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# Billions of Dollars Are at Stake Under Trump's Funding Freeze. What Could That Mean for Your College?

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7–9 minutes



*President Trump* Andrew Harnik, Getty Images

The Trump administration's initial [move](#) freezing [trillions](#) of dollars in federal grants and loans has sparked widespread confusion and concern across higher education and the nation, even though it was [walked](#) back after being paused by Judge John J. McConnell

Jr. of the U.S. District Court of Rhode Island. The funding freeze was later further blocked by an additional order from Judge Loren AliKhan of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

Part of the confusion stems from the language of the original memo issued last month by the Office of Management and Budget, advising all agencies in the executive branch to suspend distribution of funding [originating](#) from about 2,600 grant and loan programs. The freeze was apparently [meant](#) to prevent federal funds from being used to “advance Marxist equity, transgenderism, and Green New Deal social-engineering policies.” Agencies were also directed to probe each program with a series of questions, such as:

- “Does this program provide federal funding to non-governmental organizations supporting or providing services, either directly or indirectly, to removable or illegal aliens?”
- “Does this program provide funding that is implicated by the directive to end discriminatory programs, including illegal DEI and ‘diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility’ (DEIA) mandates, policies, programs, preferences, and activities, under whatever name they appear, or other directives in the same [Executive Order], including those related to ‘environmental justice’ programs or ‘equity-related’ grants?”
- “Does this program promote gender ideology?”
- “Does this program promote or support in any way abortion or other related activities identified in the Hyde Amendment?”

Before the memo was ultimately rescinded, administration officials [clarified](#) that certain programs would not be paused: Student loans, Pell Grants, and other Title IV funds were to be disbursed as normal, as were [funds](#) associated with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Medicaid, Social Security, and Medicare.

Some programs and funding remain in the crosshairs. Karoline Leavitt, the White House press secretary, said President Trump's overarching executive orders directing his administration to review and eliminate federal spending on "ideological" programs and causes (DEI; environmental justice; gender identity, among others) [remained](#) in effect, indicating the administration's intent to continue to probe about 2,600 federal programs.

And in spite of the rulings from Judges AliKhan and McConnell, reports suggest some organizations have continued to struggle to gain access to some federal funds. New York's attorney general, Letitia James, a Democrat, [told](#) Judge McConnell that many state agencies were still having difficulty gaining access to funding appropriated under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act.

The president has also issued a flurry of executive orders with more specific aims, which have translated into funding stoppages for [transgender](#) health services and research, refugee

[resettlement](#), and clinical trials [overseen](#) by the U.S. Agency for International Development. The diffuse and decentralized nature of these and other funding pauses has complicated efforts to comprehensively understand how federal funding has been affected since President Trump took office, and how it might be affected across the next four years.

To better understand how reliant colleges are on federal programs, a *Chronicle* analysis identified just over 1,500 institutions that received nearly \$53 billion of federal assistance during the 2023 fiscal year — the most recent period available for analysis and for which there is a critical mass of filings accessible for review. *The Chronicle* excluded from its analysis an array of federal programs — specifically, Title IV (HEA) programs, various programs created in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as ones focused on disaster relief — to gain a more-precise understanding of the revenues that are at risk. However, because of how certain state bodies cataloged and reported their receipt of federal assistance, this analysis shouldn't be seen as comprehensive for the higher-ed sector as a whole. Public colleges in states like North Carolina and West Virginia, which receive considerable federal support for research, had to be excluded. More information can be found in the footnotes below.

Several institutions pulled in hundreds of federal grants, with a handful receiving billions of dollars, for purposes that include funding for research, conservation, economic development, and curriculum development.

To see how much federal money typically flows to the nation's colleges, explore the table below.

Notes: The universe of institutions in the table originates from information submitted by state, nonprofit, and tribal entities to the federal government, and should not be considered comprehensive. An institution's failure to submit its financial statements or an audit for the 2023 fiscal year would have precluded it from this analysis. *The Chronicle* elected to exclude filings for entities whose reported mandate extended well beyond higher education. For instance, federal assistance awarded to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is recorded [alongside](#) K-12 funding in filings submitted to the federal government by the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority. Given the NCSEAA's broad interests, information relevant to NCSEAA — and therefore North Carolina public universities — is excluded from this analysis. Similarly, because financial information relevant to West Virginia University and its sister institutions were incorporated within the filing prepared for the [entirety](#) of the state of West Virginia, *The Chronicle* excluded such information from this analysis as well.

Readers should also remain mindful of the diversity of corporate structures used by America's colleges. When financial statements were prepared and reported separately for affiliate organizations, *The Chronicle* elected to exclude such filings from this analysis. In other cases, like the University of California — representing the UC system office, the UC's 10 campuses, 13 medical centers, and Oakland-based Children's Hospital and Research Center — financial assistance information is cataloged in a single report.

Institution-submitted financial statements and single audits covering their 2023 fiscal years are available for download from the table. Revenue information can be found in [Statement](#) (or

Statements) of Activities ([Revenues](#), Expenses, and Changes in Net Position). Information about specific federal-assistance programs is reported within the [Schedule](#) of [Expenditures](#) of Federal Awards.