

Summary of Legislation

2026



Higher Education

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During the 2026 legislative session, the General Assembly considered a variety of measures related to higher education in Colorado. Specifically, the legislature adopted bills related to workforce development, health and wellness, funding, board representation, and performance and oversight.

Workforce Development

The General Assembly passed two bills aimed at bolstering workforce development. [House Bill 26-1136](#) creates the Pathways to Public Service Program in the Department of Personnel and Administration to encourage public service for students in high schools, postsecondary institutions, and career and technical education training programs by aligning postsecondary curriculum that qualifies students for employment at state agencies. [House Bill 26-1317](#) modifies the mission of the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) and creates a transition committee to provide recommendations on how to restructure and reorganize the CDHE to achieve its modified mission. Effective July 1, 2028, the mission of the CDHE will be to oversee a system of postsecondary talent development that

integrates postsecondary education, training, and employment resources.

Health and Wellness

By August 1, 2027, [House Bill 26-1335](#) requires that public and private institutions of higher education (IHEs) that operate a student health center provide access to abortion medication, unless doing so conflicts with the IHE's religious beliefs. If an IHE has an on-site pharmacy, the medication must be available on campus. If there is no on-site pharmacy, IHEs must allow abortion medication to be dispensed through a provider on staff at the student health center if permitted by licensing requirements, or by submitting a prescription to an off-campus pharmacy.

Funding

Open educational resources are teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits free use and repurposing by others. [House Bill 26-1016](#) continues the Open Educational Resources Council and grant program, which provides funding for public IHEs, faculty, and staff to create and expand the use of open educational resources.

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Board Representation

Two bills the General Assembly passed during the 2026 session make changes to institutional governing boards. The first, [House Bill 26-1029](#), expands the membership of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education to include two student representatives, one who is enrolled at a public four-year institution and one who is enrolled at a public two-year institution. Under current law, the Board of Directors of the Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC), which is comprised of Metropolitan State University, the University of Colorado at Denver, and the Community College of Denver, has two nonvoting members representing the AHEC student advisory committee and AHEC faculty advisory committee. [Senate Bill 26-034](#) makes these advisory committee representatives voting members of the board.

Performance and Oversight

Two bills adopted this session focus on rewarding IHEs for their performance. Under current law, IHEs are allocated state funding based on a performance funding model, with defined metrics and weights. [House Bill 26-1345](#) adjusts these metrics and weights based on recommendations from the Colorado Commission on Higher Education. [House Bill 26-1006](#) creates an advisory committee in the CDHE to develop criteria for a new thriving institution designation for IHEs. The department must publicly

recognize these institutions by posting the awards list on their website.

The Division of Private Occupational Schools (division) within the CDHE regulates private occupational schools in order to protect against fraudulent or substandard practices. [Senate Bill 26-173](#) exempts pilates and barre teacher training courses, programs, and schools from regulation by the division.

Finally, [Senate Bill 26-078](#) makes several changes to higher education statutes related to data sharing, building maintenance, capital construction, fiscal analyses, and revenue bonds.