University of Phoenix®

Office of the President
Chris Lynne
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November 9, 2026

The Honorable Secretary McMahon
U.S. Department of Education
Washington, DC

Dear Secretary McMahon:

Thank you for your call to America's colleges and universities to reaffirm higher education's responsibility to students, taxpayers, employers, and the Nation. University of Phoenix appreciates the opportunity to respond to this call.

For nearly 50 years, the University has focused on expanding educational opportunity for working adults. Our mission reflects a belief that higher education should create meaningful opportunity for working adults while respecting their time, their financial investment, and their aspirations for a better future. It should also be academically rigorous, relevant to labor-market needs, and accountable for the value it delivers to students and society.

That mission continues to guide an institution that has served nearly 1.3 million graduates and currently enrolls approximately 81,000 adult students. Approximately 75 percent are employed, 52 percent have dependents, and nearly 53 percent are first-generation college students.

Public confidence in higher education depends upon institutions demonstrating educational value, fiscal responsibility, measurable outcomes, and responsible stewardship of the resources entrusted to them. The University welcomes the opportunity to describe how its mission, operations, and outcomes align with those expectations.

Transparency, Access, and Merit

The University believes that higher education should be accessible to individuals who are prepared to pursue it and committed to the responsibilities that academic achievement requires.

As an open-enrollment institution accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, University of Phoenix admits applicants with a high school diploma or equivalent. This standard for admission is applied consistently to all applicants in accordance with the University's educational mission.

The University views transparency as a core element of institutional accountability. Students should have access to clear information regarding educational costs, financing options, transfer opportunities, degree requirements, and expected outcomes before making significant educational and financial commitments. To support informed decision-making, the University provides tools

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and resources that help students evaluate transfer-credit opportunities, estimate costs, and understand available pathways toward degree completion.

The University believes educational opportunity should be expanded through preparation, effort, and support while recognizing that learners enter higher education with different experiences, responsibilities, and prior learning.

Affordability, Value, and Student Outcomes

Affordability extends beyond tuition pricing. It includes the total investment of both time and financial resources required to complete a credential that creates measurable value for students, employers, and society. University of Phoenix has worked deliberately to make both more predictable.

The University's educational model is structured to accommodate adult learners, many of whom balance employment, family obligations, military service, and community responsibilities while pursuing their education. Our flexible learning environment fits the busy lives of working adults, and we are proud to offer a high-quality online education that reduces the life disruptions of the college experience.

The University's Tuition Guarantee provides students with a flat tuition rate from enrollment through completion of their program. Together, the Tuition Guarantee and Locked-In Pricing initiatives provide students with greater predictability regarding educational costs and support long-term financial planning.

Just as importantly, we believe students should not have to pay to relearn what they already know. The University awards appropriate academic credit for prior college coursework, military experience, workplace learning, and other validated forms of learning. Affordability is pursued through a coordinated strategy that includes transfer-credit pathways, Prior Learning Assessment, employer-sponsored education benefits, competency-based programs, scholarships, accelerated degree options, and tuition-stabilization initiatives designed to reduce both educational costs and time to degree completion while maintaining academic quality and learning outcomes.

During the most recent reporting period, the University applied 906,892 transfer credits, and eligible students saved more than $12,000 on average through transfer-credit recognition. Over the past eight years, more than 7 million transfer credits have been applied, helping students save an estimated $3 billion in tuition and fees through the avoidance of repeated coursework. These pathways not only reduce educational costs but also allow students to complete their programs more efficiently. Transfer students reduced their time to degree by more than one year on average, helping many adult learners achieve educational and career goals sooner.

Our competency-based graduate programs allow students to apply prior learning in their field and move through coursework more flexibly, making it possible to earn a graduate degree for less than

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$11,000. Our new three-year bachelor's degree options provide another pathway to reduce both cost and time to completion while preserving expected learning outcomes.

Employer partnerships also help expand educational opportunity and affordability. The University currently works with more than 2,500 employers nationwide, and business-to-business enrollment has increased significantly in recent years, reflecting growing employer demand for flexible educational pathways that support employee development and retention.

Institutions of higher education have a responsibility to measure and publicly evaluate educational effectiveness and student outcomes.

The University publishes an Academic Annual Report, available at:

https://www.phoenix.edu/about/publications/academic-annual-report.html

The report presents measures of student learning, academic quality, retention, persistence, graduation, and institutional effectiveness. Its findings are used to support evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement efforts across the University. The University also uses student and alumni feedback to understand the relevance and value of the educational experience.

We also look to employers themselves for evidence that this approach is delivering value. In a 2026 national study conducted by The Harris Poll, employers with direct experience managing University of Phoenix graduates reported strong confidence in their workplace readiness and performance. Ninety percent rated graduates as very or extremely prepared on day one, 94 percent rated their job performance as excellent or above average, and 92 percent agreed that University of Phoenix aligns its programs with workforce demands.

Student success requires both rigorous academic programs and effective support systems. The University supports learners through academic advising, developmental coaching, tutoring resources, disability accommodations, financial-wellness services, and other student-support programs designed to strengthen persistence and completion.

The University's Career Services for Life program reflects the belief that support for professional advancement should continue beyond graduation. Students and alumni retain access to career-planning resources, coaching, and guidance throughout their professional journeys.

Free Speech, Open Inquiry, Intellectual Pluralism, and Civil Discourse

The ability to engage constructively with differing viewpoints is essential for professional success, informed citizenship, and participation in a free society.

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Students are encouraged to engage in respectful discussion, evaluate evidence, challenge assumptions, and consider viewpoints that differ from their own. Open inquiry and constructive dialogue are integrated into the University's learning model and support the development of critical thinking, sound judgment, and effective communication.

The University's mission and curriculum are intentionally designed around career readiness, workforce relevance, and practical problem-solving. Because academic programs are skills-mapped and focused on the application of knowledge in professional environments, collaboration is a foundational element of the learning experience.

Courses incorporate learning teams, group projects, discussions, and other collaborative activities that require students to engage with peers from varied geographic regions, industries, professional backgrounds, and life experiences. Students are routinely expected to engage with multiple perspectives as part of demonstrating mastery of course and program outcomes. These activities encourage participation by all members and require students to consider, integrate, and respond to differing viewpoints when developing analyses, recommendations, and shared work products. In this respect, intellectual pluralism is not only an institutional value but also an educational practice.

Faculty Excellence and Scholarship

The University's practitioner-faculty model is central to its educational approach.

University faculty average approximately 29 years of professional experience and more than 16 years of teaching experience at the University. Faculty members serve as executives, healthcare leaders, educators, technology professionals, entrepreneurs, public servants, and business leaders whose current expertise helps students connect academic concepts to real-world challenges.

Faculty qualifications combine advanced academic preparation with substantial professional experience. This practitioner-scholar approach helps ensure that instruction remains both academically rigorous and relevant to the needs of employers and industries served by the University's graduates.

Faculty are also evaluated on their service to students, with student surveys providing feedback from course to course. External benchmarking indicates that instructional quality compares favorably to national norms for online higher education.

University of Phoenix is not a traditional research university supporting scholarship across every area of inquiry. Instead, our research focuses on workforce readiness, how working adults learn, and how best to prepare students to contribute to society.

Through the University of Phoenix Career Institute, the University conducts labor-market and career research related to career mobility, employee well-being, caregiving responsibilities, artificial intelligence adoption, and labor-market change. Through initiatives such as the Career

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Optimism Index and national studies of adult learners, the University seeks to contribute evidence and insight to conversations among employers, educators, policymakers, and workforce leaders.

Academic Rigor, Learning, and Student Achievement

The University believes academic rigor and career relevance are mutually reinforcing and essential to educational quality.

The University maintains clearly defined learning outcomes and assessment processes designed to evaluate whether students have acquired the knowledge and competencies required by their programs of study. Institution-wide learning goals emphasize critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, digital fluency, ethical reasoning, and cultural competence. These competencies reflect capabilities consistently identified by employers as essential to professional success and career advancement.

Students do not need to wait until graduation to demonstrate what they have learned. Through the University's skills-verification framework, students have earned more than 800,000 skills badges, enabling them to document and communicate demonstrated competencies to employers and professional networks. All active degree programs are aligned to workforce-relevant skills and regularly evaluated against labor-market information and employer expectations.

Academic rigor is reinforced through authentic assessments that require students to apply knowledge to practical and workplace-relevant challenges. In 2025 alone, students completed more than one million summative assessments, generating direct evidence of student learning and informing curriculum improvement.

We believe grades and credentials must represent genuine achievement. Completion matters, but completion without demonstrated learning does not fulfill our obligation to students, employers, or the public.

Educational quality is supported through a structured assessment framework that includes Academic Program Reviews, Health Checks, Rapid Assessment Processes, course-level assessment reviews, and annual reporting of student outcomes. These processes provide evidence used by faculty and institutional leaders to evaluate effectiveness and guide continuous improvement efforts.

Innovation, Research, and Artificial Intelligence

We do not believe higher education serves students by attempting to wall them off from artificial intelligence. Employers increasingly expect workers to understand how to use AI. Our responsibility is therefore to teach students how to use these tools responsibly, critically, and effectively while preserving the integrity of the learning process.

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University of Phoenix established guidance governing student use of generative artificial intelligence in 2023 and has developed academic AI pillars that integrate AI literacy, applied skills, and ethical practices throughout the educational experience.

More than 20 academic programs are being enhanced with AI competencies and literacy components. Rather than treating AI solely as a stand-alone subject, the University is redesigning courses to include AI-related assessments and practical skill-building activities. Students have access to Microsoft Copilot, the University's Center for AI Resources, and AI-supported learning tools designed to support both practical skill development and responsible use.

The University is also collaborating with OpenAI to explore how artificial intelligence can strengthen learning, student success, workforce readiness, and applied research focused on adult learners. This collaboration seeks to better prepare students for an AI-enabled workplace while ensuring that technology complements, rather than replaces, human judgment, creativity, and critical thinking. This work pairs our nearly 50 years of experience serving working adults with the expertise of an organization at the forefront of the technology transforming how people learn and work.

Accordingly, students are expected to develop both technical familiarity with artificial intelligence tools and the judgment necessary to evaluate their appropriate use, limitations, and ethical implications.

At the same time, AI does not diminish our expectations for student mastery. It increases the importance of assessment, critical thinking, and demonstrating authentic learning.

Workforce Readiness, National Competitiveness, and American Prosperity

The University recognizes that the economic and demographic conditions facing the United States require renewed attention to workforce readiness, lifelong learning, and educational pathways that support national competitiveness. America is running short of new workers just as AI rewrites the work itself. Births are at record lows, the number of high school graduates has peaked, and within a few years deaths will outnumber births. At the same time, nearly 40 percent of the skills jobs require are expected to change by the end of the decade.

The country cannot meet its future talent needs solely by educating the next generation of workers entering college directly from high school. A substantial portion of the Nation's future workforce already consists of individuals who are employed and will require opportunities to upskill and reskill throughout increasingly dynamic and technology-driven careers.

Today's workforce requires educational pathways that recognize prior learning, support flexibility, connect learning to workforce opportunities, and enable continuous skill development throughout a career.

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Working adult learners are among the most overlooked and least understood students in higher education. For more than three decades, this cohort has gone largely unstudied at a national scale, even as the system built around traditional students continues to fail them. It is time to better understand and look deeper into who they are, what they carry, and what they need.

The University also maintains a longstanding commitment to military-affiliated students and veterans. More than 287,000 military-affiliated learners have graduated from the University, and approximately 18,600 military-affiliated students were enrolled during FY25. Military-specific advising, credit recognition for military learning, and veteran-support programs help servicemembers and veterans translate their experience into educational and career advancement opportunities.

The University's workforce-focused model is strengthened through engagement with employers, Industry Advisory Councils, practitioner faculty, and labor-market research. These inputs help guide curriculum review and help ensure programs remain responsive to evolving workforce needs.

The University recognizes that higher education serves not only individual students but also the broader national interest. By helping adult learners acquire in-demand skills, adapt to technological change, advance in critical sectors of the economy, and increase their productivity and earning potential, the University contributes to workforce readiness, economic growth, and long-term national prosperity.

Conclusion

University of Phoenix believes institutions of higher education should be evaluated by their ability to expand educational opportunity, maintain academic rigor, demonstrate measurable outcomes, respond to workforce needs, and contribute to the long-term prosperity and competitiveness of the Nation.

Students should expect institutions to respect their time and money. They should expect academic programs to evolve as the workforce evolves without compromising the standards that give a degree its meaning.

The University's response to this call is clear and longstanding. We will continue to focus on educational quality, affordability, student success, responsible innovation, and the preparation of learners for meaningful careers and civic contribution.

The University recognizes that public trust and participation in federal student-aid programs carry a responsibility to demonstrate value through transparency, accountability, and measurable outcomes.

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For nearly five decades, University of Phoenix has focused on helping adult learners translate education into opportunity, economic mobility, and career advancement. As technological change, labor-market disruption, and demographic shifts reshape the American economy, that mission remains as important as ever.

At its core, the University's mission is to serve American adult learners, support American employers, and contribute to the continued strength and prosperity of the United States. Higher education serves the national interest when it develops talent, expands opportunity, strengthens communities, and helps ensure that the American workforce remains skilled, adaptable, and globally competitive. Through its students, graduates, faculty, employer partnerships, and research initiatives, University of Phoenix will continue to contribute to the nation's workforce, economic opportunity, and long-term prosperity.

Respectfully,



Chris Lynne
President
University of Phoenix