



Action Hub Description

Legal Strategy

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Problem Statement: Higher education faces escalating legal, regulatory, and political threats. These include the weaponization of civil rights law to target diversity, equity, and inclusion through enforcement actions, state and federal policy changes, regulatory actions, funding conditions, investigations, litigation, and other tools. Heightened enforcement and compliance requirements have increased legal risk and created a chilling effect on institutional decision-making, while political interference seeks to influence university governance through funding threats and coercive pressure. At the same time, barriers to student access—including threats to financial aid, restrictions affecting vulnerable student populations, and cuts to college access and affordability programs—are expanding alongside state, federal, and private attacks on academic freedom, curriculum, and faculty.

Purpose: The Legal Strategy Hub (Democracy 2025 Higher Education Working Group) serves as a central coordination point for legal strategy and partner collaboration to address threats facing higher education. The Hub facilitates partner input for Democracy's Campus 2036 and provides strategic guidance to participating partners on legal and policy considerations shaping the future of higher education, with a focus on advancing equity, diversity, academic freedom, and civil rights.

Goals:

- Monitor and analyze emerging legal matters by tracking executive orders, regulatory actions, and litigation, and providing partners with timely insights on implications for the field.
- Coordinate and support partner legal actions by creating opportunities for collaboration on litigation and non-litigation advocacy while ensuring partner efforts are aligned, amplified, and mutually reinforcing.
- Strengthen cross-organizational collaboration by building relationships across partner organizations, translating discussions into clear action items, and supporting coordinated follow-through to build a unified, strategic response to threats facing higher education.
- Elevate non-litigation strategies by identifying and promoting partner-led initiatives that advance access, equity, student support, and academic freedom, and leveraging these efforts

to strengthen policy impact and public understanding in alignment with the Hub's legal strategy.