

Washington Square Citizens League

Discussion Forum

7:00-8:15 pm

Monday, June 2, 2025

Higher Education in Tumult

Vicky Kirkham, moderator

I compiled a handout from my perspective as a professor with interests in the communities of a university—students, faculty, and administrators—in relation to troubling campus issues that have emerged in the last couple of years. I chose articles about what is happening around the country, as well as here in Philadelphia, at Penn (but I didn't include Columbia, which we already know about). Hence one article is from the *Daily Pennsylvanian* (Penn student paper). But I wanted a variety of sources, so there are others I selected from Al Jazeera, NPR, NYT, and my sister, who gives a detailed report in real time and depth about what is happening at Kansas State, where she is a University Distinguished Professor. The issues covered in my contributions to the handout include: challenges threatening the survival of the university system generally, college closings, the federal government's ruthless assaults on higher education, reasons for widespread student protests, antisemitism, administrators' responses (reasonable? craven?), ICE in the classrooms, forced deportation of foreign students, and the atmosphere of fear on campuses.

Pro-Palestinian activists claim responsibility for vandalism of Ben Franklin statue

By [Paige Rawiszer](#) 09/12/24 3:33pm, The Daily Pennsylvanian

Pro-Palestinian activists claimed responsibility for vandalism of the Benjamin Franklin statue in front of College Hall early Thursday morning.

An Instagram [post](#) from the pro-Palestinian group Penn Students Against the Occupation of Palestine showed video footage of an unidentifiable individual splattering red paint on the statue. Penn's Division of Public Safety confirmed they received a report of the incident and said officers have responded.

"Personnel from Facilities and Real Estate Development are working to repair the damage. Penn Police are investigating," DPS wrote to The Daily Pennsylvanian.

By 10 a.m., FRES workers had pressure washed the paint off the statue.

The PAO Instagram statement said that an "autonomous group" was responsible for the vandalism. The statement said the group intends for it to serve as a "visual reminder of the over 186,000 martyrs who have been murdered by the IOF and the university's complicity [in] this genocide."

“The University has tried to suppress the student intifada and has turned a blind eye to the genocide--all in the name of ‘campus safety.’ ...” the PAO statement read. “The education system of Gaza has been systematically destroyed, and the genocide has only expanded.”

PAO also described the statue as a “symbol of imperial violence and colonialism.”

There have been several incidents of vandalism on campus since controversy erupted following the Oct. 7, 2023 Hamas attack on Israel and last fall's Palestine Writes Literature Festival. These instances include [antisemitic graffiti](#) reported next to the Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity house last October and several incidents of vandalism — including of the Benjamin Franklin and Split Button statues in front of College Hall – during last spring's Gaza Solidarity Encampment.

The Graduation Issue 2025: Penn’s responses to pro-Palestinian protests since last year’s encampment

By [Samantha Hsiung](#) 05/16/25 1:37am, The Daily Pennsylvanian

In spring 2024, amid mounting student protests nationwide, pro-Palestinian students and community members launched an encampment on Penn’s College Green.

Over the course of 16 days, protesters issued [three demands](#): for Penn to disclose its financial holdings “in the spirit of transparency and shared governance,” divest from corporations linked to Israel’s military actions in Gaza and occupation of Palestinian territories, and defend Palestinian students and their allies by “granting amnesty” for pro-Palestinian protesters.

On the morning of May 10, 2024, officers from Penn Police and the Philadelphia Police Department forcefully disbanded the encampment at the word of senior University leadership. Officers in riot gear [arrested](#) 33 protesters, including nine Penn students. The protesters were taken to the police station, processed, and [released](#) after being issued code violation notices.

One year after the Gaza Solidarity Encampment, The Daily Pennsylvanian compiled Penn’s responses to pro-Palestinian student protests.

Temporary expression guidelines

In June 2024, a month after the encampment was disbanded, Penn launched [new temporary guidelines](#) for campus demonstrations and initiated a review of the Guidelines on Open Expression.

The announcement of the new policy, which was signed by Interim Penn President Larry Jameson, Provost John Jackson, Senior Executive Vice President Craig Carnaroli and deans from all 12 Penn undergraduate and graduate schools, contained updated guidance on “when, where, and how open expression can take place” and announced the formation of a task force to review the existing open expression policies.

The task force is chaired by professor of medicine and Chair of the Committee on Open Expression Lisa Bellini and professor of education and Faculty Director of the SNF Paideia Program Sigal Ben-Porath. According to the University Council Committee on Open Expression’s recently published [year-end report](#), the task force approved a revised draft of the guidelines in late February 2025.

A [DP analysis](#) of the temporary guidelines found that the policies increased the powers of Penn's vice provost for University Life, redefined events on campus as inherently private to the University community, and prohibited many of the tactics used by demonstrators on campus in recent years.

Suspension of Penn students

In July 2024, Penn [suspended four students](#) who participated in on-campus pro-Palestinian activism, according to an [Instagram post](#) from the Freedom School for Palestine. The post stated that the students received semester long or yearlong suspensions in letters notifying them of their updated disciplinary status on June 27, 2024.

The suspensions came after Penn had placed six student organizers affiliated with the Gaza Solidarity Encampment on mandatory [leaves of absence](#) in May 2024.

Barricades on College Green

In September 2024, Penn [installed](#) barricades around the perimeter of College Green and along Woodland Walk. The University attributed the decision to precautions related to the presidential debate that occurred the day prior to the installation.

Portions of College Green had also been fenced off during the Gaza Solidarity Encampment. Six-foot fences surrounded much of the area, alongside heightened security presence, into the summer of 2024.

Shift to institutional neutrality

On Sept. 10, 2024, Jameson announced in an email to the community that the University would [limit statements](#) on local and world events that do not have a direct impact on Penn, in a shift toward institutional neutrality. Jameson cited aims to protect the “diversity of thought” central to the University's mission as the primary motive of the decision.

“It is not the role of the institution to render opinions — doing so risks suppressing the creativity and academic freedom of our faculty and students,” Jameson wrote.

‘Raid’ of pro-Palestinian student activists’ home

On Oct. 18, 2024, Penn Police officers [executed a search warrant](#) at an off-campus residence belonging to pro-Palestinian student activists and seized a Penn student's cell phone. The search was part of an investigation into Sept. 12, 2024 [vandalism of the Benjamin Franklin](#) statue on College Green, which pro-Palestinian organizers had previously claimed responsibility for on social media.

Penn Police utilized surveillance methods, including CCTV footage, Wi-Fi router data, and phone records, to identify suspects, according to [three search warrants](#) obtained by the DP. The warrants — the first of which was served on Sept. 24 and the other two on Oct. 18 — listed violations of criminal mischief and conspiracy.

Undergraduate Assembly resolution on disclosure

At a Jan. 26 general board meeting, the Undergraduate Assembly [passed a resolution](#) calling for the University to formally disclose its investments and initiate a review of its securities in external funds. The resolution was passed by a 15-6 vote after months of increased discourse surrounding the transparency of Penn's finances.

A UA member at the board meeting shared concerns that the passage of the resolution would be “a political statement” related to the ongoing Israel-Hamas war.

The resolution came after the Gaza Solidarity Encampment called on Penn to divest from “corporations that profit from Israel’s war on Gaza and occupation in Palestine,” disclose its financial holdings under the Associated Investments Fund — the pooled investment vehicle for the majority of Penn’s endowment — and defend Palestinian students.

Months earlier, Penn’s Muslim Students Association put forward a successful [campus-wide divestment referendum](#) and submitted a formal proposal to the University Council Steering Committee. The committee declined to advance the proposal, reiterating Penn’s opposition to boycotts, divestment, or sanctions against Israel.

Protest at Jameson’s house

Penn students, alumni, and Philadelphia community members [gathered](#) at Jameson’s private residence on March 21 in opposition to the University’s “complicity in Palestinian genocide, violations of free speech, and refusal to protect Penn’s non-citizen community from invasive I.C.E. raids.”

A University spokesperson denounced the characterization of the event as a “protest,” and called the demonstration “an unlawful intrusion and a deliberate act of intimidation.”

“The right to protest does not include the right to threaten and harass,” the spokesperson wrote in a statement to the DP. “This is not protected speech. These actions are not acceptable, and certainly not from members of our university community.”

The great collapse of US higher education has begun

Budget cuts, culture wars and enrolment crashes are pushing American universities off the edge.

By Donald Earl Collins Professorial Lecturer at American University in Washington, DC

Published On 24 Apr 2025, Aljazeera

There is no other way to say it. The American university as the United States has known it since the 1960s is at an end. The spate of college closings and consolidations that began 15 years ago is certain to increase over the next few years.

Overall college enrolments peaked in 2010, but have fallen consistently since then, as the cost of college, the COVID-19 pandemic and other trends have curtailed students from attending higher education institutions. But with the recent crackdowns against protests on college campuses, the anti-DEI climate and the US government’s persecution of foreign students, American universities are truly up against a tsunami. The trickle of institutions closing or on the margins is all but assured to turn into a flood between now and the end of the 2020s.

Sonoma State University (aka, California State Sonoma) is among the latest universities facing budget cuts. Despite a [Sonoma County court ruling](#) that has temporarily put the university’s plans on hold, Sonoma State still faces a budget shortfall of \$24m. Even if the order holds beyond May 1, Sonoma State can and likely will work in good-faith negotiations with staff, faculty and students to eliminate upwards of 22 majors, six departments, and more than 100 faculty positions. Specifically, the art

history, economics, geology, philosophy, theatre/dance, and women and gender studies departments are on Sonoma State's chopping block, mostly liberal arts and the social sciences.

The most expansive retrenchment in the past decade, though, occurred at West Virginia University in 2023. That August, after [a six-year campaign](#) to increase enrolment, West Virginia announced that it incurred a \$45m budget deficit, and that enrolment had dropped from roughly 29,000 in 2017 to just under 26,000 in 2023. The austerity plan [was to cut 32 majors](#)– including all of their foreign language programmes and its maths doctoral programme – and 169 faculty positions. But after [weeks of student protests](#), the number ended up being 28 majors (nearly one-fifth of its undergraduate majors) and 143 faculty (a 13.5 percent reduction) instead. The sudden shift towards austerity [has led to a steady stream](#) of faculty and administrators resigning or taking retirement buyouts to leave West Virginia. Again, the undergraduate liberal arts majors and small academic graduate programmes were the main targets for cuts.

Stories like what is happening at Sonoma State and has already occurred at West Virginia are part of a larger and terrible trend. As college matriculation for women has incrementally increased over the past 50 years, there has been a more drastic decline in men attending college, especially among white men. Since 1970, [men have gone from 58 percent](#) of all undergraduate college enrollees to only about 40 percent as of the early 2020s. Fully [71 percent of the decline in college attendance](#) since 2010 coincides with the decline of men as students in higher education. Perhaps sexism disguised as disinterest in higher education in the wake of a women-dominant student body might be at least part of the explanation for this steep fall in enrolment.

But [other higher education institutions](#) are worse off: Clarion University of Pennsylvania, California University of Pennsylvania, The College of Saint Rose in New York and Independence University in Utah, for example. These are among the 76 colleges and universities that have either closed their doors or have merged with other higher education institutions in the US, affecting the lives of tens of thousands of students and several thousand faculty members. Nearly all of these institutions have cited budget shortfalls and lower enrolment as reasons for their demise or mergers.

Nationally, the number of students attending US colleges and universities fell [from a peak of 18.1 million students in 2010](#) to 15.4 million in 2021, including a drop of 350,000 students after the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. As of this past fall, enrolment had climbed to 15.9 million students, a 4.5 percent increase, but hardly enough to stem the tide of closures, austerity and consolidations.

According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia's [financial stress test model](#) for American higher education institutions, as many as 80 colleges and universities in the US could permanently close their doors by the end of the 2025-26 school year. They based their findings on "the worst-case scenario predictions com[ing] to pass from the upcoming demographic cliff (or a 15 percent decline in enrolment)." [Demographers have also foreseen an imminent drop](#) in the numbers of college enrollees starting this fall, a consequence of the economic distress that began the Great Recession of the late-2000s.

Then there is Trump 2.0 and his administration's persecution of foreign college students. The recent [crackdowns on academic freedom under former President Joe Biden](#), with pro-Palestinian college faculty and student protesters, and under mostly Republican governors like Greg Abbott in Texas and Ron DeSantis in Florida over [Critical Race Theory](#) and [DEI](#), have escalated under President Donald Trump. The Trump administration's move to revoke the visas of more than 1,700 foreign faculty and students, and kidnap and deport many others, mostly over pro-Palestine activism and other political

stances deemed against the interests of the administration, threatens the one area of sustainable growth in higher education. Neither Alireza Doroudi, Rumeysa Ozturk and Mahmoud Khalil, nor any of the hundreds of other victims of this injustice, have committed any crimes under US laws. Unless going to a funeral or writing an op-ed or exercising the First Amendment right to protest is criminal behaviour.

In 2023-24, [more than 1.1 million international students](#) attended US colleges and universities at the undergraduate, graduate and professional levels. But with the Trump administration threatening, arresting and deporting foreign students and scholars in their dozens, it is all but certain that international student enrolment from the Middle East and South Asia will drop in the coming year. There will also likely be a drop in students from China as a consequence of the ongoing tariff fight between the two nations. One-quarter of all foreign students in the US are from China.

For some students who protested war in Gaza, fear and silence is a new campus reality

By Elena Moore, NPR, APRIL 12, 2025

Last spring, Cornell University was home to a student encampment, where dozens slept in tents on the quad to protest Israel's war in Gaza. The demonstration lasted more than two weeks.

"It's actually one of my most beautiful memories in Ithaca," said a Ph.D. candidate at the school currently studying on a visa. She asked to be identified by the nickname Sam due to concerns over how she could be treated by immigration authorities if targeted for deportation.

Sam didn't sleep in the encampment, but visited daily. She remembers a "supportive and accepting and diverse environment" where students organized alongside faculty members and local residents.

It was part of a wave of demonstrations at schools around the country calling on universities to divest from Israel — protests that students have defended as largely peaceful. However, much of that same activism is now under increased scrutiny as part of a policy that the Trump administration says is aimed at eliminating antisemitism, particularly on American campuses.

The effort has led to the targeting of non-citizen students over their past pro-Palestinian activism, resulting in students losing visas and several high-profile arrests. These incidents have created a climate of uncertainty at many colleges and universities, leaving some students feeling increasingly silenced and fearful.

Sam disagrees with the administration labeling the protests as antisemitic. She argues the movement she supports is focused on criticizing Israel and its policies towards Palestinians — not discriminating against Jewish students.

But watching Trump's actions has made her worried for her safety.

"A huge part of my time and energy that I used to dedicate to work, to my projects, to organizing, to my own care, I've had to move it towards preventive actions," she said. "A lot of what I felt that I could do to contribute to society has now been diminished."

Now, every day, Sam checks her email for a potential notice revoking her visa. When she picks out her clothes each morning, she wonders if they are comfortable enough in case she is arrested.

In recent weeks, she has watched other student protesters have their lives upended, including Columbia University graduate student Mahmoud Khalil, a legal permanent resident, and Rumeysa Öztürk, a Ph.D. candidate at Tufts University who had a visa. Both are currently being held in U.S. detention centers and challenging their arrests. On Friday, an immigration judge in Louisiana [ruled that Khalil can be deported](#) – a decision he is expected to appeal.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio [has defended](#) the administration's efforts and said he has already revoked hundreds of visas, including many for students.

"We are not going to be importing activists into the United States," Rubio told reporters after both Khalil and Öztürk's arrests. "They're here to study. They're here to go to class. They're not here to lead activist movements that are disruptive and undermine the — our universities. I think it's lunacy to continue to allow that."

'So many students are just terrified'

During last year's surge of campus protests, there were reports of antisemitic incidents that left some Jewish students feeling unsafe, including at Columbia University, as reported [by the Columbia Spectator](#). Columbia was also one of multiple schools that [moved their spring classes online](#) shortly after dozens of student protesters were suspended and arrested.

The allegations of antisemitism drew the ire of both [Republican](#) and some [Democratic](#) lawmakers on Capitol Hill. They also formed much of the basis for language in an executive order signed by President Trump within days of his return to office. The order cites "an unprecedented wave of vile anti-Semitic discrimination, vandalism and violence" and calls on the government to use "all available and appropriate legal tools, to prosecute, remove, or otherwise hold to account the perpetrators of unlawful anti-Semitic harassment and violence."

Student protesters adamantly dispute allegations that last year's demonstrations were discriminatory towards Jewish students. And while extremism researchers have clocked surges in anti-Jewish sentiment nationwide in recent years, they have also [cautioned against broadly](#) characterizing the campus protests as antisemitic.

Watching the administration's arrests of Öztürk and Khalil has raised alarm bells, including from Kenneth Stern, who heads the Center for the Study of Hate at Bard College and drafted a commonly used [definition](#) of antisemitism. In a recent interview with [NPR's Morning Edition](#), Stern, a supporter of Israel, said Trump's actions represent a "weaponizing" of antisemitism.

"To me, one of the things that's important for our ability to combat antisemitism and other forms of hate is having strong democratic institutions," he said. "When we're assaulting free speech, that's McCarthyism. We don't have strong democratic institutions anymore."

It's a sentiment felt by students on campus who support the pro-Palestinian movement.

"It's just incredibly heartbreaking that antisemitism is the device weaponized to enact this repression to ... induce this chilling effect on campus," said an undergraduate student at Johns Hopkins University. He is Jewish and a U.S. citizen, but he asked to have his name withheld out of concern for being harassed online.

"So many students are just terrified," he said. "Not even protesting in support of Palestine, but protesting in support of anything."

Activists at other schools report witnessing a similar hesitancy, particularly among their peers who are not U.S. citizens.

"We've seen a lot less attendance from international students and even some organizers ... they had to quit because of just the amount of potential risk that's involved," said an undergraduate at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

He's a U.S. citizen of Palestinian descent and asked to withhold his name because he worries about the ability to visit family abroad. He said that while he has seen an increase in individuals wanting to push back against the Trump administration, organizers have also had to take more precautions when speaking out.

"We try to have our citizens always do the speeches, always do the chanting, the rallying, always be the ones that are planning it because we have the least risk at the moment," he added. "We definitely advise our international students to stay away for now."

Pressure on universities

Back at Cornell, undergraduate Yihun Stith has been working to get his school to provide more protections for non-citizen students, advocating for faculty and police to [undergo additional training](#) on how to deal with requests from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

He recalled a recent conversation with an international classmate.

"She said, 'I felt like no one had cared about us,'" Stith remembered. "That is what they feel at this university. They feel like the university isn't here to protect them."

Stith was part of the student protests last year and played a role in negotiations with the university. He organized alongside Ph.D. student Momodou Taal, an international student who recently [chose to leave the country](#) after his visa was rescinded.

Before this past month, Stith said he had already felt disenchanted with his school's ability to hear student needs. Now, as his classmates report feeling unsafe, his concerns have only grown.

"It shows that nothing really matters to them," he added.

Students want more university support, but schools are under pressure in their own right. On top of examining student activism, the administration has announced civil rights investigations into [60 universities over their handling of alleged antisemitism](#).

It has resulted in some of the [top private universities in the country](#) losing federal funding, including Cornell.

Just this week, an administration official who was not authorized to speak publicly about the investigations confirmed that about \$1 billion in federal funding had been frozen for the university.

Higher Education in Tumult: Silence at Kansas State University

by M.B. Kirkham, University Distinguished Professor of Agronomy, Kansas State Univ., May 18, 2025, redactions by V. Kirkham, the author's sister

Students at Kansas State University were silent and had no protests concerning the war in Gaza, such as those that occurred at universities after the October 7, 2023, attack on Israel by Hamas. Most students at Kansas State University are focused on sports. The one protest that took place on the campus of Kansas State University was in December, 2023, and it was due to the dismissal of a star basketball player, Nae'Qwan Tomlin (6 ft., 10 in.; from Harlem; never graduated from high school due to poor grades). The President of the University, Richard Linton, dismissed him, but did not say why. President Linton said he could not discuss why the university had removed him from the team due to FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act). However, in a letter to the university, President Linton said, "The NCAA Board of Governors has required each member institution to adopt a 'serious misconduct policy' covering a number of potential allegations, including Title IX. Under the university's serious misconduct policy, the university president is involved in collaborations with the athletic director and head coach when making a final decision concerning a student-athlete's conduct and team membership."

The public never knew what the allegations against Tomlin were, but Title IX was involved. I heard through the grapevine that it was sexual abuse. The dismissal caused an uproar on campus (and throughout Kansas) and students surrounded the President's house (which is on campus) and violently demonstrated. At a gathering for University Distinguished Professors, President Linton told them that it was the most difficult time in his life. This was even worse than his cancer treatment. He had just finished a seven-week (August-October 2024) daily treatment at the University of Kansas Cancer Center in Kansas City for throat and tongue cancer. President Linton and his wife Sally said that he would wake up in the middle of the night with nightmares about the protests over Tomlin. He had never had nightmares before. He defended his decision and said he had no choice but to dismiss Tomlin. Thus, while students at Columbia and other universities were protesting the war in Gaza, the students at Kansas State University were protesting the dismissal of a basketball player. (Tomlin went on to play for the Cleveland Cavaliers in the NBA.)

The students at Kansas State University seemed oblivious to the protests about Gaza. The student newspaper never mentioned them. I think this is because the students at Kansas State University do not follow the news. Sometimes in my class, I mention a recent news item I have heard on the radio or seen on TV, and they look back at me blankly. They have never heard of what I was talking about. And these are major event news stories. Students do not read newspapers. I heard that many students get their news from podcasts that they follow. Some students tell me that they appreciate the snippets of news that I bring into my class (trying to relate the news to a class topic).

To understand the culture of the students at Kansas State University, we need to go back to the first Trump administration. Trump took office on January 20, 2017. Kansas is a conservative state with strong white nationalists. Previous American presidents have put a lid on racist hate and have defended the rights of all people. But Trump's rhetoric allowed this hate to bubble up and be publicly expressed. This happened on the campus of Kansas State University. On Friday, May 5, 2017, a noose was found hanging from a tree on Mid-Campus Drive in the central part of the campus. The university police removed it, and University President Richard Myers (he was a retired Air Force General and was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 9/11/2001) condemned the act as "intolerable" in a message to the campus the following Monday morning.

I think the events of Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017, were especially the impetus for a surge of hate crimes that occurred on the campus in the fall of 2017, as follows:

October 2017: Suspected anti-Semitic vandalism occurred outside two campus dormitories

September, 2017: White supremacist posts were found on campus

November, 2017: A car parked near the campus was vandalized with racist graffiti, including the N-word and phrases like “White’s Only” and “Date your own kind.”

In 2023, a former colleague from India, ___, told me she had racial slurs shouted at her from a car. She lived in an apartment a few blocks away from Throckmorton Hall (where the Department of Agronomy is located), and had to walk along a major street (Denison Avenue) to get to campus. One day she was walking to campus and someone shouted at her to “go home” and other threatening language. M___ continued to walk. The car had to stop at a stop light further up the street. M___ walked by the car again, and again the person in the car shouted abusive language at her. I told M___ to report the event to officials at Kansas State University, but she did not. M___ did not like the Department of Agronomy at Kansas State University and found another job at Texas A&M. She is an outstanding molecular biologist looking at the reason for weed resistance to herbicides (a big problem now).

Concerning the current situation: I mentioned on the phone last night (May 17, 2025) that many grants at Kansas State University have been terminated due to the downsizing of government by Trump. All U.S. AID (Agency for International Development) grants have been terminated. In 2014, Dr. P___, (the ___ professor in my department who supported me to get University Distinguished Professorship) got a \$50 million grant, the largest grant that Kansas State University had ever received, to establish the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Laboratory (SIIL). The grant lasted for five years. In 2019, he got a five-year extension on the grant for \$23 million (2019-2024). SIIL worked to increase agricultural productivity and incomes to provide improved nutrition and food security to small holder farmers in Africa and Asia. The countries that SIIL focused on were Ethiopia, Tanzania, Senegal, Malawi, Burkina-Faso, Bangladesh, and Cambodia. US AID’s mission was to promote self-reliance for farmers around the world while enhancing U.S. security and prosperity. (If the farmers have enough food to eat, they will not go to war and attack the USA.) In its first five years, SIIL supported more than 120 scientists, trained more than 80 graduate students, and provided short-term training to more than 15,000 farmers and agricultural professionals across the globe.

In April, 2024, P___ got another US AID grant for \$12 million to expand SIIL’s work into Haiti. The project engaged with six Haitian agricultural universities to develop agricultural education, extension, and research.

Throughout all of 2024, Dr. P___ told me that he worked to write another five-year grant to keep the project going. He was in competition with other universities, but he told me in November, 2024, that he had been successful in getting the grant. He and his wife made a special trip to my apartment to thank me for my support of him, so he could be successful in getting this new grant. I was the first person he told that he had been notified he would get the grant. He even bowed down in front of me in prayer (he is a Hindu) and gave thanks to me. (I had supported him for various awards and recognitions on campus since he was hired in 2005, but I was not involved in writing the grant.) I was overwhelmed by his thanks, but his gratitude showed how much he wanted this grant and the good that it would do in the world.

Then in late January, 2025, Kansas State University was notified that all the US AID funding was terminated. After a faculty meeting on Friday, April 18, 2025, Dr. P___ told me that the Guatemala part of his grant that he submitted in 2024 would be funded. Because US AID had been terminated by the government, the Guatemala grant would come out of the Department of State. He told me that the project had been salvaged due to the intervention of Kansas Republican Senator Jerry Moran. He is from Manhattan, KS, and has supported Kansas State University. (In about 2012 when I was President of the Kansas State University chapter of the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, I sat at the head table with him and his daughter, a graduate of Kansas State University, when she got an award from Phi Kappa Phi, but I did not meet him personally). Dr. P___'s project mentioned the word "coffee," and that saved the project. As I said on the phone, I do not understand the details. But we do not produce any coffee in the USA and are dependent on other countries to import it. Jerry Moran made a deal that, if Kansas farmers could continue to export their wheat (half of the wheat in Kansas is exported), then Senator Moran would assure that Dr. P___'s grant would be approved by the Senate and funded. It was a transactional deal. That is what all grant funding now is—political. As I said, review panels for grant proposals to the NSF, NIH, and other scientific agencies, are now suspended. Grants are not funded on merit, but on how they can support the Trump agenda.

The Guatemala part of the project was \$6 million, so this is the amount of money Dr. P___ will get. It will allow him to pay contracts for work done by SIIL, but had not been paid when the termination order came in late January, 2025. Dr. P___ told me that he had to rewrite his project to eliminate all "DEI" (diversity, equity, inclusion) language. Most of the agricultural work in developing countries is done by women, so he had in the Guatemala project wording that said it would help women build the economy in Guatemala. He had to delete the word "women." He also had an educational component for "youth." He had to delete the word "youth" from the project. He said anyplace a particular type of person was identified, he replaced it with "person." The grant could then be funded.

Now coming to the present and the international students on the Kansas State University campus: Kansas State University has been completely opaque about how it is handling international students. ___, Associate Vice President for Research, who oversees all grant proposals that leave campus (he has been in charge of Pre-Award Services since 1987) said at a Sigma Xi meeting (Sigma Xi is the Scientific Research Honor Society) on March 10, 2025, that the university would get executive orders weekly, usually late on Fridays and that the administration was working hard to abide by them. He said, the goal of Kansas State University is to keep its name off the front page of the newspaper (*The Manhattan Mercury*). So all communications that come from the administration are vague and just say "everything is in transition and we cannot say anything for sure." The "federal transition" is what the university calls the changes due to the Trump administration. On February 17, 2025, President Linton announced in the campus newsletter that a "Federal Transition Task Force" had been set up, but the members of the task force were never made public.

On Friday, February 7, 2025, I heard at a Course and Curriculum meeting for the Department of Agronomy that ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) was coming to classrooms and removing international students. This concerned me, because this past semester, I have had 16 students in my class and 9 of them are international students (from Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Iran, and Sri Lanka). I was especially concerned about the two students from Iran that I

had in my class (one had to leave in early March, because the grant that her major professor promised her was one of the ones cut by Trump and she had no funding—she had to leave KSU, but the university allowed her to finish her spring semester classes by Zoom). So I went to the student teaching office and talked to ___, who is the Academic Coordinator for undergraduate students in the Department of Agronomy. She said she would put a notice in each classroom concerning what a professor should do if ICE showed up. On Monday morning, February 10, 2025, I found the following message pasted to the teacher's desk in my class room: "If ICE comes to my classroom: 1. Remain calm and professional; 2. Request identification and documentation; 3. Engage the designated university contact. Call 785-395-DEAN for immediate assistance; 4. Protect student and employee privacy; 5. Seek and/or direct to additional support services as needed following the interaction: Students: Lafene Counseling and Psychological Services [this is our university clinic]; Faculty: Employee Assistance Program."

This information was not helpful for me, because my class begins at 7:30 a.m. and official business hours (when these offices would be open) do not start until 8:00 a.m.

ICE never came to my classroom.

However, as I said on the phone last night, I gave my annual student party on May 9, 2025. The student from India said that the international students were concerned about their status. They are not travelling abroad, for fear of not getting permission to return to the USA when they come back from their foreign trip, even though they have valid visas, which is happening in the USA. This concern is affecting the Kirkham Conference.** Several international students in the USA have been accepted to give talks and posters at the Kirkham Conference in Fukushima, Japan, in August, 2025, but they are afraid to attend for fear they cannot get back into the country. The student from India said that one foreign graduate student at Kansas State University had been deported. The university gives out no information concerning deported students. She said the only way foreign students could find out if a student was deported was through a website that gave foreign students attending universities in the USA. (I did not understand this website.) She said students checked it regularly, and, if a name disappeared, they knew the student had been deported. Both the American and foreign students at my class party wanted more transparency from the administration concerning what was happening to foreign students. I said the Graduate Student Director in my department (___) had said nothing about the status of foreign students. At my class party, an American student from Biology said that her department chair (Dr. ___) had sent a cryptic e-mail to graduate students saying he would meet with them and the meeting might be of most interest to international students. But the e-mail did not say what the meeting would be about. The administration is trembling in fear from the new federal regulations and is bending over backwards to comply with every regulation, so we do not lose any more money.

On Friday, May 16, 2025, the campus newsletter had an update from the "Federal Transition Task Force." (Again, please note that the people on this task force have never been identified.) Here is what the article said about international students: "Our international community has felt much uncertainty during this transition, which is why the university reaffirmed existing guidance around immigration and deportation, as well as carried out a clear, FERPA-compliant process to assist students who may have had questions in regard to their visa or SEVIS [Student and Exchange Visitor Program] statuses. We wish to extend much gratitude to International Student and Scholar Services for its tremendous work supporting our international students, faculty and staff, now and always." This message was vague and said nothing about deportations.

In sum, there have been no student protests at Kansas State University due to the current crack-down on international students. I think there have been no protests because the students are in fear of losing what funding they have. They want to keep their Graduate Research Assistantships.

The only protests that have occurred in Kansas due to the cuts in science funding took place in Topeka, KS, on March 7, 2025. This protest was part of a national event, entitled “Stand Up for Science,” and protests occurred around the USA on that day. The main event was in Washington, D.C., and approximately 5,000 people attended it, according to the Internet. I was notified of this protest by a flyer that was put under my office door in Throckmorton. I think all offices of scientists on campus got the flyer. Clipped to the flyer was the following poem by Pastor Martin Niemöller:

“First They Came for the Jews”

“First they came for the Jews
And I did not speak out –
Because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for the communists
And I did not speak out –
Because I was not a communist.
Then they came for the trade unionists
And I did not speak out –
Because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for me –
And there was no one left
To speak out for me.”

Pastor Niemöller, (14 January 1892 – 6 March 1984)

** An international triennial conference on Soil Physics named in honor of our father.

Trump Administration Says It Is Halting Harvard’s Ability to Enroll International Students

The move was a major escalation in the administration’s efforts to pressure the college to fall in line with President Trump’s demands.

By Michael S. Schmidt and Michael C. Bender, May 22, 2025, NYT

The Trump administration on Thursday said it would halt Harvard University’s ability to enroll international students, taking aim at a crucial funding source for the nation’s oldest and wealthiest college in a major escalation of the administration’s efforts to pressure the elite school to fall in line with the president’s agenda.

The administration notified Harvard about the decision — which could affect about a quarter of the school’s student body — after a back-and-forth in recent weeks over the legality of a [sprawling records request](#) as part of the Department of Homeland Security’s investigation, according to three people with knowledge of the negotiations. The people spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

The latest move intensifies the administration's attempt to upend the culture of higher education by directly subverting the ability of one of the nation's premier universities to attract the best and brightest students from all over the world. That capability, across all of academia, has long been one of the greatest sources of academic, economic and scientific strength in America.

It is also likely to prompt a second legal challenge from Harvard, according to another person familiar with the school's thinking who insisted on anonymity to discuss private deliberations. The [university sued the Trump administration](#) last month over the government's attempt to impose changes to its curriculum, admissions policies and hiring practices.

"I am writing to inform you that effective immediately, Harvard University's Student and Exchange Visitor Program certification is revoked," a letter to the university from Kristi Noem, the homeland security secretary, said. A copy of the letter was obtained by The New York Times.

The Department of Homeland Security said the action applied to current and future students.

"Harvard can no longer enroll foreign students, and existing foreign students must transfer or lose their legal status," the department said in a news release after Ms. Noem posted the administration's letter on social media later on Thursday.

TRUMP VS. HARVARD

Here is an overview of all the [actions the administration has taken](#) against the university.

About 6,800 international students attended Harvard in the 2024-25 school year, or roughly 27 percent of the student body, [according to university enrollment data](#). That was up from 19.7 percent in 2010-11.

The administration's decision is likely to have a significant effect on the university's bottom line. Tuition at Harvard is \$59,320 for the 2025-26 school year, and costs can rise to nearly \$87,000 when room and board are included. International students [tend to pay larger shares of education costs](#) compared with other students. (Harvard notes it is need-blind [for all students, regardless of nationality](#).)

A spokesman for Harvard called the administration's action "unlawful."

"We are fully committed to maintaining Harvard's ability to host our international students and scholars, who hail from more than 140 countries and enrich the university — and this nation — immeasurably," said Jason Newton, the university's director of media relations. "We are working quickly to provide guidance and support to members of our community. This retaliatory action threatens serious harm to the Harvard community and our country, and undermines Harvard's academic and research mission."

The federal student visa program is overseen by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which is part of Ms. Noem's department. The agency is responsible for vetting international students — and certifying universities, community colleges and high schools that participate.

Federal regulations [stipulate](#) how and why a school's certification can be revoked. One way is the failure to comply with specific reporting requirements, a rule Ms. Noem's letter mentioned. Harvard has maintained that what Ms. Noem had asked for exceeded what is required by law.

"This is unprecedented," said Andrea Flores, who was a D.H.S. official under President Barack Obama and is now the vice president of immigration policy at [FWD.us](#), an immigration advocacy

group. “D.H.S. has never tried to reshape the student body of a university by revoking access to its vetting systems, and it is unique to target one institution over hundreds that it certifies every year.”

Leo Gerden, a senior at Harvard from Stockholm who has been a staunch advocate on campus for international students, said he was devastated by the news.

“Without its international students and without its ability to bring in the best people from around the world, Harvard is not going to be Harvard anymore,” said Mr. Gerden, who graduates next week.

“The Trump administration is using us as poker chips right now,” he added. “It is extremely dangerous.”

Harvard has been praised for fighting back against President Trump and his administration, and legal experts have said the school has a strong case to get back the federal funding for its research that the administration stripped from the school.

But the administration’s move is the latest example of why senior Harvard officials have been privately concerned that they are in the midst of an untenable crisis as the administration continues to target the school with onerous investigations and extensive funding cuts.

Even if the Trump administration is forced to return research funding to Harvard, the university is contending with additional government-imposed burdens, like a recently opened [investigation by the Justice Department](#) into the school’s admission policies that includes a cumbersome records request.

The decision from Ms. Noem on Thursday stemmed from a separate investigation her agency opened on April 16. In a letter to the school, she demanded a trove of information on student visa holders, saying that the college had “created a hostile learning environment for Jewish students.”

Her request included eight criteria, including the coursework for every international student and information on any student visa holder who had been involved in illegal activity.

News of the investigation unnerved many students and alumni, and raised concerns among the university’s lawyers that the administration’s request went beyond data that the school was legally allowed to share, according to people familiar with the matter.

Harvard relayed those concerns to the administration on April 30. On the same day, the university’s executive vice president, Meredith Weenick, issued [a public letter](#) that vowed the school would provide the administration only with information “required by law” and urged students to “stay as focused as possible on your academic pursuits.”

The administration responded the following week, notifying Harvard that the school’s response did not satisfy Ms. Noem’s request, the people said. In the same message, the administration appeared to narrow its request by asking for information on international students who met any one of four criteria.

Last week, Harvard told the administration that only a few students met those qualifications and asked the government for additional clarification on one of the requests.

Then, on Thursday, Ms. Noem disqualified Harvard from the student visa program, explaining that her decision was because of the university's "failure to comply with simple reporting requirements."

She then expanded the list of criteria for student records to six, and gave Harvard 72 hours to comply.

Scott L. Bok: Donors should not decide campus policies or determine what is taught

by Scott L. Bok, For The Inquirer, Dec. 12, 2023

In recent months, America's elite universities have been at the center of a firestorm. None more so than my alma mater, the University of Pennsylvania, where I served as chair of the board of trustees [until I resigned last Saturday evening](#).

My devotion to Penn is understandable. I first came to campus 43 years ago as a scholarship kid from rural Michigan, the first in my family to go to college. I met my wife in a campus dormitory and earned degrees from three of Penn's schools.

Before I speak to recent events on our campus (now that I am unconstrained by university affiliation), let me make clear a few preliminary points.

I unequivocally denounce the Oct. 7 terrorist attack on Israel. I fully recognize Israel's right to exist and to defend itself.

I mourn the loss of innocent lives throughout that region and hope for peace.

I deplore increased incidents of antisemitism on campuses across our country and around the world.

I advocate for free expression and the right to demonstrate, but I am deeply troubled by the hurtful rhetoric sometimes used at demonstrations.

I despair at the ability of social media to mislead, distort, and amplify such rhetoric.

But there are limits to what universities can do to address such matters. Physical safety concerns must come first, so at Penn, we dramatically stepped up our police presence — that campus has never been more closely watched. And if you walked across campus as I did numerous times this semester, most often you would have been struck by how normal life seemed.

Students are walking to classrooms and labs, hoping to win a place at a law or medical school or a job at Google or J.P. Morgan or Teach for America. On weekends they are going to fraternity parties and basketball games, just like I did.

There have been a handful of loud but otherwise peaceful protests where hateful things have been said, but it's been a long way from the unrest of the 1960s, when the civil rights movement and Vietnam War inspired violent protests on a grand scale.

And yes, there have been some well-publicized acts of deplorable antisemitism.

Penn has repeatedly condemned hateful speech and appropriately investigated all acts of antisemitism, pursuing every remedy within its power. In particular, it has acted aggressively in response to any vandalism, theft, violence, or threats of violence on the campus.

The challenge all universities face — and always have faced — is how to balance the desire to allow free speech with the desire to maintain order and allow all students to flourish free from bias or harassment. Chaos and violence are bad, but so are McCarthyism and martial law.

To strike the right balance, one needs first to put the problem in perspective. If one were an all-seeing, all-knowing dictator determined to maintain rigid order, one would want to kick some students off campus for what they have said or done in recent weeks.

But I am confident that number would be a small fraction of 1% of the student body at Penn. The rest are busy being college students, although I recognize that many are feeling increased uncertainty and fear even when campus is quiet.

Likewise, faculty are not trying to brainwash students. First of all, the vast majority are teaching subjects like math, chemistry, accounting, or engineering, where politics is irrelevant.

Yes, most of those teaching history or political science are probably more politically liberal than your typical alumnus, but that has been the case since Ronald Reagan ran for president when I was there. And any purported attempts to indoctrinate students with liberal bias are obviously failing, as most — certainly at Penn — grow up to be good capitalists and taxpayers.

A refrain I have heard repeatedly in recent weeks is that Penn and all elite universities are “too woke.” And there’s constant talk of some people being allowed to say the most outrageous things while others are punished for “microaggressions.” But real-life examples of discipline for such offenses are almost as uncommon as Eagles Super Bowl appearances.

Sure, if you look hard enough across the country you can find a case or two of faculty being punished for misgendering someone, and, of course, conservative speakers are sometimes not exactly embraced on campuses — ‘twas ever thus.

But the first-floor freshman dorm in the Quadrangle where I started my Penn journey had not a single African American, Latino, or person of Asian or Indian descent among its 25 residents. What shows how far we have come is that, at the time, none of us seemed to think that was peculiar. We should not turn back toward that world.

The fact is that, for decades, most universities have imposed no meaningful restrictions when it comes to speech. In fact, I don’t know of any cases in my decades of Penn involvement where a student was disciplined for speech alone.

That’s consistent with the official student code of conduct at Penn and most of its peers, which says that students may not be subject to discipline for speech alone. And that, in turn, is what set the three esteemed presidents up for [a cringeworthy moment in front of Congress](#) last week. They mishandled a question focused on the issue of student discipline for speech, in part because they had likely never seen a case of such discipline being enforced.

If universities were to impose restrictions on speech much tighter than the Constitution provides, then there will arise innumerable cases to adjudicate — all much more complex than the simple one Rep. Elise Stefanik posited.

Can we trust a university bureaucracy to judge those fairly? And will the ensuing punishments and reactions bring down the temperature on campuses or turn it up?

On all these issues, universities need to be very careful of the influence of money, especially one like Penn, which has a business school with a brand larger than that of the university itself. And I say that as

both a Wharton graduate and someone who understands that contributions play a critical role in everything from lifesaving medical research to scholarships for kids like I once was.

But donors should not be able to decide campus policies or determine what is taught, and for sure there should not be a hidden quota system that ensures privileged children a coveted place at elite schools.

For nearly all of the 19 years I served on Penn's board, I felt like there was a very broad, largely unspoken consensus on the roles of the various university constituencies: the board, donors, alumni, faculty, and administration.

Once I concluded that this longtime consensus had evaporated, I determined that I should step off the board and leave it to others to find a new path forward.

The culture wars can be brutal.

I am not complaining, but in full disclosure, I've received violent threats, been confronted on the street, had a mobile billboard of Israeli hostage pictures posted by my workplace, withstood an attempt to thwart an important business deal, been pelted by robot-generated emails, and been the subject of ridiculously false "news" stories sourced by unnamed informants.

The low point was when the university mysteriously got access to a slick, Hollywood-quality video featuring Penn's president and me along with images of Adolf Hitler, marching Nazi troops, and the World Trade Center in flames on 9/11. Fortunately, that turned out to be so outrageous that it never got broadly distributed.

It's ironic that someone whose moderate political outlook was formed during a childhood in Gerald Ford's congressional district now finds himself entangled in the culture wars. But sometimes, while you are standing in place, the spectrum is moving around you. We should all be watchful as to where that spectrum might move now.

University presidents, Republican lawmakers spar over alleged antisemitism on campuses

By Arthur Jones II, May 7, 2025, ABC

College presidents faced off with lawmakers on the House Education and Workforce Committee on Wednesday in an at-times contentious congressional hearing examining alleged antisemitism on campus.

But the school leaders' concessions and inability to explain why they didn't follow university policies to remove encampment demonstrations fell short of satisfying Republicans..

When pressed by House Republican Conference Chairwoman Lisa McClain "How'd that go?" DePaul University President Robert Manuel responded, "Not very well."

"Your apologies are a little hollow," McClain responded.

The hearing, aimed at stopping the alleged spread of antisemitism at colleges and universities, featured the presidents of DePaul University, Haverford College and California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.

Dr. Jeffrey Armstrong of Cal Poly defended his school and its "vibrant" Jewish community.

"We do not tolerate threatening activity," Armstrong said. "We deploy campus police whenever there is the potential for trouble, and they make arrests and file criminal charges when justified. In addition, when alleged antisemitism or harassment occurs, we investigate and impose immediate university discipline," he added.

In an exchange with Haverford President Wendy Raymond, Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., admonished Raymond for her university's lack of transparency in identifying the school's disciplinary actions.

"For the American people watching, you still don't get it -- Haverford still doesn't get it," Stefanik said.

"It's a very different testimony than the other presidents who are here today who are coming with specifics," she added. "So, again, this is completely unacceptable, and it's why this committee stepped in because higher education has failed to address the scourge of antisemitism, putting Jewish students a risk at Haverford and other campuses across the country."

Stefanik has led the charge against antisemitic conduct and harassment on campuses since the Oct. 7 Hamas attack in Israel. Her question -- does calling for the genocide of Jews constitute as hate speech on campus? -- became the highlight of the Education and Workforce Committee's historic Dec. 5, 2023, hearing with the presidents of Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on combating antisemitism.

But the hearing, called "Beyond the Ivy League," is a stark contrast from those featuring the schools on which the committee had typically focused its ire.

This time, the university presidents prepared for Stefanik's grilling. The congresswoman asked if calling for the genocide of Jews is "protected speech" on Haverford's campus. "No, of course not," Raymond replied.

"And what disciplinary action has been taken or would be taken if someone made that call?" Stefanik interjected.

"Representative, there have been no such calls, and we would use all of our disciplinary actions to follow through on any such call," Raymond said. "I would never expect that to happen at Haverford, and if it would, we would deal with that swiftly."

All the presidents distanced themselves from the answers made in the Harvard hearing and apologized to their respective Jewish communities for their inaction.

"To our students, our parents, our faculty, our staff, our alumni and our friends, I am deeply sorry," Manuel said. "I know there are areas where we must and will do better."

Manuel also spoke directly to two of his students who were harassed on campus last fall, including Michael Kaminsky, a junior who was in attendance at the hearing on Wednesday and said at a news conference on Capitol Hill on Tuesday that he was injured during an assault for being a Jewish American.

"What happened to them was a hate crime. No one should ever be attacked because of who they are. I am sorry for the pain they experienced," he said.

The hearing was the committee's ninth congressional event dedicated to antisemitism since Oct. 7. Despite more than a year of oversight, Chairman Tim Walberg, R-Mich., said universities continue to be infested with antisemitism.

Walberg slammed the presidents testifying on Wednesday, especially Haverford College, saying, "The Haverford administration has consistently refused to act against severe antisemitic harassment on campus. It has refused to even condemn these incidents of harassment or hostility in a clear, unequivocal statement, much less to meaningfully discipline the students responsible for these incidents."

However, the liberal arts school has taken steps to address antisemitism in all its forms, argued Raymond, who repeatedly denounced hate speech on her campus.

"I hear you and acknowledge that we can do better and I can do better," Raymond said.

"To our Jewish students, some of you who are here today, I wish to make it unmistakably clear that you are valued members of our community and on our campus. I am sorry that my actions and my leadership let you down. I remain committed to addressing antisemitism and all issues that harm our community members. I am committed to getting this right," Raymond added.

McClain blasted the "hollow" apologies.

"Why did it take them this long to apologize, No. 1, and why did it take them this long to change their policies?" McClain told ABC News. "If they were truly sorry, it should have happened long, long ago."

She warned colleges and universities that fostering antisemitism on campus could lead to monetary consequences, including the loss of federal funding.

"The only thing that these universities respect is the dollar," McClain said. "I know it shouldn't be like that, but that gets their attention."

Meanwhile, Democrats claimed the dismantling of the Department of Education's civil rights divisions, which conducts investigations on the issues the committee is bringing up in its hearings, runs counter to Republicans' work to eliminate antisemitism on college campuses.

"We have in place systems to hold universities who receive federal money -- to hold them accountable for discrimination that occurs on the basis of religion," said Rep. Mark Takano, D-Calif., who later stormed out of the hearing during Stefanik's questioning.

Ranking member Bobby Scott, D-Va., said the department has a backlog of 12,000 open civil rights cases but that the agency has slashed half its staff and shuttered regional civil rights offices across the country.

"One is left to wonder how can OCR carry out its important responsibilities with half the staff?" Scott asked.

Jewish Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, D-Ore., said she can no longer pretend the antisemitism crusade is a "good faith" effort by her Republican colleagues on the committee.

"Instead of engaging with this topic genuinely and constructively, we have another performative hearing," Bonamici said. "It's another chapter in the majority's battle against higher education."