher Education Accreditation Advisory Statement”

