

We Value Freedom in Education: Oppose Cooperation with Authoritarians

Academic freedom is a core value of a democratic society. Those of us working to save our democracy need to support leaders who are standing up to the Trump regime and try to persuade those that aren't to change their posture.

- An authoritarian can't survive if the institutions of society refuse to bow down to them.
- We all have a bit of influence on the social institutions to which we are linked.
- Those of us who have attended college or university can write to their leaders and thank them for their non-cooperation with Trump's demands to end diversity and equity and his attempts to stifle academic freedom. We can express our disappointment at those leaders who have folded to the regime's demands.

Take These Simple, Meaningful Steps

1. Find the name and snail mail or e-mail address of the leader of your college or university, likely the President or Chancellor. Look on the institution's web page.
2. If you don't have time to do any other research, use the "general letter" format below.
 - If you have time to dig a little more into your institution's policies, adapt the most relevant of the letters on the reverse page.
 - To find out if your university's or college's leadership signed the national letter protesting the Trump regime's "unprecedented government overreach and political interference" into higher education, see <https://www.aacu.org/newsroom/a-call-for-constructive-engagement>

General letter

Dear [leader's title and name]:

As an alumnus [class of ____] of [college or university name], I am writing to ascertain if [university/college name] maintains its policy of creating an open, inclusive and diverse learning environment. I want to know if the university has appeased the Trump administration by scaling back equity efforts. Please let me know what current university policy specifically states.

If you have kept these positions in place, I applaud your ongoing effort. If not, I urge you to reconsider. We need to remain vigilant against those who would use politically charged rhetoric to force conformity to a white-washed world view many of those in power wish to impose on us.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response, as I am reviewing my gifts to institutions who stand firm for American values.

Sincerely,

Letter for university/college leader who is upholding diversity policies

I am an alumnus of [university/college name], [degree, year]. I'm writing to whole-heartedly thank you and your leadership team for upholding the university's commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion, as illustrated by [for example, your webpage of the Office of Equity and Inclusion and the upcoming annual conference on Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion]. I was also pleased to see the university [for example, is taking very seriously its responsibility to protect students' private information in the face of federal overreach].

We need to remain vigilant against those who would use politically charged rhetoric to force conformity to a white-washed world view many of those in power wish to impose on us, and to undermine the steps towards equity for which so many have fought for so many years.

Letter for university/college leader who signed "A Call for Constructive Engagement" letter

I am an alumnus of [university/college name], [degree, year]. I'm writing to whole-heartedly thank you for signing the letter, A Call for Constructive Engagement, that opposes the political overreach of the Trump regime into American higher education. Your action took courage and was a shining example to the students and faculty of your institution.

We need to remain vigilant against those who would use politically charged rhetoric to force conformity to a white-washed world view many of those in power wish to impose on us.

Letter for university/college leader who capitulated

I am an alumnus of [university/college name], [degree, year]. I am writing to inform you of the great disappointment I feel upon learning of your decision to [what they did to cede to the demands of the Trump regime].

I urge you to reconsider. We need to remain vigilant against those who would use politically charged rhetoric to force conformity to a white-washed world view many of those in power wish to impose on us. I also encourage you to become a signatory to the public statement of hundreds of university and college presidents, A Call for Constructive Engagement, which clearly and forcefully states why academic freedom is a bedrock of American prosperity and well-being.

[I will be reviewing my gifts to the university in light of your actions.]

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.