

From Degree to Career: Strengthening the Pathway to Meaningful Work

June 18, 2026 | Philadelphia College Prep Roundtable Spring
Symposium





Government Relations and National Engagement Department



The American Council on Education (ACE) is a membership organization that mobilizes the higher education community to shape effective public policy and foster innovative, high-quality practice. As the major coordinating body for the nation's colleges and universities, our strength lies in our diverse membership of nearly 1,600 colleges and universities, related associations, and other organizations in the United States and abroad.

ACE is the only major higher education association to represent all types of U.S. accredited, degree-granting institutions. Our members educate two out of every three students in all accredited, degree-granting U.S. institutions.

National Engagement

State Policies Driving National Impact



2026 WINTER TERM PULSE POINT SURVEY

Kara Seidel and Danielle Melidona

State Limitations on Diversity Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education

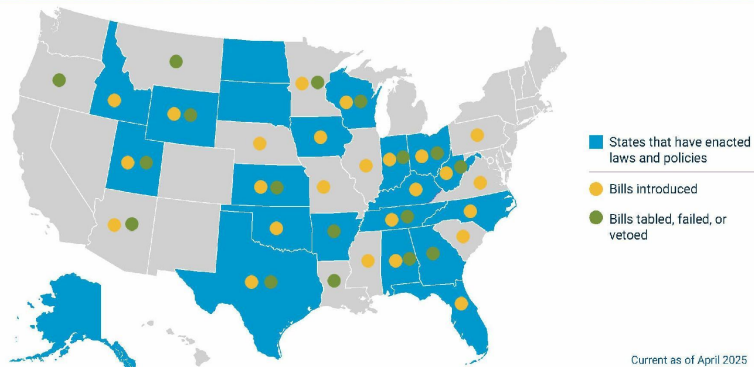
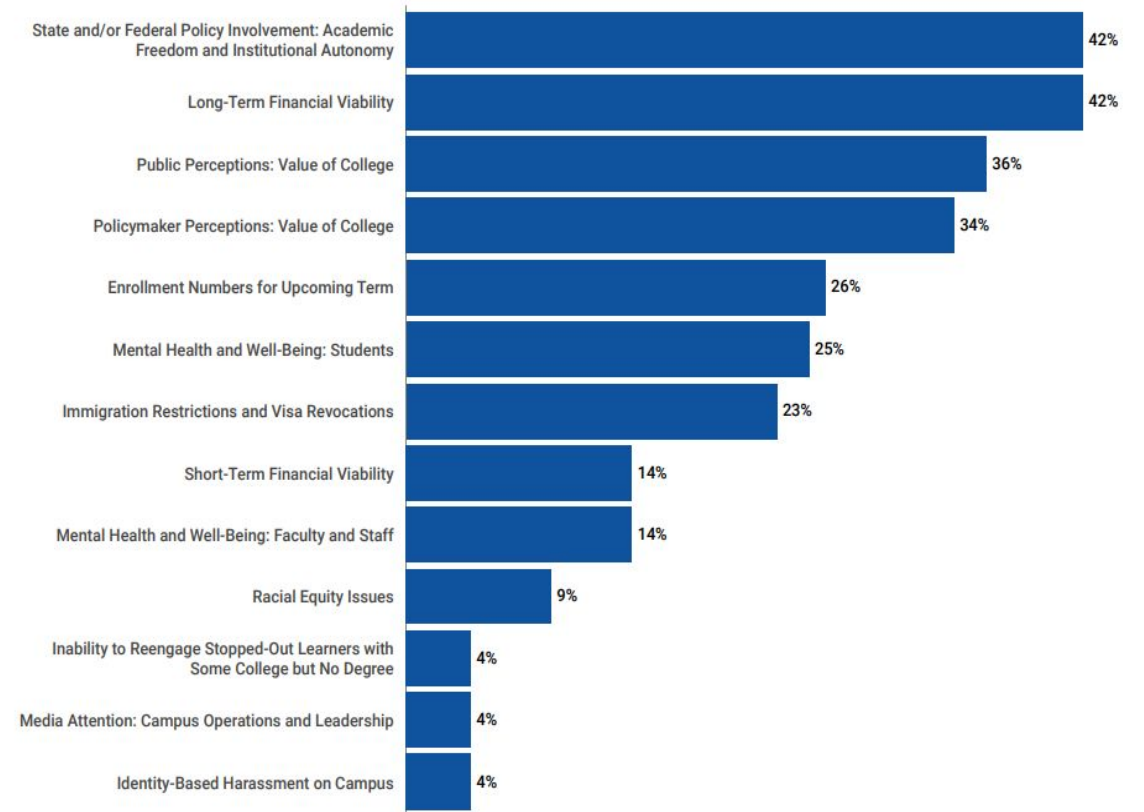


Figure 2. Distribution of Most Pressing Concerns



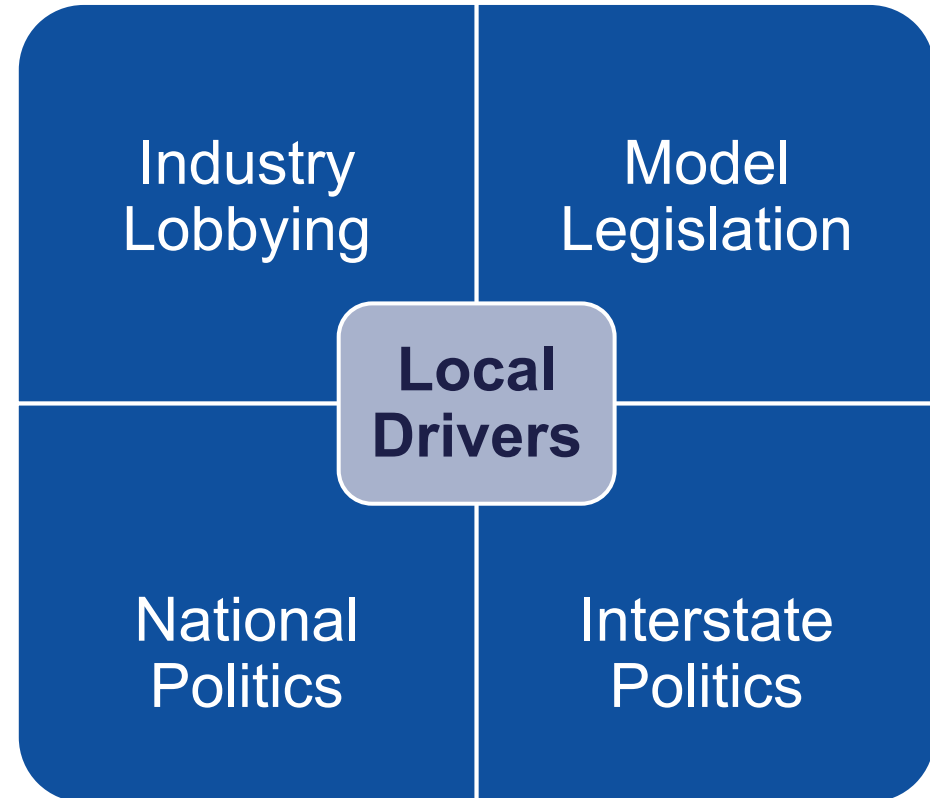
State Legislatures

The Ground Game for National Policy

Introductions

Enactments

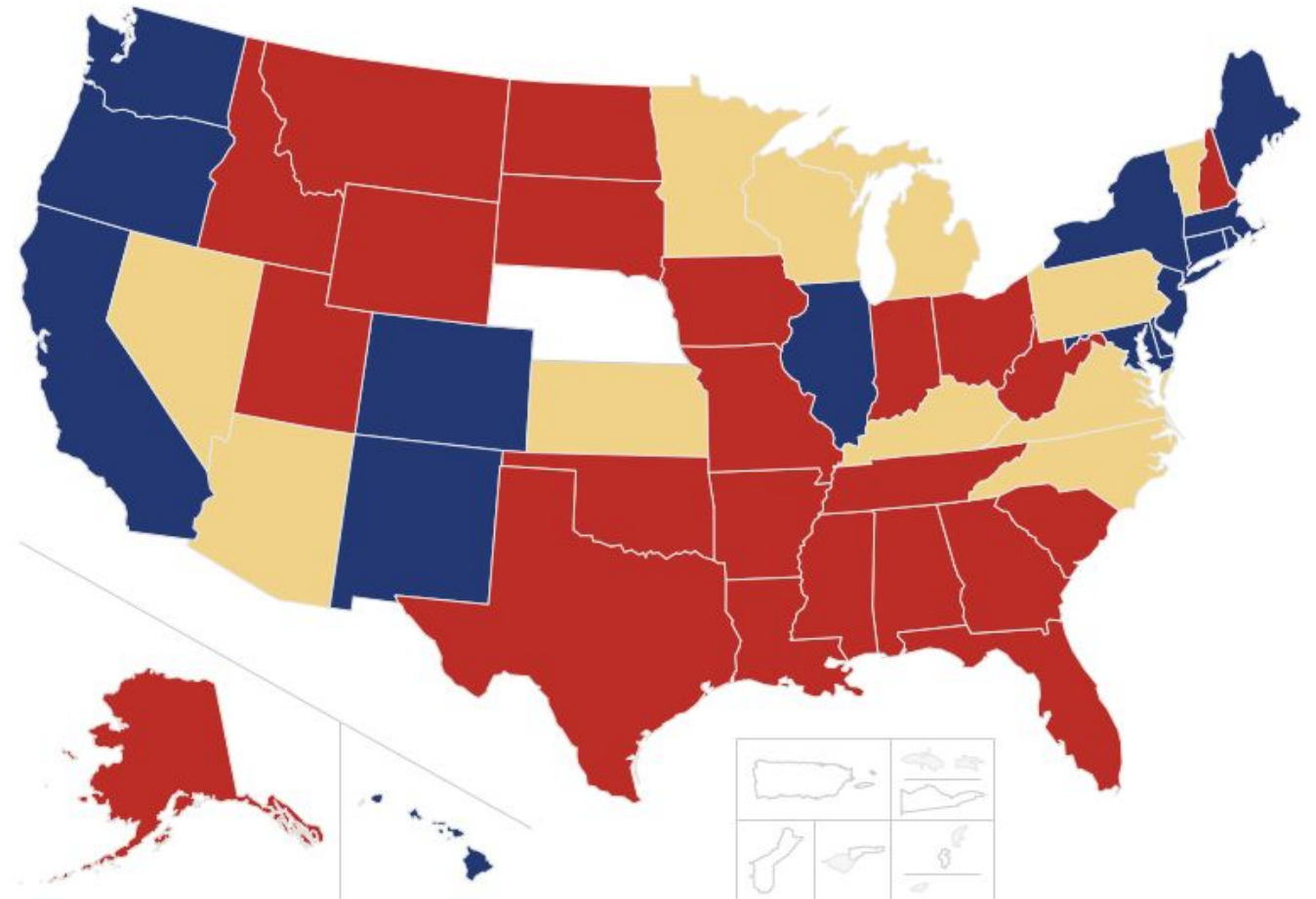
Colorado: 67.81%
Georgia: 66.06%
Delaware: 64.62%
Utah: 63.16%
Arkansas: 62.52%
District of Columbia: 60.09%
North Dakota: 59.18%
Louisiana: 57.78%
Idaho: 56.62%
Nevada: 50.37%



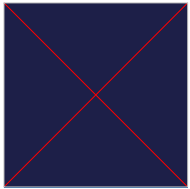
Beyond Partisanship: local accountability controls

NCSL | August 29, 2025

Legislature and Governor Control

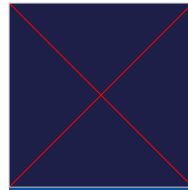


Designing a National Engagement Strategy | *All Politics are Local*



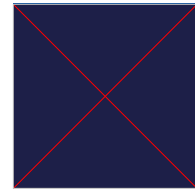
Advocate

Build and empower member communities to strategically engage on state public policy



Create

Develop the infrastructure to convene and grow a national network of member communities advancing state policies



Educate

Affirm and strengthen public trust by fostering awareness about the role and value of postsecondary degrees

State Strategies

Integrating with federal
advocacy

Cutting through the culture
wars

Workforce readiness as a
translator

Defining a higher education
ecosystem



Building Pathways in Virginia Bridging Education & Workforce for All August 25, 2025



THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN AMERICA

Explore how colleges and universities in the USA drive economic growth and enrich communities.



ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Higher education plays a critical role in building Virginia's economy, workforce, and communities.

Higher education builds America.

Learn more at acenet.edu/buildamerica

VIRGINIA SUMMARY

 **139**
institutions *

 **704,143**
students †

 **98,422**
employees ‡

Colleges are leaders of Virginia's economic enterprises.

Our institutions generate revenue for the local, state, and regional economies.

\$19.81 billion
in **total revenue** across
institutions within the state

\$17.60 billion
in **total money spent** by
institutions within the state

Research expenditures drive economic growth, grow and attract industry, and help to develop a skilled workforce.

\$1.73 billion
in **total research expenditures** within the state

College graduates power Virginia's workforce.

Our graduates help fill workforce needs across the state and in many cases outearn nongraduates.

Median Earnings, by Educational Attainment

High school degree or equivalent	\$41,061
Some college or associate degree	\$47,086
Bachelor's degree or higher	\$74,468

Estimated Unemployment Rates for the Civilian Labor Force, by Educational Attainment

High school degree or equivalent	4.3%
Some college or higher	2.1%

Virginia's colleges are key employers.

Our institutions are large employers that support jobs and employ people across the state.

Institutions across the state employ 98,422 individuals, resulting in:

\$7.29 billion
in **total salary**
expenditures

\$1.74 billion
in **total benefits**
expenditures

Virginia's colleges invest in students.

Across the state, institutions of higher education invest in students by supporting families and ensuring that students can access and complete their degrees.

\$3.28 billion in total federal, state, and institutional student grant aid and scholarships awarded	\$11,286 spent on instruction per FTE student	\$2,788 spent on student services per FTE student
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Civic and Community Engagement

	High School or Equivalent	Some College or Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Advanced Degree
Voted in the last local election	40.4%	55.5%	58.9%	65.5%
Attended a public meeting to discuss issues	3.3%	13.3%	11.6%	18.2%
Belonged to any group, organization, or association	15.7%	34.3%	31.5%	43.2%
Participated in volunteering	11.3%	30.4%	37.6%	47.2%
Donated to political organizations	3.2%	2.0%	6.6%	15.8%
Donated to non-political organizations	40.5%	55.3%	69.9%	67.9%

Source: CPS (2023 September)

Notes: Data represent estimates across Title-IV institutions for each state and the District of Columbia. | * Includes only Title IV primarily postsecondary institutions. | † Total 12-month unduplicated headcount. | ‡ Includes medical school employees.

Sources: Data from National Center for Education Statistics, 2022-23 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (U.S. Department of Education, 2023); U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey, Tables S1501 and B23006 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2024).

Questions?

