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September 20, 2017

Hilary Malawer, Assistant General Counsel
United States Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Room 6E231
Washington, DC 20202

Docket ID: ED-2017-OS-0074

Dear Ms. Malawar:

On behalf of the University of Colorado (CU), I write to submit comments in response to the June 22, 2017 Federal Register notice, which requested public input on federal regulations to repeal, replace or modify, in accordance with President Trump's Executive Order 13777 "Enforcing the Regulatory Reform Agenda."

CU is committed to acting as a responsible steward of federal funds. As President, I have prioritized controlling the university's costs, as well as streamlining and improving our business practices, and have passed on those savings to our students. As a result, CU's administrative overhead is 28 percent below our national peers, according to the most recent data from the National Association of College and University Business Officers.

I likewise recognize that regulatory oversight, when exercised in a meaningful and limited way, can provide essential protections to students and taxpayers. Unfortunately, the current patchwork of federal regulations that institutions of higher education like CU must comply with can be excessive, duplicative, ambiguous, and often costly.

In 2013, Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO) asked me to serve on a national task force with fifteen other college and university presidents to identify specific federal regulations and reporting requirements that unduly burden students, families, and institutions of higher education. In February 2015, we issued a final report with our conclusions entitled "Recalibrating Regulation of Colleges and Universities: Report of the Task Force on Federal Regulation of Higher Education."


The task force found a number of broad problems facing institutions of higher education, including many federal regulations that are unnecessarily voluminous and complex; costly in their reporting and compliance burden; discourage educational innovation; and may even be unrelated to education, student safety, or stewardship of federal funds. Our report spotlighted ten especially problematic regulations to reform, including financial responsibility standards, return of Title IV funds (R2T4), state authorization of distance education programs, and institutional accreditation. We also provided a comprehensive list of 59 specific regulations, with proposed actions the Department of Education should take, in a "regulations matrix" included in the report's appendix.

I recommend this report to you as you evaluate the current patchwork of existing regulations, and determine which reforms will be in the best interest of students, institutions of higher education, and taxpayers.

Finally, I firmly believe that we need significant reform in the area of accreditation. I would have liked to see an even deeper dive and more substantive reforms proposed by the task force in this area. CU has identified several top priorities and principles for accreditation reform, which include refocusing federal oversight on educational quality, not superfluous or irrelevant metrics; sustaining and enhancing academic quality through institutional autonomy and academic freedom; and reorganizing accreditors so that their oversight emphasizes high-level goals and metrics.

I would be delighted to discuss the recommendations of the Task Force on Federal Regulation of Higher Education, as well as CU's priorities for reforming accreditation in detail anytime. Thank you for the opportunity to provide input as the Department performs this important regulatory evaluation.

Sincerely,



Bruce D. Benson
President