

FAQ about Trump's Secret Weapon and How to Fight Back

What Is Accreditation?

1. What is accreditation?

Independent organizations review colleges, universities & professional programs to ensure they meet standards for educational quality and integrity. The federal government does not directly accredit schools but does approve the accreditors.

2. What is professional accreditation?

It evaluates specific programs or professional schools, such as medicine, law, nursing, engineering, education, and business.

3. Who accredits schools?

Independent accreditors.

4. What do accreditors evaluate?

Academics, faculty, student outcomes, governance, finances, admissions, resources, legal compliance with federal regulations such as non-discrimination and student protections.

5. Who oversees accreditors?

The Dept of Education determines which accreditors are federally recognized.

6. Why does accreditation matter for federal aid?

In order to receive Pell Grants, federal loans and other Title IV aid, students must attend a school accredited by a federally recognized accreditor.

Accreditation is therefore a gateway to billions in federal funding and educational institution solvency.

7. What happens if a school loses accreditation?

It will lose access to federal student aid, leading to financial ruin. Students may also face problems transferring credits, obtaining licenses, or having degrees recognized.

8. Who serves on accrediting organizations?

Currently it is primarily educators, administrators, academic experts, and professionals. Accreditation traditionally relies on peer review rather than government control.

What Is the Trump Administration Proposing?

1. What would change?

- Make it easier to create and switch accreditors.
- Emphasize outcomes, affordability, and return on investment.
- Create federal oversight into political viewpoints of professors through “intellectual diversity” rules.
- Target DEI-related accreditation requirements.
- Reduce ties between some professional accreditors and professional organizations.
- Change how the government recognizes and oversees accreditors.

2. What has already happened?

- Nearly \$15 million awarded to support emerging accreditors and accreditation changes-including Ron DeSantos’ supported “Commission for Public Higher Education”.
- Switching accreditors is easier.
- The federal Accreditation Handbook is being revised.

3. Why does the administration want these changes?

The administration says they will improve outcomes and reduce bureaucracy. In reality they create a system for the right to gain leverage over universities, roll back DEI, and influence what institutions teach, research, and value.

4. Who could be affected?

Nearly all higher education—including colleges, universities, and professional schools in law, medicine, teaching, engineering, psychology, and social work.

5. What is “intellectual diversity”?

The proposal would require attention to ideological diversity, including surveys of faculty and students. This means asking what their political ideology is, and making sure that there are conservative voices throughout the higher education system.

Why Is Accreditation So Powerful?

Universities educate future doctors, lawyers, teachers, scientists, business leaders, and public officials. Pushing political ideology into higher education can therefore affect institutions throughout society.

Professional accreditation is especially important because it shapes how entire professions are trained.

Change universities → change future professionals → change institutions → change society.

The government's leverage works roughly like this:

Government → Accreditors → Universities → Federal student aid

Changing the rules governing accreditors can therefore influence universities without directly ordering them to change.

How Could This Change Higher Education?

1. **Teaching and research:** Universities will change courses, hiring, programs, and research priorities to comply with new accreditation expectations.
2. **DEI and civil rights:** Schools will scale back or remove diversity initiatives to avoid accreditation or federal-funding disputes.
3. **Academic freedom:** Politically defined standards will discourage teaching or research that conflicts with conservative government priorities.
4. **Federal aid:** Losing accreditation will jeopardize Pell Grants, federal loans, and other aid, hurting both students and educational institutions.
5. **Predatory schools:** Lowering barriers for new accreditors will weaken safeguards against low-quality institutions.

What Could This Mean for UC?

UC will face additional federal control, including leverage over DEI, academic freedom, research, and teaching through accreditation and federal funding.

Federal aid is significant: **35% of UC undergraduates receive Pell Grants**, while UC students also receive more than **\$1 billion annually in federal student loans**. The threat of losing accreditation will put both UC students and the entire UC system at risk.

How Could Professional Institutions Change?

- **Law:** Will affect training involving DEI, constitutional rights, ethics, and academic freedom. It will influence lawyers, judges, and policymakers.

- **Medicine:** Will affect health care disparities, including women's health, DEI, all research, medical training, and patient care.
- **Education:** Will influence how teachers and administrators are trained and affect K–12 classrooms-changing what our children learn.
- **Health professions:** Will change standards in nursing, pharmacy, psychology, and social work.
- **Engineering and technology:** Will introduce greater political influence over scientific and technical education.

What Can We Do?

1. What can people do?

Submit public comments, educate others, contact elected officials, and organize through universities and professional organizations.

2. What makes an effective comment?

Be specific and personal: identify the change, explain its likely impact, and say what you want changed or removed. See our [comments guide](#) for help.

3. Deadline:

September 21, 2026.

4. Why comment?

Comments can influence the final rule, create a public record, inform Congress, slow down their process and potentially become relevant in litigation.

5. Where and when can I submit a comment?

- a. Comments on the Accreditation, Innovation, and Modernization (AIM) proposed rule can be submitted through the federal rulemaking process. The deadline is September 21, 2026.

- b. Leave a comment [here](#).

6. Where is the direct link to the changes?

- a. <https://www.ed.gov/topic/accreditation>