

SACSCOC Legislative Activities Summary

SACSCOC created a new legislative webpage, outlining federal legislative activities for the upcoming year at <http://www.sacscoc.org/LegislativeActivities.asp>. As part of its legislative activities, SACSCOC plans to emphasize the following talking points:

- Stress the importance of local/state control and high institutional quality are achieved through facts and careful deliberation through regional accreditation.
- Remind legislators that student populations' demographics vary in different parts of the US and "a single 'bright line'" cannot be applied to all schools.
- Emphasize the need of quality data, especially in higher education, from the US Department of Education (ED), and how to improve the use of such metrics in regional accreditation.
- Relay concerns of federal overreach in state and local matters, especially in the area of financial aid, which does not fall under the purview of regional accreditation agencies. However, regional accreditation can play a role in this area through collaboration with ED and state/local governments in sharing needed information to decrease financial aid waste.

With this in mind, SACSCOC plans to contact key legislators, write op-ed articles in Washington DC and regional media outlets, and appear on media programs as needed.

As part of the legislative strategy, SACSCOC received a memorandum from the Penn Hill Group (PHG) the day after the election, and posted it on its legislative webpage. PHG, based in Washington DC, is a lobbying firm specializing in education and workforce policy (<http://pennhillgroup.com/>). PHG's detailed memorandum outlines its expectations by forecasting the implications of the Trump presidency on federal education policy. PHG discussed the following areas:

- Identified key education players from the Hoover Institution, American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation and other organizations/agencies to assess their impact on shaping federal policy within the Trump presidency.
- Identified key legislators within education committees, and determine how they could either push or delay appropriations for key education bills needing reauthorization, such as the Education Sciences Reform Act (ERSA) and the Higher Education Act (HEA) along with other specific programs, such as National Institutes of Health (NIH) with a significant increase due to the potential distribution of Pell Grant program surplus.
- Identified education-related regulations and determine how they may be prioritized by the Trump presidency and legislators due to the anticipated deregulation, including Title IX investigations and for-profit education providers.
- Potential scale back of former President Obama's educational / regulatory initiatives.
- Development of FY18 budget with additional appropriations for school-choice initiatives, the simplification of the student loan repayment, and federal tax breaks. Determine whether expired authorizations such as the ERSA and HEA will be re-appropriated as well as computer science/STEM initiatives for K12 schools.