

Higher Education Policy Simulation

July 22, 2026

Purpose: To simulate legislative testimony and policy debate across different political contexts in higher education.

Format: 5 breakout groups with 6 fellows each.

Breakout group tasks:

- 1) Research and prepare 3-5 written talking points
- 2) Deliver 3-minute (maximum) oral testimony to the legislature
- 3) Respond to questions from legislators for 5 minutes

Time:

15 minutes All groups finalize research, talking points, and testimony prep

45 minutes Each group will testify and respond to legislator questions

Legislators:

- Steven Bloom, Group 1
 - Jon Fansmith, Group 5
 - Sarah Spreitzer, Group 2
 - Lindsey Tepe, Group 3
 - Heidi Tseu, Group 4
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The Legislative Proposal

Scenario Details for Groups 1-4

- Your state legislature is holding a public hearing on an introduced bill that proposes to do the following:
 - Disqualify students from a state administered scholarship program if they are pursuing degrees in fields with low projected earnings or workforce demands such as humanities, fine arts, social sciences, and philosophy.

- Reduce funding to higher education for this state scholarship program accordingly (equivalent to a 20 percent reduction to the annual scholarship budget).
- Redirect savings to a new state-based employer grant fund for businesses to upskill employees in high demand workforce areas such as healthcare and childcare.
- Assumptions:
 - You are the president of an institution of higher education in the state.
 - The total state scholarship funding is \$15 million annually.
 - The state has a projected workforce shortage in 3 years for both healthcare and childcare throughout the state.
 - The state scholarship has been equally available to both public and private institutions within the state.
 - Your institution also provides degree programs in healthcare and childcare.
- Divide roles across each group to: provide the oral testimony (not to exceed 3 minutes), develop 3-5 written talking points, and respond to the legislator's questions.
 - Group 1 is in a red state and testifying in support of the legislation.
 - Group 2 is in a red state and testifying against the legislation
 - Group 3 is in a blue state and testifying in support of the legislation
 - Group 4 is in a blue state and testifying against the legislation

Scenario Details for Group 5

- The chair of the federal committee on education and workforce is holding a public hearing to explore the feasibility of a national equivalent to the state proposal.
- Divide roles across the group to:
 - Provide oral testimony (not to exceed 3-minutes) as the governor of a state where the legislation was enacted.
 - Provide oral testimony (not to exceed 3-minutes) as the governor of a state where the legislation was defeated.