



2 April 2025

Dear colleagues,

We, the undersigned, ask you as our representatives to bring a matter before the President and Provost in the deliberations of the Committee of the Council.

We are alarmed by the attacks on research and higher education by the Trump administration. In particular, the violation of mandated procedures under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in order to extort concessions from Columbia University and the University of Pennsylvania constitutes an existential threat to the autonomy of universities and the safeguards of academic freedom. The Trump administration has demanded that non-academic forms of judgment control the governance of academic units and that ideology constrain academic appointments. Columbia has capitulated. The subsequent dismissal of Columbia's interim president confirms, if confirmation were needed, that the Trump administration will accept nothing short of abject surrender to its demands.

The expansive lists of universities under investigation signal that the threat extends to the sector as a whole.

We ask that the President and Provost commit, in writing and in public, to the defense of the University and its ideals. In particular, we ask that the University's leadership pledge to sustain the following principles:

- We understand attacks on any university to be an attack on our values. The university is an ideal, and we will defend it everywhere.
- We will not compromise on the autonomy of academic judgment. We will not allow outside pressure to intrude upon or affect appointments, teaching, grading, research, or hiring.
- We affirm the absolute right to academic and political speech, within the bounds of civil engagement, by all members of the community. We commit to defend those rights, including the provision of assistance to members of the university community whose legal status makes them vulnerable to state authority.
- 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 will not assist in the removal of any person from the university on grounds of the content of their speech; we will help any member who travels to rejoin our community of inquiry.

- We will not hide our values in private communication or direct messaging. The values that we endorse are worthy of speaking aloud, in the voice of the university, or we are not committed to them at all.

Faculty senates at several Ivy+ universities and member institutions of the AAU are passing resolutions in support of their university and advocating for solidarity among research universities. They are also requesting public statements along these lines from their leaders. We firmly believe that the joint commitment of peers to these ideals, and to mutual defense of them, is our best hope for sustaining the institutions to which we have dedicated our professional lives.

yours,