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## Higher Education

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During the 2019 legislative session, the General Assembly considered measures related to higher education. Specifically, the measures concern student loans and financial aid, college and career access and readiness, teacher preparation and retention, and the administration and governance of state institutions of higher education.

### Student Loans and Financial Aid

The General Assembly adopted several bills related to student loans and financial aid. Under *Senate Bill 19-002*, student loan servicers operating in Colorado are required to obtain a license from the Administrator of the Uniform Consumer Credit Code in the Department of Law. The bill specifies license application requirements, and prohibits student loan servicers from defrauding or misleading borrowers, omitting material information, misapplying student loan payments, providing inaccurate information to a credit bureau, and failing to evaluate a borrower for an income-based repayment program if available. In addition, the bill establishes a Student Loan Ombudsman in the Department of Law to assist student loan borrowers and to receive, review, and resolve borrower complaints.

*Senate Bill 19-057* requires the Department of Personnel and Administration to provide and facilitate the distribution of information on federal loan forgiveness programs and student

loan repayment options to all state employees, local education providers, state institutions of higher education, nonprofit public service organizations, and local government entities.

Currently, a student who does not have lawful immigration status may be classified as a resident student for tuition purposes under certain circumstances. These students are eligible for the resident tuition rate at public institutions of higher education and may qualify for institutional or private financial aid programs. *House Bill 19-1196* makes these students eligible for additional state-funded financial aid programs administered by the Department of Higher Education (DHE).

In an effort to increase student financial aid application completion rates, *House Bill 19-1187* provides additional funding to local education providers that receive a school counselor corps grant to assist students and families with completing state and federal financial aid applications. Finally, *Senate Bill 19-231* creates a scholarship program in DHE called the Colorado Second Chance Scholarship Program to assist individuals previously committed to the Division of Youth Services who are currently pursuing a postsecondary credential.

### College and Career Access and Readiness

In 2019, the General Assembly considered six bills pertaining to postsecondary and

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workforce access and readiness, as well as degree completion. Under current law, concurrent enrollment programs allow qualified students to enroll in courses that simultaneously provide credit towards high school graduation requirements and apply as postsecondary credit. Under changes made by *Senate Bill 19-176*, beginning in FY 2020-21 schools and districts that enroll high school students must offer concurrent enrollment programs, including enrollment in academic and career and technical education courses, to all qualified students free-of-charge. Students who complete a concurrent enrollment course must receive credit that applies to both high school graduation requirements and a postsecondary degree or certificate.

Supplemental academic instruction and basic skills courses allow students at four-year institutions with limited academic deficiencies who require a minimal amount of academic support to get this support on campus through credit-bearing courses rather than having to attend traditional remedial courses off-site at a community college. *House Bill 19-1206* makes several changes to current law pertaining to these types of courses.

*Senate Bill 19-171* requires the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment to establish, update, and promote a resource directory containing detailed information about apprenticeship programs in the state. *House Bill 19-1294* requires the Colorado Community College System to convene a working group to determine the best way to transfer credit from a registered construction apprenticeship program to college credit.

Area technical colleges (ATCs) are governed by a local school district or board of cooperative educational services and offer postsecondary vocational programs that are approved by the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education. There are three ATCs

in Colorado: Emily Griffith Technical College, the Technical College of the Rockies, and Pickens Technical College. *Senate Bill 19-097* creates a grant program in DHE to provide grant funding to ATCs for specific capital and equipment purposes.

Finally, *House Bill 19-1236* creates a workforce development pilot program to provide performance payments to qualified providers of dropout recovery services for eligible adult students enrolled in the provider's programs who achieve specified educational milestones.

### Teacher Preparation and Retention

Over the past decade, Colorado has seen a decrease in the enrollment and completion of teacher preparation programs, while at the same time is experiencing an increase in demand for qualified teachers, especially in rural areas and for hard-to-fill positions. In response to the growing teacher shortage across the state, the General Assembly passed several bills focused on bolstering teacher preparation programs and the recruitment and retention of teachers statewide. *Senate Bill 19-190* requires the Colorado Departments of Education and Higher Education to work together to adopt guidelines and best practices for teacher preparation programs, and creates a grant program to support mentor teachers who oversee teacher candidates in clinical practice.

Currently, DHE administers stipends for teachers in rural schools or districts who are seeking a higher certification, or those in teacher preparation programs who, upon completion, agree to teach in a rural school or district for at least two years. *Senate Bill 19-009* removes the limits on the number of stipends that may be issued and increases the maximum stipend amount. *Senate Bill 19-003* continues until 2033 the teacher loan forgiveness pilot program in DHE and renames it the Educator

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Loan Forgiveness Program. The bill also expands and makes changes to the list of individuals who qualify for the program, and specifies that eligible educators may receive up to \$5,000 in loan forgiveness for each year of employment in a qualified position for up to five years.

### **Administration and Governance**

During the 2019 session, the legislature passed five bills impacting the administration and governing policies of state higher education institutions. *Senate Bill 19-007* requires all state institutions to adopt sexual misconduct policies and offer related training to students and staff. The bill also requires DHE to convene an advisory committee and biennial summit on preventing sexual misconduct on campuses. *Senate Bill 19-170* prohibits, with a few exceptions, state institutions of higher education from inquiring into or obtaining an applicant's criminal or disciplinary history on an application for admission. *House Bill 19-1152* removes the in-state tuition requirement to serve on the student advisory council to the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education. *House Bill 19-1178* changes the name of Western State Colorado University to Western Colorado University.

In 2014, the General Assembly passed House Bill 14-1319, which created a formula for allocating state funds to state institutions of higher education. *Senate Bill 19-095* requires the Colorado Commission on Higher Education to conduct a review of the funding formula by November 1, 2019, and every five years thereafter, and submit the review report to the Senate and House Education Committees, Joint Budget Committee, and the Governor.