

TACRAO Legislative Issues Committee Members

Samantha Taylor, Chair—Tarrant County College
Brenda Martinez—Texas Tech University
Sarina Willis—Prairie View A&M University
Julio Reyes—Laredo College
Nadia Mahannah—Southwestern University

Committee meeting held 02/23/2024 and attended by Samantha Taylor, Brenda Martinez, and Sarina Willis. Agreed to do monthly check in meetings throughout the year as we monitor and discuss legislative items we need to track.

Updates since the October 2023 report:

State Legislation:

On October 9 – November 7, 2023, Texas held its third special legislative session. The governor called for a fourth session, held November 7 – December 5, 2023. While education topics were discussed, no education legislation was produced by either special session.

2024 is not a legislative year for the state of Texas, but the committee plans to monitor the news about important topics that came out of the sessions for 2023, as it was a very active legislative year for Texas and institutions are continuing to interpret new legislation to implement policies on their campuses.

Federal Legislation:

The simplified FAFSA was released in a “soft launch” December 30, 2023. The rollout was challenging for both students and financial aid administrators, with technical issues and the subsequent online maintenance making the form unavailable for large periods of time. The form is now readily available but at the end of January the DOE announced that higher education institutions will not receive applicants’ information until March 2024 at the earliest. This further shortens an already small window of time for institutions to prepare financial aid packages for prospective students.

The DOE released a FAFSA College Support Strategy on February 5, 2024, to provide additional personnel, funding, resources, and technology to help schools process student records as quickly and accurately as possible. This plan includes deploying financial aid experts to lower resourced colleges to provide support and training, allocating \$50 million in federal funding that will be provided to non-profit groups specialized in financial aid support and services; and, releasing test ISIRs to help schools prepare their systems for the new data.

On February 13, 2024, the DOE indicated that they would take the following steps to help colleges process student records quickly and efficiently: significantly reduce verification requirements, suspend new routine program reviews through June 2024, and allow flexibility of deadline dates for certain institutions who need to recertify eligibility for student aid programs.

The Federal Student Aid website has been frequently updating information as it becomes available, and our committee will continue to monitor further developments.

New Title IX regulations are still not available and have been pushed to March 2024. New rules will not take effect until July 1, 2025.