



An Open Letter Regarding the Statement on Educational Excellence, Opportunity, and Accountability.

PURPOSE: U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon issued an open letter on August 3, 2026, launching a "National Call to Action" that urges college and university presidents and governing boards to publish public statements by December 31, 2026, detailing their commitments to institutional reform.

Florida Panhandle Technical College (FPTC/College), is committed to maintaining the public's trust through transparency, accountability, academic integrity, fiscal responsibility, and measurable results. Our focus remains on student success, workforce readiness, and expanding economic opportunity for the communities we serve; therefore, Florida Panhandle Technical College submits the following answers to the questions posed by the open letter.

POLICY FPTC shall maintain institutional practices that promote merit-based access, intellectual diversity, academic rigor, affordability, and the protection of educational integrity. The College commits to continuous evaluation and improvement of policies to meet federal expectations and serve students, employers, and the broader community.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES

1. Transparency and Merit in Admissions FPTC ensures all admissions criteria are clearly published through official catalogs, websites, and advising materials. Admissions decisions are based on program requirements, student readiness, and alignment with career pathways. The College maintains open-access principles while ensuring students are placed into programs where they can succeed based on merit, preparedness, or other applicable conditions for enrollment.

2. Free Speech and Open Inquiry FPTC supports the free exchange of ideas within a safe and respectful learning environment. Institutional policies prohibit harassment, disruption of instruction, or intimidation. The College promotes civil discourse through classroom engagement standards and student conduct codes wherein students and employees are expected to respect differing viewpoints while maintaining an environment free from harassment, intimidation, discrimination, and disruption to balance freedom of expression with campus safety. Conduct that interferes with instruction, threatens the safety of others, or disrupts campus operations is addressed through established college policies and applicable law.

3. Intellectual Pluralism and Academic Vitality FPTC fosters diverse viewpoints through inclusive curriculum design, faculty development, and faculty and staff selection practices that prioritize

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qualifications, professional expertise, skills, knowledge, and varied perspectives. Instructional delivery encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and respectful consideration of differing ideas. Employment decisions are not based on unlawful preferences or ideological conformity.

4. Affordability, Value, and Student Outcomes FPTC maintains low tuition rates, short-term program options, and workforce-driven training to maximize return on investment. The College monitors completion rates, job placement outcomes, and employer satisfaction to ensure programs remain relevant, affordable, and effective and that they demonstrate value and alignment with current and projected workforce needs.

5. Academic Standards and Rigor in the Age of AI FPTC upholds strict academic integrity policies, including guidelines for program and occupational training, and for appropriate use of artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence will continue to change education and the workplace, and faculty are trained to design assessments that measure authentic learning, and the College actively monitors grading practices to prevent inflation and maintain credential value to ensure students demonstrate the competencies required to safely and successfully perform in their chosen occupations.

6. Safeguarding Research Integrity from Malign Foreign Influence While primarily a workforce institution, FPTC ensures all partnerships, instructional resources, and data systems comply with state and federal security standards. The College protects institutional data, student information, and intellectual property through established cybersecurity protocols.

7. Prioritizing American Interests and Workforce Needs FPTC aligns all programs with regional and national workforce demands to support opportunities to gain the skills, credentials, and technical knowledge necessary to enter and advance in the workforce, particularly in high-demand and industry critical fields. The College prioritizes training that supports economic development, public safety, and national competitiveness while serving the local community workforce needs.

COMMITMENT AND CONSIDERATIONS Florida Panhandle Technical College will continue to focus on what matters most: providing students with a high-quality education, preparing them for employment and further education, meeting the needs of Florida's workforce, and being responsible stewards of public resources. FPTC believes career and technical education should provide students with a clear return on their investment and employers with a skilled workforce with:

- Alignment with federal and state workforce priorities
- Continuous improvement through accreditation and program review
- Integration of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence
- Commitment to ethical standards and public accountability

APPROVAL, EFFECTIVE DATE, POSTING

This policy is approved by the Washington County School Board and shall remain in effect until further notice. This Letter shall be posted on the FPTC website.