



New England Institutional COVID-19 Response

What we can expect from the Federal Government

MARCH 2021

What is in the works at the Federal level?

At the end of February, 2021, NEBHE's Regional Higher Education Action Group (RHEAG) met with higher education expert [Dr. Terry Hartle](#), Senior Vice President of Government Relations and Public Affairs at the American Council on Education (ACE). Dr. Hartle offered insights regarding legislative actions in the works, top priorities for the Biden/Harris administration and what the higher education sector can expect in the coming months. Below are some highlights from this conversation.

In the first month in office, the Biden/Harris administration has taken the following actions directly related to higher education:

- ✓ Reinstated DACA ([memo](#))
- ✓ Ended restrictions on U.S. entry for passport holders from Muslim-majority countries ([proclamation](#))
- ✓ Extended student loan repayment moratorium through the end of the COVID-19 pandemic (directive to Education Department)
- ✓ Rescinded the 1776 Commission and directed agencies to review actions to ensure racial equity ([Executive Order](#))

Miguel Cardona, Connecticut's Education Commissioner, has been confirmed as Secretary of Education. His first and largest task will be to reopen elementary and secondary schools. To benefit higher education in the immediate, Secretary Cardona could:

- ✓ Provide clarity on issues related to COVID relief funds made available to higher education institutions in December 2020
- ✓ Streamline the loan forgiveness program and create mechanisms to more productively interface with borrowers that wish to engage with the forgiveness program
- ✓ Clarify foreign gift reporting protocol

See ACE's Letter to Secretary of Education-designate Cardona [here](#)

Which proposed federal actions will affect higher education long-term?

- ➔ **Doubling the Pell grant and widening eligibility requirements**
Doubling the Pell grant is at the top of the Biden/Harris administration's priority list and they may pursue this item in a future stimulus bill, anticipated for April or May 2021
- ➔ **Increased funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)**
This item will not require new legislation and will likely be accomplished in the short-term
- ➔ **Loan forgiveness for individuals currently repaying student loans**
This is an expensive pursuit and is controversial in the legislature in comparison to other initiatives. President Biden has voiced his support for up to \$10,000 of loan forgiveness over democrats' proposed \$50,000

New England Institutional COVID-19 Response

Campus update

State	Cases reported by institutions (spring 2021)	# of institutions reporting
CT	997	19
ME	182	19
MA	2,877	49
NH	369	21
RI	2,249	8
VT	303	10
TOTAL	6,977	126

Case numbers are cumulative for the spring semester OR over the last 1-4 weeks depending on how an institution reports its data/when testing began for spring 2021.

See all of NEBHE's COVID-19 Institutional Response Briefs [here](#).

*Interested in a topic we haven't covered? Reach out to:
cpeyser@nebhe.org*