

Resolution to Establish Mutual Academic Defense Compacts in Defense of Academic Freedom, Free Expression, Institutional Integrity, and the Research Enterprise

Background

The federal government has withheld funding and used other tactics to obtain concessions by universities in ways that violate academic freedom and institutional self-governance.

Executive Orders and Dear Colleague letters seek to censor speech and mandate programming at publicly funded universities. The government has deployed its Homeland Security Department ICE agents to baselessly revoke student visas in order to arrest and detain international students as punishment for exercising their First Amendment rights. This resolution seeks to unite institutions to collectively defend and safeguard our shared values of academic freedom, free expression, democratic governance, civic responsibility, scientific discovery, and the pursuit of knowledge in all fields. Following the example of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, which passed a similar resolution on April 10, 2025, and the University of California, Santa Cruz (whose passed resolution serves as a template for this resolution), we propose the following.

Resolution to Establish Mutual Academic Defense Compacts in Defense of Academic Freedom, Free Expression, Institutional Integrity, and the Research Enterprise

Whereas, escalating actions by governmental bodies threaten foundational principles of American higher education, including the autonomy of university governance, the integrity of scientific research and other scholarship and arts, and the protection of the freedoms of inquiry, speech, and association;

Whereas, political actors have targeted individual institutions with legal, financial, and political incursions designed to undermine their public mission, silence dissenting voices, and exert unlawful control over academic inquiry;

Whereas, governmental actors have signaled a willingness to censor curricula, restrict inquiry, target scholars and students, and carry out politically motivated detentions;

Whereas, America's Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) represent a longstanding tradition of academic collaboration, research excellence, and commitment to democratic values and shared governance;

Whereas, these nearly 250 APLU institutions represent more than one million faculty and staff members and 6.6 million undergraduate and graduate students;

Whereas, institutions of higher education in California—public and private, large and small—share a longstanding commitment to academic freedom, democratic governance, civic responsibility, and the pursuit of knowledge for the public good;

Whereas, California is home to a diverse and internationally respected higher education ecosystem that serves hundreds of thousands of students and employs tens of thousands of educators, researchers, and staff whose work supports innovation, critical inquiry, social mobility, and community engagement;

Whereas, the preservation of one institution's integrity is the concern of all, and an infringement against one institution shall be considered an infringement against all;

Be it resolved that the University of California Riverside Faculty Senate urges the President of the University of California system and the Chancellor of the University of California, Riverside to formally propose and help establish a Public and Land-Grant University Mutual Academic Defense Compact (PLUMADC) among all public and land grant universities that choose to participate;

Be it further resolved that, the Faculty Senate of the University of California Riverside urges the President of the University of California system and the Chancellor of the University of California Riverside to formally propose and help establish a California Higher Education Mutual Academic Defense Compact (CHEMADC) among public and private colleges and universities across the state that choose to participate;

Be it further resolved that, under these compacts, participating institutions shall commit meaningful support—financial, legal, organizational, and/or strategic—to a shared or distributed defense infrastructure designed to respond immediately and collectively to attacks by governmental actors on any member institution;

Be it further resolved that, these compacts shall facilitate the mobilization of institutional resources—including legal counsel, governance experts, public affairs professionals, faculty governance leaders, research capacity, and media relations—to coordinate a unified and robust response, including but not limited to:

- Legal representation and, where appropriate, countersuit actions;
- Public communication strategies to counter misinformation and defend academic principles;
- Filing of amicus briefs, publication of expert testimony, and other legal interventions;
- Legislative advocacy, coalition-building, and coordinated policy engagement at the state and federal levels;
- The development of collaborative strategies and frameworks to diversify funding streams beyond the federal government; and
- Rapid-response research and public-education initiatives;

Be it further resolved that, this resolution be transmitted to the leadership of all Public and Land-Grant Universities across the nation and all institutions of higher education in California as well as their shared governance bodies;

Be it finally resolved that, the President of the University of California system and the Chancellor of the University of California Riverside take leading roles in convening summits of faculty and administration leaders to initiate the implementation of these compacts and affirm the collective commitment to defend academic freedom, free expression, institutional autonomy, and the public mission of higher education in the state.

Sponsors; Members of the UC Riverside Committee on Academic Freedom:

Quinn McFrederick, Chair

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