

November 18, 2022

Dear President Neeli Bendapudi:

We, the Penn State chapter of the AAUP (American Association of University Professors) endorse [the letter by Concerned Faculty](#) that expresses concerns about the cancelation of the Center for Racial Justice, a decision announced within days of the administration's supporting the student-fee funded hate group event on campus. In dialogues about these events, AAUP members have expressed outrage that the administration tossed aside work by faculty and staff to launch the Center for Racial Justice while permitting a neofascist white supremacist and his associates to be platformed on our campus. AAUP members echoed the letter's concerns about the administration's "brash disregard for BIPOC voices and anti-racist protestors." Lack of consultation with faculty working to launch the Center is another concern, as it violates the [ethics of shared governance](#), [academic freedom](#), and [transparency](#) that AAUP upholds.

Members are also concerned that our campuses have become targets for neofascist, white supremacist organizing. We are disturbed that the very students, faculty, and staff that the administration claims to embrace in diversity, equity, and inclusivity statements could not fully access their campus and colleagues when the hate group speaker and followers came to town. We are concerned about barriers to access going forward. We are concerned that the militarized police response also put students' lives in jeopardy, as there are reports and video footage of hate group supporters assaulting and macing students and journalists while police stood by. We are concerned about physical and psychological damage to the students, faculty, and staff already contending with systemic and interpersonal forms of racism, as [More Rivers to Cross Part 1](#) & [Part 2](#) document, and as antiracist reports and student activism over past decades has made clear. We are concerned about the unreported costs of the overwhelming local police, SWAT, state trooper, and mounted police presence. We are concerned that, as the letter emphasizes, Black faculty are leaving Penn State in numbers four times greater than any other group.

Members want to take administrators' expressions of solidarity with Black faculty, staff, and students at their word. Discussions we have had with faculty show that these recent decisions by administration have broken the trust many of us have regarding the administration's will to put such words into action. The Penn State AAUP hopes you will reconsider your decision to cancel the Center for Racial Justice and greenlight it now.

Sincerely,

Michelle Rodino-Colocino  
President, Penn State AAUP (American Association of University Professors)