

What to Do at Department of Ed

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The U.S. Department of Education building in Washington on June 10, 2024. Madalina Vasiliu/The Epoch Times



By Mark Bauerlein

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Commentary

Everybody is offering advice to the individuals on their way into office in the Executive Branch after the inauguration on Jan. 20. Federal

practice in the area of higher education is particularly ripe for reform, given the low public opinion of the campus at the present time.

Many institutions such as Harvard University and the University of Pennsylvania would end up in financial trouble if federal support were lightened or withdrawn entirely. Federal research dollars

Share maintain the sciences at those places, and they have strings attached,



For instance, the pressure offices of civic rights exert regarding disparate outcomes in the standardized tests the schools use. To

change federal policy on higher education is to change higher



education.

Here are some suggestions for the incoming political appointments.



First, with a quick order, President Trump and his lieutenants may



eliminate all diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices within the department of Education and the cultural agencies (NEH, NEA, IMLS,

etc.). The social engineering in affairs of personnel, grant-making, and program development must stop.

The division of Americans into the privileged and the historically disadvantaged/underrepresented should have no place in government policy. People who enact such programs should be let go or reassigned. No more identity politics in the agency.

Second, the new administration must review the current accreditors, those bodies charged with evaluating and authorizing educational institutions. Schools don't qualify as schools and the degrees they award aren't valid unless they have undergone an accreditation process and passed the tests.

Accreditors ensure that the mission of the institution is legitimate and that its practices inside and outside the classroom are aligned with that mission. The problem at the present time is that accreditors have inserted identity politics into their criteria. They ask schools about their diversity plans; they want to know what institutions are doing to foster an inclusive climate. Schools are forced to comply—their survival depends upon a positive score. What the new administration

must do is require accreditors to expunge identity criteria from their measurements. Or, the new leadership must authorize new accreditors who eschew woke yardsticks in their reviews of institutions. Conservative institutions should have a choice of accreditors who do not coerce them to abandon their conservatism.

Third, as has been often observed, enrollments in classical education schools at the primary and secondary levels have been exploding in the last 10 years. Single schools and small networks of schools have opened and found that demand far exceeds supply. Applications have increased, waiting lists have swelled. As students in those schools have passed through and graduated, many have wanted to continue their study of the classics and Western civilization at the next level.

This is one reason why many conservative colleges, often those with a religious orientation, are seeing the same thing happening during admissions season: interest is rising, schools are at capacity. This is the case at Belmont Abbey College in Charlotte, Christendom College at Front Royal, Hillsdale College in Michigan, University of St. Thomas in Houston, and many others.

This is a signal to the federal government. Parents want classical education for their kids, and too many are being turned away. A population is underserved. The Department of Education can help by founding new programs in the field, and it can pay for them with funds taken from DEI offices and programs that have been terminated. There could be special grant categories for recruiting teachers and school leaders, for making improvements in facilities, adding music and arts programs, etc.

Classical education would be a focus in the same way that the Department of Education and the cultural agencies have in the past supported educational programs that affirm identity politics.

These three actions would evoke anger and criticism, to be sure. Unions would object, as would academics whose outlook is grounded in identity politics and journalists who share the model of group victimization. The results of the election last week, however,

demonstrate that negative coverage doesn't matter. Defenders of the status quo have no arguments in their favor. Academic outcomes are down, campus controversies such as the pro-Palestinian encampments and the plagiarism cases have shocked and dismayed Americans, and astronomical tuition has angered middle-class families.

Withdrawing the federal government from illiberal practices of identity politics is a political win for the incoming president.

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