



Higher Education

During the 2021 legislative session, the General Assembly considered several measures related to higher education. Specifically, the legislature considered bills related to the accreditation, administration, and governance of state institutions of higher education; student admissions; student loan protections; support services for displaced workers through higher education institutions; and in-state tuition for American Indian tribal members with historical ties to Colorado. The legislature also considered a measure concerning studying barriers to educator diversity in K-12 schools using data from teacher certification and degree programs.

Accreditation, Administration, and Governance

The General Assembly adopted four bills concerning the accreditation, administration, and governance of state institutions of higher learning.

Current law requires private institutions of higher education to be institutionally accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE). *House Bill 21-1306* expands this to allow for either institutional or programmatic accreditation by a body recognized by either the DOE or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). The bill creates an exemption for certain private occupational schools regulated by the Division of Private

Occupational Schools, and makes it a deceptive trade practice for private schools to advertise or represent accreditation unless the accrediting body is recognized by DOE or CHEA.

Senate Bill 21-179 amends the composition of the Colorado opportunity scholarship initiative advisory board, and permits non-state employed members to receive per diem and expense reimbursements. Also, *Senate Bill 21-100* extends the repeal of the Council of Higher Education Representatives until September 1, 2031.

Finally, *Senate Bill 21-191* removes the residency requirement for the student member serving on Western Colorado University's Board of Trustees.

Admissions

The General Assembly passed two bills related to student admissions at state institutions of higher education. *House Bill 21-1173* prohibits a state-supported institution of higher education from giving preferential admissions consideration to applicants because they are related to an alumni of the institution.

House Bill 21-1067 permanently removes the requirement for state institutions to require a national assessment test score, such as the SAT or ACT, as one of the criteria used to determine admissions eligibility of first-time freshman

Higher Education (cont'd)

students, making these test scores optional for schools to use as part of the admissions decision.

Student Loan Protection

Senate Bill 21-057 expands the Colorado Student Loan Servicers Act to include requirements for private lenders, creditors, and collection agencies related to higher education loans. The legislation also increases protections for borrowers and cosigners, providing oversight and regulation. Under the bill, private lenders will be required to register with the Department of Law and provide annual information on their loans. A violation of this new law is a deceptive trade practice under the Colorado Consumer Protection Act.

Displaced Workers Grant

Senate Bill 21-232 appropriates \$15.0 million from the General Fund to the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) for the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative displaced workers grant program. The program supports participants whose work has been negatively impacted by COVID-19. Support provided includes: scholarships; advising services; and connection and transition to the workforce.

In-State Tuition for Colorado American Indian Tribes

Beginning with the 2021-22 academic year, *Senate Bill 21-029* requires that all Colorado state institutions of higher education adopt policies to charge in-state tuition to any student who is a registered member of a federally recognized American Indian tribe with historical ties to Colorado. Students classified for resident tuition are eligible for participation in the College Opportunity Fund, and may be eligible for certain financial aid.

K-12 Workplace Diversity

House Bill 21-1010 requires that CDHE, in conjunction with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), assemble a workgroup to investigate barriers to the preparation, recruitment, and retention of a diverse educator workforce.