



To: NJ Institutions of Higher Education
From: NJ Office of the Secretary of Higher Education
Date: October 1, 2025
Subject: Updates on Federal Actions Impacting NJ Institutions of Higher Education

Recent Federal Actions Regarding Higher Education

Federal Government Shutdown Begins October 1

As an agreement has not yet been reached regarding federal appropriations, a Federal Government shutdown began at 10/1. The U.S. Department of Education's Contingency Plan for lapse in FY 2026 Appropriations is available online: <https://www.ed.gov/media/document/us-department-of-education-contingency-plan-lapse-fiscal-year-fy-2026-appropriations-112431.pdf>. Disbursement of Federal Student Aid is expected to continue during the shutdown, as well as ongoing negotiated rulemaking. The American Council on Education has provided an additional overview on potential impacts: <https://www.acenet.edu/News-Room/Pages/Government-Shutdowns-and-Higher-Education.aspx>.

Forthcoming Public Comment Deadlines

The U.S. Department of Education's proposed IPEDS data collection rules are now available for review and have public comment deadline of October 14, 2025: [Comments due by October 14, 2025](#).

The U.S. Department of Education is seeking public comment on two Secretarial priorities for discretionary grants. More information detailing these priorities and how to submit a public comment by the October 27, 2025 deadline are linked: "[Expanding Career Pathways and Workforce Readiness](#)" and "[Meaningful Learning Opportunities](#)."

The U.S. Department of Education also released a request for information on redesigning the Institute for Education Sciences with a focus on how to modernize its programs, processes, and priorities. [Comments due by October 15, 2025](#).

2026-27 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Now Available

The U.S. Department of Education announced on September 24, 2025 that the 2026-27 FAFSA form is now available online. Information regarding the updated features of the FAFSA and early data from the beta period is available in their press release:

<https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-announces-earliest-fafsa-form-launch-program-history>

New Jersey Updates

New Jersey Continues GEAR UP Program Funded by US ED

New Jersey has received its GEAR UP grant award notification from the US Department of Education to continue supporting the state program through the new award year. This marks the 7th and final year of the current grant cycle, which is set to end in August 2026. The agency plans to reapply for the GEAR UP grant in FY26, once the Department releases the new grant application. Additional information about NJ GEAR UP program can be found:

<https://www.nj.gov/highereducation/gearup/index.shtml>.

NJ Attorney General Platkin Joins Coalition Opposing PSLF changes

On September 17, 2025, NJ Attorney General Platkin joined 21 other Attorneys General in submitting a public comment in opposition to the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Proposed Rule. The full letter is available here: <https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/attachments/press-docs/2025.09.17%20PSLF%20Comment%20Letter%20FINAL.pdf>.

Request for Updates on Federal Impact, if Applicable

In addition, the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education is continuing to compile questions and information about any institutions who are experiencing issues with federal funding or other impacts due to federal action. Please submit a brief summary of issues to

Stefani.Thachik@oshe.nj.gov if applicable to your institution. Updates and resources regarding federal actions continue to be provided on the [NJ OSHE website](http://www.nj.gov/highereducation).

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