

INSIDE HIGHER ED

Panel Says Deregulation of For-Profits is Likely

Kasia Kovacs

November 17, 2016

Leading critics and supporters of the for-profit college industry gathered on a panel at the Cato Institute Wednesday to discuss the sector's future of under President-elect Donald Trump. The six panelists agreed on one point: nobody really knows what to expect, given Trump's unpredictability.

It's certainly a possibility that Trump will be inclined to roll back regulations that have been imposed on the beleaguered industry, said Barmak Nassirian, director of federal relations and policy analysis at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, and Eric Juhlin, CEO at the Center for Excellence in Higher Education. However, they agreed that a total deregulation of the industry was unlikely. It's also possible that the U.S. Congress will make many of the significant policy decisions concerning the for-profit industry, agreed Nassirian and Ben Miller, senior director of postsecondary education at the Center for American Progress.

The panelists could not say with certainty who Trump's pick for education secretary will be, although it's likely that the position will go to someone with more K-12 policy experience than higher education experience, said Neal McCluskey, director of the Center for Educational Freedom at the Cato Institute.

The panelists were less willing to agree on the Obama's administration legacy with the for-profit industry. The Education Department under Obama will be known for its disproportionate focus on regulating for-profits, said McCluskey. But Robert Shireman, a senior fellow at the Century Foundation who previously played a prominent role in the department's crackdown on the industry, thought differently: history will show that the for-profit industry shot itself in the foot, he said.