

TACRAO Legislative Issues Committee Members

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This report includes updates since the June 2024 Report. The committee meeting for July was canceled and our next meeting is scheduled for August 15, 2024.

1. On July 16, 2024, Samantha Taylor presented legislative updates at the TACRAO Summer Meeting on behalf of the Legislative Issues Committee. Topics at both the state and federal levels included:

- New Title IX regulations and response from the state of Texas
- Institutional responses to Texas SB 17
- THECB news
- Changes to the Texas Administrative Code, effective May 16, 2024
- Simplified FAFSA rollout and impacts on institutions' enrollments and budgets
- Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024
- Federal regulation changes on financial responsibility and administrative capability, which has impacts on issuing and withholding official college transcripts
- FLSA changes and Texas' lawsuit/injunction in response to the changes
- SCOTUS decision to overturn the Chevron Doctrine and possible impacts of this decision upon Higher Education

2. THECB ApplyTexas rollout

Key Changes

- **Application Cutover:** The new ApplyTexas launched June 10, 2024.
- **Payment System:** In the new ApplyTexas system, payment will not be accepted within ApplyTexas, and students will be prompted to pay institutions directly.
- **Field Changes:** Due to improvements to the application, there will be some small changes to fields in data submission.
- **Operating Costs:** The THECB will be taking over the operating costs shared by all public institutions required to use ApplyTexas. This means some institutions may no longer be required to pay a portion of the annual cost of the ApplyTexas system.
- **Transcript Requests:** ApplyTexas allows applicants from Texas high schools to request and send transcripts to institutions through the Texas Records Exchange (TReX).

Detailed information about all changes is included in memos, webinars, and other resources posted to the THECB website, on the Redesigned ApplyTexas page. Functional and IT users can also sign up to receive emails about these and future changes.

Source: https://www.highered.texas.gov/our-work/supporting-our-institutions/redesigned-applytexas/?utm_medium=email&hsenc=p2ANqtz-_GNpCsZdYRzQs6NVvWaHn6MqxFHxqOQxOdNdw_aZ7obZ9ewRGE_WcIQ3V7NI_DLceqwFvU5B8z3wrU-

3. Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) grants & awards

- In July, the TWC awarded grant funds totaling \$578,399 through the Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) program. JET grants are used to defray start-up costs to develop career and technical education programs for public community, state, and technical colleges, school districts, and open-enrollment charter schools. Equipment funded through JET grants must be used to train students for jobs in high-demand occupations. The grants were given to two ISDs in south Texas: Jim Hogg County ISD - a \$266,868 grant to train 126 students as welders, cutters, solderers, and brazers in partnership with Coastal Bend College. And United ISD - a \$311,531 grant to train 1,100 students as registered nurses in partnership with Laredo College.
- Another JET grant of over \$331,000 was awarded to Amarillo College. This grant will support career and technical education training programs by helping the school purchase and install equipment to initially train 80 students as welders.
- Texas State Technical College (TSTC) received a Skills Development Fund (SDF) grant award totaling \$110,193 from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). Through this grant, TSTC will provide customized training for more than 55 new and incumbent employees of Noble Texas Builders LLC for high-demand occupations in accounting and auditing, surveying and mapping, office administration, and construction.

4. Title IX regulations and the state As of July 29, 2024, 21 US states, including Texas, have pending law suits that block enforcement of the new rules temporarily. Institutions would be wise to prepare a plan and have it ready, but don't implement the plan until after the rulings are made. If the blocks are overturned, the US government will expect compliance the following day, since the new regulations went into effect at the federal level on August 1, 2024.

5. Higher Education spending bill At the end of July, the Senate Appropriations Committee advanced a bill to fund the DOE and related agencies. The funding is significantly higher than what was approved by the House subcommittee in June 2024. According to a summary, the bill would:

- Increase by \$100 the maximum Pell Grant, raising it to \$7,495;
- Level-fund Federal Work-Study and the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant;
- Increase funding for TRIO, GEAR UP, Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program, the Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students Program, and the Postsecondary Student Success Grant Program; and
- Provide an additional \$100 million to support student aid program administration, such as implementing the FAFSA.

The House Appropriations Committee has completed markups on all of its appropriations bills, but only five have been passed by the full House. The full Senate has yet to pass any.

Source: https://www.acenet.edu/News-Room/Pages/Senate-FY25-Appropriations-Spending-Bill.aspx?_cldee=mb0WAOKzR0-lcdNthhcs5FPd7s_fsdNBorWMrCp4gnC1v1bXhUdgbeOw7zJrSF-&recipientid=contact-02280f15d162ee11be6e000d3a8f5b52-e17e3d62cd3a4a178da7b335f700f464&utm_source=ClickDimensions&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=HENA%202024&esid=564e2fd5-3853-ef11-a317-7c1e521c423d

6. **July 24, 2024 – The DOE proposed a rule entitled Program Integrity and Institutional Quality: Distance Education, Return of Title IV, HEA Funds, and Federal TRIO Programs.**

They indicate that these regulations would increase college access for high school students, provide better public data on student outcomes, including to increase oversight over distance education programs, and ensure the student aid programs work in the best interests of students. It's currently posted on the Federal Register and open for comments, which are due on or before August 23, 2024. If these drafted regulations are issued before November 1, 2024, they will take effect by July 1 of next year.

Sources: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/07/24/2024-16102/program-integrity-and-institutional-quality-distance-education-return-of-title-iv-hea-funds-and> & <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/biden-harris-administration-releases-proposed-regulations-increase-college-access-and-quality-and-strengthen-oversight-distance-education>