# BIDEN ADMINISTRATION:

## Higher Education Overview

In the following report, Hanover Research examines priority areas for the incoming Biden administration and policy implications for the higher education sector.

# INTRODUCTION: THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

On January 20, 2021, the higher education sector began engaging with a new presidential administration: **Joe Biden,** the **46th president of the United States**; his wife **Dr. Jill Biden**, a long-time **community-college educator**; **Vice President Kamala Harris**, the first graduate of a **Historically Black University (HBCU)** in the White House; and **Education Secretary Miguel Cardona**, who, as education commissioner in Connecticut, is well-known for his efforts to **support low-income and minority students** (*Inside Higher Ed*).

With control of both the White House and Congress, the Biden administration is well-positioned to set the legislative agenda (NPR). In the following policy brief, Hanover Research presents information on what policies may be enacted early on and how that **impacts planning decisions for higher education leadership**. Ultimately, Hanover's high-quality research and analytics will **help higher education stakeholders make informed decisions**, identify and seize opportunities, and heighten their effectiveness in the Biden era.

## OVERVIEW OF KEY POLICY POSITIONS

**With policy implications for the higher education sector, the Biden administration's *Plan for Education Beyond High School* outlines the following priority areas for the incoming Administration:**

- **Community Colleges:** The Biden administration seeks to invest in community colleges and workforce training. Colleges should conduct research to determine what student support services, facilities, technologies, and other investments they should make to leverage the Biden administration's proposed grant funding.
- **Higher Education ROI:** The Biden administration intends to strengthen the return on investment (ROI) of higher education, requiring that institutions understand where they currently are and what they need to change to best support short- and long-term student success.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** The Biden administration highlights diversity and inclusion initiatives and programming, particularly among minority-serving institutions (MSIs). These institutions should strategically plan how to allocate incoming grant monies from the federal government.

**The Biden administration also released a summary of his proposed $1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package – the "American Rescue Plan", which includes another $35 billion for the higher education sector. The proposed package prioritizes:**

- **Public Institutions and MSIs** : The Biden administration's relief package focuses on providing financial support to public universities and colleges as well as private institutions serving minority students in the wake of COVID-19. According to documents obtained by *Inside Higher Ed*, "The president-elect's plan will ensure colleges have critical resources to implement public health protocols, execute distance learning plans, and provide emergency grants to students in need."

## Biden Administration's Goal: Invest in community colleges and workforce training

### What are the Biden administration's intended actions? The Biden administration will...

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| Enact legislation and create federal-state partnerships to provide two years of **tuition-free community college education or training programs** | Provide grant money directly to community colleges to **improve student success** rates | Offer financial incentives to foster collaboration between community colleges and community-based organizations for **student support services** | Make a $50 billion investment in workforce training, such as **through industry partnerships**, based on **in-demand skills and knowledge** | Invest $8 billion in community college **facilities and technology** |

### What Does This Mean for Higher Education? Institutions should...

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| Identify **new student recruitment markets and profiles** to expand their reach | **Evaluate the academic program opportunities** to boost student outcomes and support local labor market needs | Identify **student needs** related to **academic development and interests** | Assess **skills, knowledge, and occupational** gaps in workforce as well as **prospective industry partners** for new and existing programming | Determine **facility and technology needs** to support strategic goals and priorities |

### What immediate next steps should we take? Hanover's research solutions include...

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| **Geographic Assessment Scan:** Assesses geographically-based factors such as population demographics to provide student recruitment insights | **Market Opportunity Scan:** Evaluates an institution's academic portfolio to identify potential areas to grow or realign | **Prospective Student Survey:** Surveys potential students, to understand their perceptions and preferences for educational opportunities | **Employer Needs In-Depth Interviews:** Gathers and assesses local employers' opinions, insights, and feedback regarding a specific program or initiative | **Peer Facilities and Technologies Benchmarking:** Evaluates facility and technology resources relative to peer and competitor institutions |

## Biden Administration's Goal: Strengthen the return on investment (ROI) of higher education

### What are the Biden administration's intended actions? The Biden administration will...

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| Make **public education tuition-free** for all families with incomes below $125,000 | Provide **additional, federal financial support** to low-income individuals, veterans, public servants, and other key community groups | Expand **academic program pathways and student support services** through grant support directly to universities and colleges | Prioritize **job-ready skills and knowledge**, such as targeted work-study funds | Increase oversight of **for-profit education programs** and private lenders |

### What Does This Mean for Higher Education? Institutions should...

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| Develop mechanisms to **evaluate and track student outcomes.** | **Understand where they are currently and what they need to change** with regards to optimizing financial aid support, especially to key student groups | Consider **what alternative program pathways and student support services exist** for potential development using grant support | Assess **potential future labor market trends and needs** for emerging fields and technologies | Determine **strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats (for-profit entities)** to shape future marketing strategies and messaging |

### What immediate next steps should we take? Hanover's research solutions include...

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| **Alumni Outcomes Survey:** Collects data from graduates regarding their career trajectory and accomplishments | **Financial Aid Optimization Analysis:** Analyzes historical trends to ascertain optimal levels of financial aid to matriculate and retain future students | **Academic Program Pathways Benchmarking:** Evaluates course structure and core components relative to peer and competitor institutions | **Industry Needs In-Depth Interviews:** Uncovers the skills and knowledge future graduates should possess to increase their value in future labor markets | **Marketing Position Analysis:** Benchmarks an institution's branding and messaging against competitors and highlights opportunities for increased differentiation |

## Biden Administration's Goal: Support diversity and inclusion initiatives and programming

### What are the Biden administration's intended actions? The Biden administration will...

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| Invest $18 billion in grants and make permanent existing federal funding to **MSIs to lower costs, improve student success, and close equity gaps** | Use $10 billion in grants and contracts to build **research capacity at MSIs** towards solving the country's most pressing issues | Expand digital and physical infrastructure for **teaching, research, and innovation at MSIs** with $20 billion in grants | Provide $10 billion in **student success programming and services** for low-income students, students of color, and other key student groups | Expand **career pathways for MSI graduates** in areas that meet national priorities, including building a diverse pipeline of **teachers and healthcare workers** |

### What Does This Mean for Higher Education? Institutions should...

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| Identify and develop ways to bolster low-income and minority students' **persistence and outcomes** | Develop **grant applications** for priority research areas to the Biden Administration, such as climate change and health disparities | Determine **resources needs and best practices** to support strategic goals and priorities for expansion | **Speak directly with students** to understand their impressions of existing support services and unmet needs | Assess **new program feasibility** in terms of student demand, employer demand, and market saturation related to education and healthcare |

### What immediate next steps should we take? Hanover's research solutions include...

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| **Student Support Services Benchmarking:** Identifies best practices and resources to improve student success during and after the academic experience | **Grant Support:** Get grant-identification and writing support from our in-house grants team | **Facilities and Technologies Benchmarking:** Evaluates resource investments and allocation relative to peer and competitor institutions | **Institutional Climate Survey:** Engages students, faculty, and staff to uncover impressions of the student services and other aspects of educational culture | **Market Analysis Report:** Assesses a specific program's attractiveness through an analysis of market demand, saturation, and employment outlook |

## Biden Administration's Goal: Support public institutions and MSIs in the wake of COVID-19

### What are the Biden administration's intended actions? The Biden administration will...

| Invest part of a $35 billion fund to aid public institutions and MSIs for **emergency grants to students in need** | Invest part of a $35 billion fund to aid public institutions and MSIs for **execution of distance learning plans** | Invest part of a $35 billion fund to aid public institutions and MSIs for **implementing public health protocols** | **Expand student aid eligibility**, such as to undocumented students and those ineligible for federal student aid | **Private and for-profit institutions are generally excluded** from the proposed relief package |
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### What Does This Mean for Higher Education? Institutions should...

| Reach out to **directly understand** the **issues that led to student attrition** during the pandemic | Determine **IT and distance learning capacity** for now and in preparation for the future | Determine **public health and emergency planning capacity** for now and in preparation for the future | **Identify students at-risk of not graduating** to determine which students may benefit from additional financial support | **Advocate for additional funding**, such as by demonstrating the impact that programming has on the local and broader economies |
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### What immediate next steps should we take? Hanover's research solutions include...

| **Dropped Student Survey:** Engages individuals who did not persist to uncover what elements of the student experience require the most attention | **Peer Distance Learning Benchmarking:** Evaluates IT and distance learning resources and techniques relative to peer and competitor institutions | **Peer Policy Benchmarking:** Evaluates public health and emergency planning resources relative to peer and competitor institutions | **Early Warning Dashboard:** Evaluates comprehensive data to identify which student profiles are at risk of not graduating | **Economic Impact Study:** Analyzes and quantifies the impact an institution has on its community, providing an anchoring point to fundraising and aid efforts |
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