

Here's Every Major Statement Trump and DeVos Have Made on Higher Ed

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Evan Vucci, AP Images

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos says her policy views are "very aligned" with President Trump's, including the belief that four-year colleges are not serving students well.

On the campaign trail, Donald J. Trump discussed higher-education policy sparingly. That tendency has largely continued since his inauguration as President Trump, and appears to be shared by Betsy DeVos, the secretary of education.

The Chronicle will keep a chronological list of comments made by both President Trump and Ms. DeVos, below. Did we miss anything? Email adam.harris@chronicle.com.

October 13, 2016: Mr. Trump gives [his most substantive speech](#) on higher education, at a rally in Columbus, Ohio, where he suggests his own income-based repayment plan, and says he will "reconsider" tax-exempt endowments.

January 17, 2017: During a contentious confirmation hearing, Ms. DeVos speaks at some length about topics ranging from [student debt to Title IX](#). "For too long a college degree has been pushed as the only avenue for a better life. The old and expensive brick-mortar-and-ivy model is not the only one that will lead to a prosperous future," she tells the senators. "President-elect Trump and I agree we need to support all postsecondary avenues, including trade and vocational schools, and community colleges."

February 2: A riot breaks out at the University of California at Berkeley after the cancellation of a speech by Milo Yiannopoulos, then a Breitbart editor. The following morning, President Trump [takes to Twitter](#) to rail against the Berkeley campus and asks whether the university should continue to receive federal funds.

February 16: Ms. DeVos [praises community colleges](#) in her first speech on higher education after being confirmed as the education secretary. During the eight-minute address, Ms. DeVos says President Trump's 100-day plan "notes the importance of expanding vocational and technical education, the types of career and technical education that community colleges excel at."

February 17: In an [interview with Axios](#), Ms. DeVos acknowledges that her policy views are "very aligned" with President Trump's, saying that the administration believes four-year colleges are not serving students well and hopes to trim the federal education budget.

February 23: During an appearance at the Conservative Political Action Conference, Ms. DeVos [takes aim](#) at university faculty members, criticizing them for "ominously" telling students what to think. Ms. DeVos further emphasizes her alignment with the rest of the administration on the Obama-era transgender bathroom guidance. "Let me just say this issue was a very huge example of the Obama administration's overreach," she says. The night before, Ms. DeVos issues [a strongly worded statement](#) proclaiming the "moral obligation" to protect students and investigate claims of discrimination.

February 27: Following a "listening session" with leaders of historically black colleges and universities, Ms. DeVos [issues a statement](#) saying HBCUs were "pioneers of school choice," in an attempt to find a common thread between her central platform and the institutions. Many people quickly note that HBCUs were not founded to promote school choice but out of necessity, as black people were barred from attending many white colleges in the aftermath of the Civil War. She begins to [walk back the comment](#) during a luncheon with black-college leaders and members of Congress the following day.

February 28: President Trump signs a long-awaited executive order on HBCUs flanked by several leaders of black colleges. In [prepared remarks](#), President Trump says the administration will make HBCUs "an absolute priority." The order moves the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities from the Education Department to the White House, but does not include targets for increased funding, as [many HBCU leaders had hoped](#).

March 16: Following the release of [President Trump's budget blueprint](#), which includes \$1.4 billion in funds for school-choice programs alongside deep cuts in a number of agencies related to higher education and in student-aid programs, Ms. DeVos issues a [statement](#) praising the president's proposals. Ms. DeVos says the budget plan would streamline and simplify college funding.

March 24: During her trip to Valencia College, a two-year college in Florida, Ms. DeVos again praised career-preparation and community colleges. Her [remarks at the institution](#) were consistent with previous statements the administration has made, where heavy emphasis has been placed on vocational and technical education. It was her first official visit to a higher-education institution.

April 7: Ms. DeVos visited Miami Dade College, a day after visiting Florida International University. In a news release, Ms. DeVos praised the college's "combination of four- and two-year programs." During [a Q&A session](#) with the *Miami Herald* following her visit, Ms. DeVos said students who are undocumented immigrants "should not be concerned." The education secretary pointed to a comment made by John F. Kelly, the Homeland Security secretary, saying that apprehending undocumented students is [not a priority](#).

May 5: President Trump raised eyebrows in his signing statement on the \$1.1-trillion omnibus spending bill when he singled out the Historically Black College and University Capital Financing Program, a decades-old program that helps historically black colleges fund campus construction projects, as an example of a [potentially unconstitutional](#)

provision in the bill that "allocates benefits on the basis of race, ethnicity, and gender." The administration walked back the comment [two days later](#) in a statement, saying the paragraph did not affect its "unwavering support for HBCUs and their critical educational missions."

May 9: During a brief appearance at the ASU+GSV conference in Salt Lake City, Ms. DeVos offered suggestions about how Congress should think about higher education. "The discussion is around the reauthorization of higher ed," she said, referring to the overdue reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965. "My bigger question is, Why would we reauthorize an act that is like 50 or 60 years old and has continued to be amended? Why wouldn't we start fresh and talk about what we need in this century and beyond for educating and helping our young people?" Sen. Lamar Alexander, chair of the Senate education committee, has said reauthorizing the Higher Education Act is his [top education priority](#) this congress.

May 10: Ms. DeVos delivered the commencement address at Bethune-Cookman University, a historically black college in Daytona Beach, Fla. Her speech was [marked by a barrage of boos](#), as the graduates turned their backs in protest. For her part, Ms. DeVos "[reaffirmed](#)" the Trump administration's commitment to HBCUs, adding that it supports restoring year-round Pell Grants.

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