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AAUP-UD Civic Bulletin #3 (May 9, 2025)

This occasional series seeks to inform AAUP-UD members about relevant developments in state and local government policies in Delaware.

~Dael Norwood, History Dept. & AAUP-UD Steering Committee

Meyer Administration

On April 10, 2025, Gov. Meyer delivered his [2025 State of the State Speech](#) in the House Chamber at Legislative Hall in Dover ([Full Text](#), [Highlights](#), [Recording](#))

Higher education policy was not among the priorities outlined in Governor Meyer's speech, though he did mention the state's institutions of higher education, in passing, as tools for vocational training and economic development:

“And for companies that are here or looking to come here, we have some of the best higher education institutions in the nation. The University of Delaware is a hub of innovative leadership. Delaware State University continues to lead with its Early Childhood Innovation Center. And Delaware Tech provides critical workforce development to countless industries.”

Reporting:

- Joseph Edelen, [“Delaware Gov. Matt Meyer Outlines Administration’s Goals in First State of the State Address,”](#) *Delaware State News*, April 10, 2025
- Joseph Edelen, [“Delaware Democrats, Republicans React to Gov. Matt Meyer’s State of the State Address,”](#) *Delaware State News*, April 10, 2025
- Jacob Owens, [“Meyer’s First ‘State of the State’ Highlights Trump, Education,”](#) *Spotlight Delaware*, April 11, 2025,
- Olivia Montes and Amanda Fries, [“6 Takeaways from Meyer’s State of State Address, Including Education, Jobs, Legal Weed,”](#) *The News Journal*, April 11, 2025
- Sarah Petrowich, [“Gov. Meyer Delivers First State of the State, Education and Affordable Healthcare at Forefront,”](#) *Delaware Public Media*, April 10, 2025

DE SecEd responds to Trump Administration demands for DEI elimination

On April 14, 2025, [Delaware Secretary of Education Cynthia Marten responded](#) to a U.S. Department of Education memo ([“Reminder of Legal Obligations”](#)) requiring states to certify compliance with federal officials’ interpretation of discrimination law (described in a [Feb. 14th “Dear Colleague” letter](#)) and eliminate DEI programs, on pain of losing funding.

Secretary Martin’s reply was brief, indicating that "DDOE and our subgrantees are committed to ensuring that every student has access to a quality education, free from discriminatory practices and policies and consistent with all applicable federal laws."

Ruling on suits brought by a handful of affected institutions, [Federal judges have since blocked US ED’s order](#). (UD, though affected by these measures, has not joined any lawsuits).

Sources:

- [DE Secretary of Education to US ED, Re: Reminder of Legal Obligations, April 14, 2025](#)
- US Department of Education, [“Reminder of Legal Obligations...”](#) April 3, 2025
- [“Dear Colleague” Letter](#), Craig Trainor, Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, US Department of Education, April 14, 2025

Reporting:

- Julia Merola, [“Education Secretary Marten Submits Response to Trump DEI Certification Demand.”](#) *Spotlight Delaware*, April 16, 2025
- Cory Turner, [“Why Judges Blocked the Trump Admin’s School DEI Crackdown.”](#) *NPR*, April 26, 2025
- Kelly Powers, [“Education Roundup: Remember That Letter? Courts Block DEI Enforcement Threatening K-12 Funds.”](#) *The News Journal*, April 28, 2025 [NB - this article conflates several US ED communications]

Legislation of Note

The Delaware General Assembly opened for its 153rd session on January 14, 2025. The session runs to June 30th. The legislature [is session again until May 22](#), when it will take a two week recess to conduct Joint Finance Committee markup (i.e. advanced budget discussions). Bills mentioned in prior bulletins that have advanced are highlighted in yellow.

HB 34 w/ HA 1 - Student Head Tax Bill

Status: Passed House; assigned to Elections & Government Affairs Committee in Senate; no hearing yet scheduled

This legislation authorizes the City of Newark to levy a tax of up to \$50 per student, for each fall and spring semester, on any Colleges and Universities that host in-person classes within city limits. (The original bill included an automatic annual CPI-adjustment of the tax’s upper limit; this was removed through amendment). The bill further specifies that payments cannot be made by credit card (UD had, in prior years, paid city utilities bills by credit card – costing the municipal government hundreds of thousands of dollars in fees).

The bill addresses UD’s failure to come to terms with the City over the university’s contribution to the City budget, which recently faced a \$6m deficit. (Since 2001, UD has paid Newark only \$180,000 annually for infrastructure and city services; the new tax would allow the City to collect \$2.4m).

On April 15th, the bill passed the House (39 in favor, 1 not voting, 1 absent), and now awaits consideration by a Senate committee. Near unanimity in the House suggests the bill has a good chance in the Senate – though no Senate committee hearing on the bill has yet been scheduled.

- Joseph Edelen, [“House Amends, Passes Newark’s per-Student, per-Semester Tax on University of Delaware.”](#) *Bay to Bay News*, April 17, 2025
- Josh Shannon, [“House Passes Bill Allowing Newark to Tax the University of Delaware.”](#) *Newark Post*, April 15, 2025

HB 9 w/ HA 1- Dual Employment Bill

Status: Passed House and Senate, awaits Governor’s signature

This bill requires state officials and their supervisors to disclose “dual employment” at other state agencies, “educational and other institutions,” or “political subdivisions” to the Public Integrity Commission. Sponsored by Rep. K. Williams, this bill (along with [HB 6](#) and [HB 38 w/ HA 1](#)) is a response to [UD administrators’ 2024 refusal](#) to comply with requests from the state auditor. It passed both houses of the legislature with overwhelming support.

- Sarah Petrowich, [“State Legislature Passes Bills to Strengthen State Dual Employment Reporting Requirements.”](#) *Delaware First Media*, May 8, 2025, sec. Politics & Government,

HB 38 w/ HA 1 - Provide Records on State Officials

Status: Passed House and Senate, awaits Governor’s signature

This legislation requires any “institution of higher education” receiving state funding to provide records on “elected or appointed” state officials employed by the institution. It appears (along with [HB 6](#) and [HB 9 w/ HA 1](#)) to be a response to [UD administrators’ refusal](#) to comply with the state auditor’s requests – but does so while carefully not defining “institutions of higher education” as state institutions. Fines for non-compliance start at \$10,000. The bill’s lead sponsors are Rep. K. Williams and Sen. T. Paradee, co-chairs of the powerful Joint Finance Committee. It passed both houses of the legislature with overwhelming support.

HB 6 - Auditor Subpoena Bill

Status: Passed full House, assigned to Elections & Government Affairs Committee in Senate

Introduced by Newark-area Rep. Osienski, this bill expands the powers of the State Auditor’s office, allowing the direct issue of subpoenas. Along with [HB 9 w/ HA 1](#) and [HB 38 w/ HA 1](#), it appears to be a direct response to [UD administrators’ refusal](#) last year to comply with the auditor’s request for documentation related to “dual employment” (e.g. a report on individuals holding two taxpayer-funded jobs).

Bills affecting migrants in Delaware: [HB 44](#), [HB 58](#), [HB 60](#), [HB 93](#), [HB 94](#), [HB 95](#), [HB 96](#)

Status: HB 44, HB 60 and HB 95 have been reported out of their committees, and now await by the full House; all the other bills are assigned to committee and await hearings)

Rep. [Sean Lynn](#) (D-Dover) has introduced seven bills that seek to buttress migrants’ rights in Delaware, and increase the state’s visibility on federal enforcement actions and data collection. The bills are varied: some mandate the continuation of educational access (HB 44); others

restrict data sharing with federal authorities (HB 60, 95), limit state law enforcement officers' and agencies' power to collaborate with federal immigration enforcement actions (HB 58, 93, 94). HB 96 would require the state attorney general to report quarterly to the legislature and governor on federal requests for migrant data and enforcement cooperation.

These bills are pertinent to UD affairs insofar as they would affect the rights and protections afforded to migrant students, faculty, and staff on campus, and provide insight into federal actions in the state.

While some of these bills have made it out of committee, the legislature's leadership has not expressed any public support for them, and neither has the AG's office (it is common in Delaware for legislators to seek public support from executive agency leaders for any bills that affect administration).

Related reporting:

- Johnny Perez-Gonzalez, [“Camden, Delaware Reverses ICE Agreement after Backlash from Residents,”](#) *WHYY*, May 9, 2025

SB 90 - Delaware State Inspire Scholarship Expansion

Status: Reported out of Senate Education Committee, awaits consideration by full Senate

Sponsored by Sen. Paradee, this bill expands the Delaware State Inspire Scholarship Program.

[The “Inspire Scholarship”](#) currently provides eight semesters of continuous full tuition funding to Delaware high school students who enroll directly at DSU; this bill would allow those who finish their BA early to apply the remaining funding to a DSU graduate degrees. (In effect, this bill expands state subsidies to DSU, and DSU alone.)

- Joseph Edelen, [“Bill to Allow DSU Inspire Scholarship Students to Use Funds for Graduate Programs Awaits Senate Vote,”](#) *Bay to Bay News*, April 25, 2025

HB 119 - “Freedom to Read Act”

Status: Assigned to the House Administration Committee

This bill requires public libraries and school libraries to adopt a “collection development policy” that prohibits the removal of materials on the basis of author's origins, background, or views, or on the grounds of “partisan, ideological, or religious disapproval.” The bill excludes libraries at “institutions of higher education,” and so does not touch on UD directly.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Griffith, has described it as aiming “to protect individuals' rights to access and read a diverse range of materials without censorship.” Book bans at Delaware public libraries are rare, though the Magnolia Middle School library pursued a mass purge of Japanese graphic novels in October 2023, as age inappropriate.

- Joseph Edelen, [“Bill to Protect Schools, Libraries from Book Bans Introduced in Delaware General Assembly,”](#) *Bay to Bay News*, April 23, 2025.

Major funding bills: [HB 100](#), [HB 101](#), and [SB 30](#)

Status: Still Pending

The statewide general fund appropriation, one-time appropriations, and bond and capital improvements bills, respectively – all of which have a bearing on UD's finances. These all remain in draft form, with changes anticipated as the session continues.

Other News

Shane Brennan, [“Rally at Wilmington Airport Protests Avelo’s Role in Deportations,”](#) *The News Journal*, April 19, 2025

“Protesters lined DuPont Highway outside of Wilmington Airport near New Castle on April 19, demanding Avelo Airlines ground its deportation flights. Avelo Airlines is the only airline that flies commercially out of Delaware. It announced plans to operate deportation flights for the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement earlier in April, citing financial stability while its service expands.”

Sarah Petrowich, [“Protestors Picket Outside Wilmington Airport after Avelo Airline’s Announces Contract with ICE,”](#) *Delaware First Media*, April 25, 2025

“Protestors lined the sides of Route 13 outside the Wilmington Airport Thursday for a honk and wave rally, encouraging residents to boycott Avelo Airlines. The outrage follows an April 7 announcement by the airline — which is Delaware’s only commercial carrier — that it entered a charter agreement with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) to carry out deportation flights. Avelo CEO Andrew Levy said in a statement that he understands this is a “sensitive and complicated topic,” but he sees the charter agreement as a way to provide more financial stability to the low-budget airline.”

Jacob Owens, [“Gov. Meyer Backs Protests of Avelo’s Deportation Flights,”](#) *Spotlight Delaware*, April 30, 2025

“In an interview with Spotlight Delaware on Tuesday, Meyer supported those [protest] efforts. ‘I believe in giving private companies latitude to do what they want to do and, as customers, we all have choices,’ he said, noting that he hasn’t spoken directly with airline leadership. ‘To be completely honest though, my wife Lauren and I were looking at going down to Puerto Rico with Avelo, but now I will not be buying tickets anytime soon.’”