



MEMORANDUM

To: CSCU Presidents

From: Terrence Cheng, CSCU Chancellor

cc: Jessica Paquette, Chief of Staff, Karen Buffkin, General Counsel, Cameron Liston, Chief Compliance Officer, Lloyd Blanchard, Interim Vice President for Admin. & CFO, Adam Joseph, Vice Chancellor for External Affairs

Date: January 25, 2025

Re: Executive Orders and Directives on DEIA and Civil Rights

Background

On January 20 and 21, 2025, President Trump issued three executive orders addressing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) policies and their alignment with federal civil rights laws. The immediate impact of the orders includes redefining sex at the federal level, terminating federal DEIA programs deemed to involve discriminatory practices, and prohibiting characteristic-based preferences in federal hiring and contracting.

On January 22, the Department of Labor released a memo instructing that grant recipients “must immediately cease all award activities related to DEI or DEIA.” The system office has identified one potentially impacted grant and will work with institutional leadership to ensure compliance with federal requirements for this and any other grants that may be affected.

Potential Impacts on CSCU

Specifically, Section 5 of the [Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity](#) executive order directs the Attorney General and the Secretary of Education to issue updated guidance within 120 days regarding “measures and practices required to comply with *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*.” This guidance will likely seek to broadly apply the federal DEIA policies to all institutions receiving federal funding, including those within the CSCU system.

Continued Monitoring

We expect further federal action impacting higher education compliance and operations. While these actions may at times indicate broad impacts, fundamental principles of federalism will define true operational impact based on action type (i.e., sub-regulatory guidance, regulation, executive orders, legislation) and established jurisdictional authority. Our responses must be thoughtful, appropriate and consistent with our mission and values.

In response to any federal actions impacting higher education, CSCU will conduct a comprehensive review to ensure that our policies and practices align with the new requirements, safeguarding continued access to federal grants, Title IV funding, and other critical federal resources. While the full impact on higher education remains to be seen, CSCU is committed to ensuring compliance while maintaining its mission of access and opportunity for all students and employees. We will continue to monitor the



situation, collaborate with stakeholders, and provide updates to you as new information becomes available.

System Coordination, Support, and Next Steps

To ensure a unified and consistent response, System Office leadership, including legal and compliance teams, will schedule a meeting in the coming week with institutional presidents. This meeting will begin the conversation, provide initial guidance, and establish the appropriate forums and processes to address this dynamic situation effectively.

In the meantime, if your institution believes any grants may be impacted by the DOL directive, or if you have questions or concerns regarding policies or compliance related to this matter, please contact Karen Buffkin, General Counsel (karen.buffkin@ct.edu) and Cameron Liston, Chief Compliance Officer (cameron.liston@ct.edu).

Our priority is to ensure adherence to federal requirements while upholding CSCU's mission to serve Connecticut residents' educational and professional aspirations. We are here to provide resources, address specific concerns, and guide you as we navigate these changes. By working collaboratively, we will ensure CSCU meets its obligations and continues its legacy of access and opportunity for all.