

FAQs: Possible Federal Government Shutdown

UMass Boston is working with elected leaders to actively monitor the negotiations on Capitol Hill about the federal budget. We remain hopeful that a government shutdown can be averted before the October 1 deadline for congressional leaders to either pass the necessary appropriations bills for the beginning of the fiscal year or pass a stopgap spending bill called a continuing resolution. We must, however, be prepared for the increasingly likely alternative: a shutdown or slowdown of some federal funding, operations, and services.

What is a federal shutdown?

A federal shutdown occurs when Congress fails to pass annual appropriations or a continuing resolution to fund government operations and discretionary spending. Nearly 75% of the federal budget consists of interest costs (8%) and fixed and entitlement costs (66%), such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and other programs that have continual funding. Twenty-six percent of the budget is composed of discretionary spending in 12 areas that require congressional approval. This year, Congress has not approved any of the spending bills. [The Brookings Institute](#) provides more details on the federal budget.

Why is this important, and how does it affect higher ed?

The possible impacts of a federal government shutdown are closely associated with the duration of the shutdown. A short-term shutdown will likely have minimal impact, whereas a longer-term shutdown of weeks or months could have more significant impacts in several areas, particularly in the areas of federally funded research and international student visas. The American Council on Education has a comprehensive assessment on [Government Shutdowns and Higher Education](#). The National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) identifies the following areas of potential impact:

- **Funding delays:** Federal grants, contracts, and reimbursements may be paused.
- **Student aid:** Pell Grants and Direct Loans continue, but some processing may be delayed.
- **Research operations:** Access to federal labs, data, or agency approvals could be interrupted.
- **Federal employees and partners:** Collaborations with federal agencies may stall.

What would a shutdown mean for students?

A federal shutdown will not have an impact on federal financial aid since those funds have already been allocated for this academic year. As for international students, past government shutdowns have minimally affected the services provided by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Applications to sponsor employees for H-1B visa status or extend current H-1B status may be impacted. Visit the [U.S. Citizens and Immigration Services](#) for more information. UMass Boston's [Office of Global Programs](#) is an on-campus resource for more information.

Will student financial aid continue?

Yes. Federal Pell Grants and Direct Loans are funded separately and will continue to be disbursed. However, support staff at federal agencies may be limited, possibly slowing problem resolution.

Would a shutdown affect faculty and staff?

Other than faculty and staff who are working on federally funded projects, a shutdown is not expected to affect UMass Boston employees. Those who are working on or toward federally funded projects should continue to work on active sponsored projects, heed deadlines for grant proposals and continue to work on grant applications, so they are ready to submit for the standard deadlines.

What happens to federally funded research projects?

- Ongoing projects: Work may continue, but new payments or reimbursements may be delayed.
- New awards: Proposals, peer reviews, and new funding may be frozen until the government reopens.
- Agency communication: Many program officers will be furloughed and unavailable.

What does this mean for faculty and staff working on federally funded projects?

UMass Boston's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) will be monitoring and assessing potential impacts of a federal government shutdown so the institution and our research community can be informed and respond appropriately. This includes reviewing information about federal offices' operations and assessing potential prolonged partial government shutdown may mean to our research community. If you have specific questions or concerns related to the shutdown, please email orsp@umb.edu

What about researchers who are currently working under federal contracts and grants? Should they continue to work?

Yes, researchers should continue to work on their grants and contracts unless instructed otherwise. Pls should inform ORSP immediately if they receive any guidance or instructions directly from federal funding agencies. Faculty with questions should keep in close touch with ORSP staff and check the website for updates.