

PRESS RELEASE

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NEW REPORT: Trump Administration Has Turned Federal Funding Into a "Massive Extortion Racket" Against American Higher Education

The AAUP's just-released report, "Extorted Compliance," exposes how the Trump administration is implementing a coordinated federal campaign to force colleges into so-called compliance agreements, a pay-to-play system for colleges and universities.

WASHINGTON, DC – The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) today released a [major new report](#) — **"Extorted Compliance: A Threat to Institutional Autonomy, Academic Freedom, and Shared Governance"** — exposing how the Trump administration has extended its pay-to-play approach to governance into higher education. From Columbia University, to Cornell University, to Brown University, the report shows colleges and universities are being forced to pay millions for federal research funding they are already owed.

The report is the first comprehensive account of how the administration has taken the same playbook it's used on law firms and foreign governments and turned it on American universities — pressuring institutions into so-called "compliance agreements" that strip them of control over admissions, hiring, curriculum, and campus discipline. It also highlights the administration's "Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education," offered first to nine hand-picked universities and then to every college in the country, which the report calls a document that "can be said to summarize the Trump program for higher education."

The findings are blunt: **"US higher education has, in effect, become a target of a massive extortion racket."**

Prepared by a joint subcommittee of the AAUP's Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure and Committee T on College and University Governance, the report also finds that in dozens of cases, the people who were supposed to stop this type of federal overreach — university boards and administrations — have failed to protect academic independence. Examining the response at Columbia University, Harvard University, University of Virginia, and Northwestern University, the report finds that most trustees and administrators "have at best been caught flat-footed, and some appear even to have welcomed governmental intrusion."

"These findings spotlight the enormous breadth with which the Trump administration is trying to shake down institutions of higher education," **said Henry "Hank" Reichman, AAUP Committee T on College and University Governance member & member of the joint subcommittee who prepared the report.** "What's made clear in this report is that the Trump administration's efforts to upend higher education institutions builds upon a larger series of assaults

on higher education by congressional committees, state governments, and feckless trustees and entitled donors. The administration's effort consolidates and intensifies in a single coordinated campaign these disparate assaults on institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and shared Governance."

It's the faculty, not the people running these institutions, that the report credits with the only real wins. "If there has been a silver lining to the cloud that is the Trump compliance campaign," the report emphasizes, "it has been the mobilization of the faculty." Litigation led by AAUP's own Harvard University chapter forced Harvard itself to [join a suit](#) that restored billions in frozen funding. A parallel effort by the AAUP, the Council of University of California Faculty Associations, and campus unions led a federal judge to bar the government from conditioning further support on new payments. As the report concludes, "Resistance has been, and will be, most effective — indeed, it may only be effective — when faculty members mobilize and take independent action."

The full report can be found [HERE](#).

About the American Association of University Professors:

The mission of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) is to advance academic freedom and shared governance; to define fundamental professional values and standards for higher education; to promote the economic security of faculty, academic professionals, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and all those engaged in teaching and research in higher education; to help the higher education community organize to make our goals a reality; and to ensure higher education's contribution to the common good. Founded in 1915, the AAUP has helped to shape American higher education by developing the standards and procedures that maintain quality in education and academic freedom in this country's colleges and universities.

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