

In today's higher education climate, boards are navigating complex terrain: shifting priorities, evolving regulations, and growing scrutiny of mission-driven values. Boards are expected not only to govern effectively, but also to safeguard the institutional identity and lead with vision, integrity, and adaptability. To support that responsibility, we offer Governance Forward—a curated weekly briefing designed to help boards remain informed, aligned, and strategic.

A weekly Board Briefing for:

ADVANCING

Encouraging proactive board action that is guided by strategic foresight rather than reactive compliance. Forward-focused governance is shaped by anticipating emerging challenges, aligning decisions with institutional values, and acting with clarity and purpose. In doing so, boards help shape an institution that can adapt, lead, and thrive.

NSTITUTIONAL

Framing developments
through the lens of
institutional goals and
community context. This
approach ensures that
boards interpret challenges
and opportunities as issues
deeply connected to their
institution's identity,
priorities, and the diverse
needs of the students,
faculty, and all stakeholders.

MISSIONS

Reinforcing the board's commitment to mission-centered governance as a foundational principle that informs institutional strategy, advances student success, and sustains long-term impact. Alignment with institutional values ensure that strategic choices remain responsive to the evolving needs of the communities boards serve.

In This Week's Briefing: Week of April 14, 2025

▶ 3 Current Developments

- Supreme Court Ruling on Federal Teacher Training Grants
- Federal Termination of International Students' Visas
- U.S Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice Announce Title IX
 Special Investigations Team

2 Powerful Perspectives

- Quote by Dr. Michael Roth, Wesleyan University President
- Quote by Dr. Wendy Hensel, University of Hawaii President

> 1 Call to Action

Sign up for our Center for Strategic and Inclusive Governance updates

<u>Supreme Court Ruling on Federal Teacher Training Grants</u>

On April 4, 2025, the U.S. Supreme Court, in a 5–4 decision, lifted a lower court's block on the Trump administration's decision to halt over \$600 million in federal grants for teacher training programs, including the Teacher Quality Partnerships (TQP) and Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) programs. These grants, previously awarded to various universities and nonprofits, aimed to address teacher shortages has historically supported key education initiatives at universities nationwide. This decision enables the administration to withhold the funds while litigation continues, posing near-and long-term challenges to educator preparation programs and institutional priorities around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Board Impact and Institutional Relevance

Financial Disruption

- The loss of projected grant funding will immediately impact teacher residency, mentorship, and faculty development programs.
- Departments may require short-term budget reallocation to maintain program continuity.

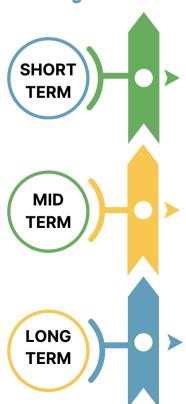
Threat to Teacher Pipeline

- These programs have played a critical role in recruiting, preparing, and retaining high-quality educators—especially in high-need areas.
- Interruptions could exacerbate regional teacher shortages and harm K-12 partnerships

Mission-Centric Vulnerabilities

- The ruling challenges the institution's commitment to mission-centric teacher preparation.
- Legal and political scrutiny of DEI-aligned content may increase, requiring careful evaluation of program language and goals.

Strategies for Boards to Consider



- Affirm commitment to sustaining teacher training programs through bridge funding or reallocated resources.
- Request a financial impact report from affected departments to assess scope and prioritize needs.
- Convene legal counsel and government relations staff to evaluate potential involvement in amicus briefs or coalition advocacy.
- Support exploration of alternative funding (state appropriations, philanthropic partnerships, private grants).
- Encourage adaptive program design that preserves mission-centric goals while aligning with evolving legal guidance.
- Affirm commitment to sustaining teacher training programs through bridge funding or reallocated resources.
- Request a financial impact report from affected departments to assess scope and prioritize needs.
- Convene legal counsel and government relations staff to evaluate potential involvement in amicus briefs or coalition advocacy.

Federal Termination of International Students' Visas

In recent days, the Trump administration has revoked visas for over 800 international students at various U.S. universities. While some cases involve minor infractions, the move appears linked to a broader initiative targeting individuals involved in pro-Palestinian activism. Universities such as Harvard, Stanford, UCLA, Michigan, and Ohio State have reported instances of visa cancellations without prior notice or clear justification. The Department of Homeland Security reportedly offered little communication or justification, leaving universities to learn of the revocations through routine federal database checks.

Board Impact and Institutional Relevance

Campus Climate

- These actions may foster uncertainty among students, affecting campus climate, mental health, and well-being.
- Visa revocations impact current international students and recent alumni, potentially reducing future international enrollment.

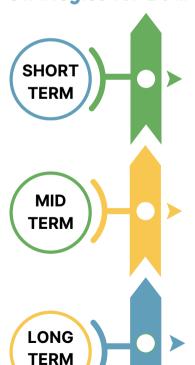
Academic Programs and Research

- International students play key roles in research; their absence could disrupt projects and collaborations.
- Reductions in international students may also impact faculty recruitment and retention in departments heavily reliant on international scholars.

Reputational Impact

- Board responses will be scrutinized and shape public perception and may impact future student, staff, and faculty applications.
- Decisions could also strain ties with alumni, especially those connected to affected students.

Strategies for Boards to Consider



- Provide legal, immigration, and mental health support, along with clear communication for impacted students.
- Establish immigration working groups to track policy and share guidance.
- Share timely updates with students, faculty, and staff to reduce fear, combat misinformation, and show institutional support.
- Review and update policies to protect student data.
- Publicly reaffirm commitments to diversity, academic freedom, and global engagement, especially in the context of federal challenges.
- Rebuild trust with international alumni and partners through targeted outreach.
- Engage in federal higher education policy discussions, ensuring long-term protections for international students and academic institutions.
- Review policies on activism, campus spaces, visa compliance, and partnerships to identify risks and strengthen protocols.
- Consider legal action or support through amicus briefs and collaborate with higher education associations to advocate for fair and transparent visa policies.
- Plan for international enrollment shifts by diversifying recruitment and expanding remote learning options for affected students.



U.S Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice Announce Title IX Special Investigations Team

On April 4, 2025, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) jointly announced the establishment of the Title IX Special Investigations Team (SIT). This initiative aims to expedite the resolution of Title IX complaints, particularly those concerning athletes' gender identity and participation in school programs and activities.

Board Impact and Institutional Relevance

Campus Climate

- Policy shifts toward biological definitions may increase anxiety among transgender and nonbinary students.
- Increased demand for mental health and counseling services.
- While some may view enforcement as protecting women's sports, others see it as exclusionary.

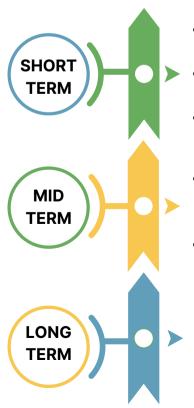
Academic Programs and Research

- The SIT has initiated investigations into institutions for alleged Title IX violations related to transgender athletes' participation.
- Non-compliance with Title IX as interpreted by the SIT could result in the loss of federal funding, impacting various programs and services within affected institutions.

Reputational Impact

- Boards must stay informed about ongoing legal developments to navigate potential changes.
- Boards may need to revisit policies to align with current interpretations of Title IX, while also supporting mission-centric goals of inclusive educational environments for all students.

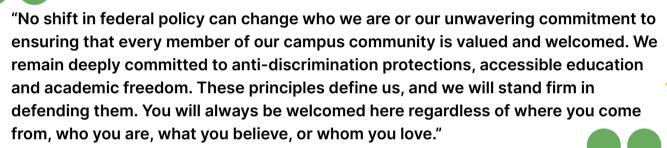
Strategies for Boards to Consider



- Provide counseling services for students, staff, and faculty directly and indirectly impacted by the latest executive orders.
- Engage with students, faculty, staff, and parents to communicate any policy changes and the institution's commitment to compliance and inclusivity.
- Consult with legal experts to assess the potential impact of SIT investigations and prepare for any necessary policy adjustments.
- Establish mechanisms to monitor compliance and address any complaints or concerns promptly, fostering a safe and supportive educational environment for all students.
- Participate in dialogues with policymakers and other educational institutions to advocate for fair interpretations of Title IX that protect all students' rights.
 - Promote initiatives that foster a culture of inclusivity, respect, and support for all students, aligning with the institution's mission and enhancing campus life.

"We must not sacrifice academic freedom and a healthy civil society for the short-term gains of anticipatory compliance. We must instead cultivate in our institutions the ability to bring different kinds of people together in common purpose, the will to protect the vulnerable, and the resilience needed for our institutions to successfully pursue their missions. Their missions, not the agenda of whoever controls the powers of the central government."

Dr. Michael Roth, Wesleyan University President



Dr. Wendy Hensel, University of Hawaii President



CALL TO ACTION

As Boards navigate the higher education landscape, we encourage you to keep your mission, values, and partners at the forefront of your decision-making.

Sign up for our Center for Strategic and Inclusive Governance updates <u>here!</u>!

Keep up with our latest resources designed for Board members and their strategic partners.