



Government & Politics

From the issue dated August 11, 2000

[SEARCH THE SITE](#)

[SITE MAP](#)

SECTIONS:

- [Front Page](#)
 - [Today's News](#)
 - [Information Technology](#)
 - [Distance Education](#)
 - [Teaching](#)
 - [Publishing](#)
 - [Money](#)
 - [Government & Politics](#)
 - [Community Colleges](#)
 - [Students](#)
 - [Athletics](#)
 - [International](#)
 - [People](#)
 - [Events](#)
 - [The Chronicle Review](#)
 - [Jobs](#)
- FEATURES:**
- [Colloquy](#)
 - [Colloquy Live](#)
 - [Magazines & Journals](#)
 - [New Grant Competitions](#)
 - [Internet Resources](#)
 - [Facts & Figures](#)
 - [Issues in Depth](#)
 - [Site Sampler](#)

Republicans Seek a New Tone on Many Education Issues

Platform praises student aid and doesn't seek to eliminate the Education Department, but it takes aim at political correctness

By JEFFREY SELINGO

Philadelphia

As Gov. George W. Bush of Texas accepted the Republican nomination for president

ALSO SEE:

[At the Convention: Volunteers, College Republicans, Campuses and Cities](#)

[What the Republican Platform Says About Higher Education and Technology](#)

at the party's national convention here last week, he used the occasion to soften his party's conservative reputation on a variety of issues, including the U.S. Department of Education and immigration.

The platform approved last week by delegates to the convention promised to increase federal research spending, study the effects of government regulations on college costs, and channel future increases in Pell Grants

to students who take courses in mathematics, science, and technology. For the first time in recent memory, the platform did not call for abolishing the U.S. Education Department.

In all, delegates said the platform reflects the "compassionate conservative" campaign of Governor Bush.

"Republicans are getting smarter," said Rep. William F. Goodling

CHRONICLE IN PRINT:

[This Week's Issue](#)

[Back Issues](#)

[Related Documents](#)

SERVICES:

[About The Chronicle](#)

[How to Contact Us](#)

[How to Register](#)

[How to Subscribe](#)

[Subscriber Services](#)

[Change Your User Name](#)

[Change Your Password](#)

[Forgot Your Password?](#)

[How to Advertise](#)

[Corrections](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[The Mobile Chronicle](#)

[Help](#)

of Pennsylvania, the Republican who heads the House of Representatives committee that oversees the Education Department. "We have done all these positive things in education, and all that was printed was that we wanted to get rid of the Education Department. It's different this year."

Even so, the platform took a familiar position on affirmative action, calling for "equal opportunities without quotas or other forms of preferential treatment." And the document reignited an old debate over political correctness on college campuses.

It was that plank, which said, "the ideal of academic freedom is threatened by intolerance," that surprised many higher-education lobbyists. It cited the use of student fees to support liberal causes, the penalizing of faculty members for holding unpopular views, and the advocacy of liberal ideologies by accrediting agencies.

"I haven't heard some of these issues raised in almost a decade," said Sheldon E. Steinbach, vice president and general counsel of the American Council on Education, who has advised Republican politicians on education issues in past elections. Debates over student fees and conservative publications, he said, have largely been put to rest by recent court decisions. "I'm not quite sure where this language leads."

Nina Rees, who helped write the education planks, said there was very little debate about the paragraph on academic freedom. It was added, in part, she said, to show support for conservative groups, some of which objected to the G.O.P. platform committee's decision not to call for abolishing the Education Department.

"The way it's phrased, it can go both ways -- it can help both liberal and conservative groups," said Ms. Rees, a senior policy analyst at the Heritage Foundation. "It was inserted because family groups have concerns that today's campuses are havens for political correctness."

Groups including the Heritage Foundation and the **American Council of Trustees** and **Alumni** have pushed an agenda opposed to political correctness -- and similar to that of the Republican platform -- for years. The council was founded by Lynne V. Cheney, wife of the Republican vice-presidential nominee, Richard B. Cheney, after she left her post as chairwoman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The president of the council, Jerry Martin, said last week that he had not spoken to Ms. Cheney recently and was unaware of the platform's plank on academic freedom. "The problem of political intolerance on campus is still ongoing," he said. "So it's good that the Republicans decided to address it."

Scott Stewart, national chairman of the College Republicans, praised the student-fee provision, as well as one that supported a "reasonable approach to Title IX that seeks to expand opportunities for women without adversely affecting men's teams." Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 forbids gender discrimination at institutions that receive federal funds.

"If you want to have academic freedom, you have to have opportunity to hear all sides," Mr. Stewart said. "Looking across the country, the money is going to very liberal organizations." He added that the G.O.P.'s college group had more than tripled the number of its campus chapters, to 1,100, in the past year.

While several higher-education lobbyists said last week that they were concerned with the platform's language on academic freedom, they added that it was unlikely to have any influence beyond the convention floor.

"The Bush campaign is moderating a fairly hard-core agenda," said Travis Reindl, director of state-policy analysis at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. "What you see here is a case where the campaign felt they could throw a bone to the conservatives."

On student aid, the platform urged that future increases in Pell Grants go to students who take "challenging courses" in math, science, and technology, as well as to students who promise to teach those subjects in schools in low-income areas, or in schools with shortages of such instructors.

Terry W. Hartle, senior vice president for government and public affairs at the American Council on Education, said last week that the higher-education group had warned members of the Republican platform committee during meetings in July against narrowing the focus of Pell Grants.

"We told them that as a matter of philosophy, there were reservations about this in the higher-education community," Mr. Hartle said. "We don't think there should be a differentiation

between students based on what they study, and it would be extraordinarily complicated to put in place."

But Mr. Hartle said college officials were "delighted that Republicans have recognized college costs are affected by government regulations." The platform proposes a "presidentially directed study on the effect of government regulation and paperwork demands."

Mr. Goodling, however, warned that in their zeal to examine rising college costs, Republicans should not simply repeat the work of the National Commission on the Costs of Higher Education, which was appointed by Congress in 1997 to study the issue. "I would suggest putting the commission back together and extending its work," he said. "Otherwise, you're going to lose a year of valuable time."

On other higher-education issues, the platform approved by delegates proposed:

- * Increasing the number of H1-B visas for skilled foreigners, to ensure that the country has "high-tech workers in specialized positions, provided such workers do not pose a national security risk."

- * Specifying English as "the nation's common language." But it stopped short of endorsing English-only laws, which have been called for in past platforms.

- * Increasing federal funds for the National Institutes of Health by an unspecified amount, and increasing, by \$20-billion, the research-and-development budget of the Defense Department.

- * Supporting legislation that prohibits all gambling over the Internet as well as gambling on intercollegiate sports by college athletes.

- * Extending the deduction on charitable gifts to the 70 percent of federal-tax filers who do not itemize their returns.

- * Promoting corporate giving by raising the cap on companies' charitable deductions and assuring them of liability protection for in-kind donations.

<http://chronicle.com>

Section: Government & Politics

Page: A28



[Easy-to-print](#) version



[E-mail](#) this article

[Copyright](#) © 2000 by The Chronicle of Higher Education

Find that *book* and *buy it*
chronicle.com/books

