



ARIZONA CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

October 25, 2023

Hon. Miguel Cardona
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona:

On behalf of the Arizona Chamber of Commerce & Industry, I am writing to express our deep concerns regarding the ongoing challenges faced by Grand Canyon University (GCU), an Arizona-based institution of higher learning, and to seek your assistance in rectifying what appears to be a protracted and unfair level of scrutiny by the Department on GCU.

You have spoken publicly about the need for a cultural shift in higher education to ensure broader accessibility and greater opportunities for students of varying means. Your call for elite institutions to think and act differently resonates strongly with us and aligns with our values and goals for higher education as a path to fulfilling employment. Increasing access to quality postsecondary education positively contributes to social mobility, strengthens our economy, and betters our nation.

GCU, an institution committed to these values, has been instrumental in producing graduates who are well-prepared for today's dynamic workforce. Not only has GCU maintained its tuition cost for more than a decade, but it also invests in traditionally underserved communities and their K-12 schools, such as in the Maryvale neighborhood the GCU campus calls home, demonstrating a genuine commitment to the betterment of our society.

The ongoing dispute between the U.S. Department of Education and GCU stems from the university's transition from a for-profit to a non-profit status in 2018, a change recognized by various regulatory bodies, including the IRS, Higher Learning Commission, and state authorities. However, it is perplexing that the Department of Education refuses to acknowledge this transition. The resulting litigation has generated substantial uncertainty and legal expenses, diverting resources that could otherwise be directed toward the university's educational mission.

But even more concerning is the way GCU is subjected to a level of scrutiny typically reserved for postsecondary institutions that provide students with a poor educational product while encouraging students to rely on loans to finance their schooling. GCU offers the very opposite. Its graduates complete their studies ready for today's job market. GCU students graduate with less debt, and pay that debt more reliably, than students at peer institutions.

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This continued scrutiny not only consumes significant resources but also disrupts GCU's vital work in preparing students for the workforce and fostering social mobility. The Department's actions are inconsistent with the call for a new higher education model that you have articulated. GCU, as a disruptor in the higher education landscape, plays a crucial role in making education accessible to a diverse array of students, representing a step towards realizing your vision.

While we recognize the Department's commitment to safeguarding the integrity of higher education, the treatment of GCU seems disproportionate and, at times, hostile. The shifting goalposts, contradictory guidance, and relentless demands placed on GCU are detrimental to the university's growth and the students it serves.

The Department may be uncomfortable with GCU's transformative impact on higher education, which is attracting students from across the nation.

Arizona depends on GCU and its graduates, and the country needs more institutions like GCU, dedicated to expanding access to quality education. We urge you to reconsider the Department of Education's stance regarding GCU and work towards a fair resolution.

On behalf of Arizona's job creators, we look forward to the possibility of an amicable resolution to this matter, and we remain open to further discussion and collaboration on this issue. Your support for GCU's noble endeavors would contribute to a more equitable and accessible higher education landscape, aligning with your vision for the future of education in our country.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danny Seiden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Danny" being more prominent than the last name "Seiden".

Danny Seiden
President and CEO