



Department of Education Developments

President Trump signed an executive order on March 20, 2025, asking Education Secretary Linda McMahon to wind down the operations of the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) “to the maximum extent appropriate and permitted by law.” The order directs Secretary McMahon to take “all necessary steps to facilitate the education department’s closure and return education authority to the states” while continuing to ensure “uninterrupted delivery of services, programs, and benefits on which Americans rely.” For higher education, these services include Pell Grants and student loans.

The President cannot close the USDE without Congressional approval to eliminate the agency. Secretary McMahon says in a statement, “We’re going to follow the law and eliminate the bureaucracy responsibly by working through Congress to ensure a lawful and orderly transition.”

There do not appear to be enough votes in the Senate to close the USDE. However, Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA) said he will submit legislation to accomplish Trump’s goal. There is also legislation introduced in the U.S. House to eliminate the Department of Education. The effort to close the Department of Education is expected to be challenged in court.

Linda McMahon was confirmed as the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education (USDE). One of her first actions was to institute a reduction in force, impacting nearly 50% of USDE employees. This reduction in force will impact many areas where the USDE developed policy, evaluated data, and provided services. The accreditation section of the USDE has not been subject to this reduction in force, meaning that recognition of accrediting organizations should continue as in the past.

Nicholas Kent has been nominated as the Under Secretary of Education. The Under Secretary has been the lead person in the USDE in higher education issues over the last several administrations. This position requires Senate confirmation. He is joining the USDE after serving as Deputy Secretary of Education in Virginia.

James Bergeron has been appointed the Deputy Under Secretary, which does not require Senate confirmation, and he is currently serving as the Acting Under Secretary of Education.