

Resolution
The Lines We Must Not Cross¹

Offered by Noelle McAfee and George Shepherd
President-Elect and President of the University Senate
Chair-Elect and Chair of the Faculty Council

We faculty of Emory University, in our role as guardians of the academic mission of the university,² affirm Emory University's mission to create, preserve, teach, and apply knowledge in the service of humanity. Emory's mission includes commitments to "high standards of academic excellence and integrity," to "humane teaching and mentorship and a respectful interaction among faculty, students, and staff," as well as "a commitment to use knowledge to improve human well-being; and a global perspective on the human condition." We worry that our mission is in peril.

In these unprecedented political times, we watch in dismay as the federal government threatens universities that do not comply with its agenda. We have two deep concerns. First, core parts of the agenda conflict dramatically with the academic freedom that is central to Emory's educational mission. Second, we object that the government is attempting to impose its will through extortionate bullying; the government threatens to harm not only the university, but also other innocent people—for example those who would be cured by sponsored health research that the government threatens to eliminate—unless the university complies with the government's demands.

We are also dismayed as other universities try to appease the federal government by trading away their institutional autonomy and core commitments, forfeiting academic freedom, and becoming complicit with the government in punishing protected speech. Of course, Emory should be flexible in considering any reasonable and legitimate concerns. But we should not be so flexible that we break and destroy the university's very reason for existence: to be a location for the free creation of knowledge. Emory must stand firm in refusing to sacrifice its fundamental values. A university that acquiesces to the government's extreme demands may benefit temporarily. But it will have sacrificed its soul. Emory must act now so that when we look back ten years from now, we feel pride, not shame.

We are heartened that Emory's administration is staying true to Emory's mission, including working with the University Senate to adopt a robust open expression policy. We urge the administration, in dealing with the federal government, to persist in doing what is right, not what is expedient. The following are bright lines over which the university should never allow itself to be pushed.

¹ This statement draws extensively from an op-ed published in the University of Chicago student newspaper by Professor Clifford Ando, the Robert O. Anderson Distinguished Service Professor in the Departments of Classics and History and in the College, as well as Extraordinary Professor in the Department of Ancient Studies at Stellenbosch University.

<https://chicagomaroon.com/46741/viewpoints/op-ed/the-lines-we-will-not-cross/>

² See the American Association of University Professors' 1966 Statement on Shared Governance as well as the Emory University Bylaws, specifically sections 25, 29, 30, and 31.

- Because a university's academic mission is central to democracy, extramural attempts to curtail the university's academic mission are assaults on democracy itself. Therefore, we will neither sacrifice the norms of academic freedom nor allow outside pressure to inappropriately intrude upon teaching, grading, research, or hiring.
- We affirm the principles of open expression and free inquiry underlying [Emory's Open Expression Policy](#). We commit to defend these principles for all members of our community. We will not abide by or assist in the removal of any person from the University on the grounds that their speech causes offense.
- We affirm the dignity and worth of all members of the University community and understand equality of dignity to be a precondition for freedom of speech.
- We are committed to protecting all members of our community from arrest, deportation, and visa revocation for their real or purported political views. We further commit to providing assistance to members of the University community whose legal status makes them vulnerable to state authority. Furthermore, we will help any member who travels abroad to rejoin our community of inquiry.