



Update from Chancellor Christian: Federal Executive Orders Impacting Our Colleges

From Faculty Association of California Community Colleges <faccc@memberclicks-mail.net>

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To Erik Woodbury <woodburyerik@fhda.edu>

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Dear FACCC Members,

We want to ensure that you are aware of an important update from Chancellor Sonya Christian regarding recent federal executive orders that may impact our colleges. In her message to the CEOs, the Chancellor highlights key areas of concern, including accreditation, federal audits of institutions over undisclosed foreign donations, and workforce development.

Please take a moment to read the Chancellor's email below.

April 27, 2025

CEO Colleagues:

This week, the administration issued seven executive orders (EO) that signal continued federal intervention in the education system, from K-12 through higher education. With the caveat that, as we've seen in just the last 24 hours, there are likely to be challenges to these executive orders in court, we wanted to quickly address a few of the orders which could be particularly relevant to CCC.

The first EO targets the higher education accreditation system, directing accreditors to prioritize what the administration calls "intellectual diversity" and student outcomes, while moving away from longstanding diversity, equity, and inclusion metrics. It requires the Secretary of Education to hold accreditors accountable through denial, monitoring, suspension, or termination of recognition for poor performance or civil rights violations. The order also aims to expand the pool of federally recognized accrediting bodies.

- The impact of this order is likely to be downstream for institutions of higher education – the immediate implications are related to accreditors – but we will continue to monitor the landscape and keep you informed.

The second EO seeks to better align education with the evolving labor market by investing in workforce development and expanding apprenticeships and vocational training – areas where our colleges are already leading. Our continued efforts to modernize workforce programs and create equitable, high-impact career pathways are directly aligned with this national priority.

- As you know, our system is already focused on this work. Our Vision 2030 plan prioritizes workforce development, increases educational access and enhances our low-income students' socio-economic mobility. We are preparing our students to work in sectors including health care, climate, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), education and early education.

A third EO creates a task force to integrate artificial intelligence education into the K-12 system.

- While this order does not directly impact our system, we are well positioned to lead in this space thanks to the innovation happening at our colleges. Vision 2030 identified Generative AI and the Future of Teaching and Learning as one of its three strategic directions. Since then, we have made significant progress in advancing work in this area.

Examples include:

- Establishing the AI Council;
- Developing the HUMANS principles, which provide a framework for how we engage with AI tools and educational technology partners;
- Launching the annual Futures Summit;
- Creating the Digital Center for Innovation, Transformation, and Equity;
- Initiating several innovative pilot projects at the Digital Center;
- Developing a draft guiding document on AI literacy; and
- Funding the AI Fellows Program.

We are committed to staying ahead of the curve on the evolving landscape and actively engaging with both the opportunities and challenges AI presents to better support our students.

Other executive actions issued this week include:

- Authorization of federal audits and investigations into institutions suspected of failing to disclose foreign donations, with potential revocation of federal funding.
- A rollback of prior federal guidance on school discipline, advocating for behavior-based disciplinary actions without consideration of race.
- A new White House initiative focused on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).
- A federal directive to move away from disparate impact theory in civil rights enforcement.

Also, some of you have reached out to me regarding the AAC&U statement, A Call for Constructive Engagement (<https://www.aacu.org/newsroom/a-call-for-constructive-engagement>), issued on April 22nd. The statement opposes government overreach that threatens academic freedom and institutional autonomy. While it expresses support for legitimate oversight and financial reform, it firmly rejects coercive interference. It emphasizes the vital role colleges and universities play in fostering innovation, expanding opportunity, and sustaining democracy. The statement underscores the importance of preserving the freedom of institutions to determine “what is taught, how, and by whom.”

The value of constructive engagement and collaboration is fundamental to Vision 2030. I have signed the statement, as have many of you. In addition, UC President

Michael Drake, along with all ten University of California campuses, has endorsed the statement.

I made an effort to slow down a bit this weekend and recharge before the busy week ahead. I hope you were able to do the same. We have a lot coming our way, and it's important that we stay steady, strong, and ready – for our colleges and our students. Taking time to rest and recharge is essential to keeping us at our best!

I am so very grateful for your leadership and continued dedication.

Your colleague,

Sonya

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