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GOVERNMENT

Jerry Falwell Jr. Says He Will Lead Federal Task Force on Higher-Ed Policy

By Goldie Blumenstyk JANUARY 31, 2017



Liberty U.

Jerry Falwell Jr. says he will head up a higher-education task force that is a response to “overreaching regulation” and micromanagement by the Education Department.

Jerry L. Falwell Jr., president of Liberty University, has been asked by President

Trump to head up a new task force that will identify changes that should be made to the U.S. Department of Education's policies and procedures, Mr. Falwell told *The Chronicle* on Tuesday.

The exact scope, size, and mission of the task force has yet to be formally announced. But in an interview, Mr. Falwell said he sees it as a response to what he called "overreaching regulation" and micromanagement by the department in areas like accreditation and policies that affect colleges' student-recruiting behavior, like the new "borrower defense to repayment" regulations.

"The goal is to pare it back and give colleges and their accrediting agencies more leeway in governing their affairs," said Mr. Falwell, who said he had been discussing possible issues with several other college leaders and at least one head of an accrediting agency for the past two months. "I've got notebooks full of issues," he said.

Mr. Falwell said Mr. Trump had first asked him to head up the task force in November, when the two met at Trump Tower in New York. At the time, Mr. Falwell said he had declined Mr. Trump's offer to become U.S. education secretary because "I wanted a role that would allow me to stay at Liberty."

Mr. Falwell praised President Trump's nominee for education secretary, Betsy DeVos, whom he met for the first time recently, at a service at the Washington National Cathedral. "The task force will be a big help to her. It will do some of the work for her."

He kept the task-force offer private until Tuesday, when Steve Bannon, President Trump's chief strategist, gave him the green light to discuss it, according to Mr. Falwell.

Goldie Blumenstyk writes about the intersection of business and higher education. Check out www.goldieblumenstyk.com for information on her new book about the higher-education crisis; follow her on Twitter @GoldieStandard; or email her at goldie@chronicle.com.