

“This year, the General Assembly encouraged the completion of credentials for in-demand fields, including early childhood, education, law enforcement, firefighting, forestry, nursing, and construction.”

The General Assembly considered multiple bills related to higher education, including legislation focused on financial aid and loan forgiveness, credentials and workforce development, health and wellness, faculty, and governance and administration.

Financial Aid and Loan Forgiveness

The General Assembly passed several bills during the 2023 legislative session related to financial aid and loan forgiveness.

Senate Bill 23-149 creates a new pilot program to provide grants to youth mentorship organizations to distribute as financial aid to college students who provide youth mentorship services through the organization.

Two bills, *Senate Bill 23-096* and *House Bill 23-1001*, make changes to existing loan forgiveness and financial aid programs, which include the following three programs created during the 2022 legislative session and funded through the American Rescue

Plan Act (ARPA) funds: Student Educator Stipend Program, Educator Test Stipend Program, and Temporary Educator Loan Forgiveness Program. SB 23-096 also allows returned Peace Corps volunteers who would otherwise have to pay the nonresident tuition rate at a public institution to qualify for the in-state tuition rate. Finally, *Senate Bill 23-084* outlines the process for institutions to certify faculty members' employment when they apply for the federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program.

Credentials and Workforce Development

During the 2023 legislative session, the General Assembly passed three bills pertaining to credentials and workforce development. *House Bill 23-1246* creates several new grant programs to encourage the completion of credentials for in-demand fields, including early childhood, education, law enforcement, firefighting, forestry, nursing, and construction, while *Senate Bill 23-281* requires schools that are not regionally accredited to notify students during the enrollment process that some of their credits from the school may not transfer to other institutions.

In 2021, the legislature created the Colorado Re-Engaged (CORE) initiative via *House Bill 21-1330*. The initiative enables four-year higher education institutions to

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award an associate's degree to students who have dropped out of a bachelor's degree program as long as the student has completed at least 70 credit hours. However, under prior law, a student could not qualify for an associate's degree through CORE if they transferred to the institution directly from a community college.

House Bill 23-1262 modifies this restriction to allow students who have earned fewer than 15 credit hours from a community college to be eligible for an associate's degree through CORE.

Health and Wellness

Two bills added new requirements for institutions of higher education that pertain to student health and wellness.

House Bill 23-1007 requires institutions to print the contact information for Colorado Crisis Services, which is the statewide behavioral health crisis response system, and the national suicide and crisis lifeline number (988) on any new student ID cards.

Senate Bill 23-299 requires institutions to stock a supply of epinephrine auto-injectors in high traffic areas around campus.

Governance and Administration

Senate Bill 23-048 extends the maximum length of employment contracts between state institutions of higher education and non-tenure track teachers or librarians from three years to five years.

The Sexual Misconduct Advisory Committee was created by *Senate Bill 19-007* to make recommendations to the General Assembly and institutions of higher education

concerning sexual misconduct policies and methods to reduce sexual misconduct at higher education institutions. The advisory committee was due to sunset on September 1, 2023, but *Senate Bill 23-085* instead continues it indefinitely.

Under current law, institutions of higher education are required to distribute forms to prospective students verifying their registration or exemption from Selective Service, which is the federal system to register eligible men for military service if a national draft becomes necessary.

House Bill 23-1261 removes this requirement and instead mandates that institutions provide eligible students with information about Selective Service prior to course registration.

Student Athlete Compensation

Under current law, an institution of higher education cannot prevent a student athlete from earning compensation from their name, image, or likeness (NIL) or from obtaining professional representation. A student athlete cannot enter into a contract that conflicts with a team contract and must disclose contracts to the institution's athletic director within 72 hours of entering into a contract, or before the next scheduled athletic event, whichever is first.

Senate Bill 23-293 expands upon current law by allowing the institution itself to create, solicit, and facilitate opportunities for a student athlete to earn compensation for the use of their NIL as long as the institution first gets the student athlete's consent.

