

RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH MUTUAL ACADEMIC DEFENSE COMPACTS IN DEFENSE OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM, FREE EXPRESSION, INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY, AND THE RESEARCH ENTERPRISE

Background: In the past month different government agencies have launched an assault on the academic freedoms and on the institutional integrity of both private and public Colleges and Universities. 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 and without any prior notice revoke student visas, upending the lives of students in our communities. This has now hit close to home as two international students in our Stockton community have been impacted.

So far, these events have happened in relative isolation, with little communication and coordinated response across affected or soon-to-be-affected institutions. Inspired by some recent resolutions at a few different institutions, including Rutgers, and the University of Massachusetts, this resolution seeks common ground across institutions uniting collectively to break the silence in order to safeguard our shared values of academic freedom, free expression, democratic governance, and civic responsibility.

Whereas, recent and escalating politically motivated actions by governmental bodies pose a significant threat to the foundational principles of American higher education, including the autonomy of university governance, the integrity of scientific research, and the protection of free speech;

Whereas, political actors have signaled a willingness to target individual institutions with legal, financial, and political incursion designed to undermine their public mission, silence dissenting voices, and/or exert improper control over academic inquiry;

Whereas, New Jersey's public Colleges and Universities represent a longstanding tradition of academic collaboration, research excellence, and commitment to democratic values and shared governance;

Whereas, Institutions of higher education in New Jersey—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, the preservation of one institution's integrity is the concern of all, and an infringement against one member one College or University in New Jersey shall be considered an infringement against all;

Be it resolved that, the Stockton University Faculty Senate urges the President of Stockton University to formally propose and help establish a Mutual Academic Defense Compact (MADC) among all public colleges and universities in New Jersey;

Be it further resolved that, under this compact, all participating institutions shall commit meaningful funding to a shared or distributed defense fund. This fund shall be used to provide immediate and strategic support to any member institution under direct political or legal infringement;

Be it further resolved that, participating institutions shall make available, at the request of the institution under direct political infringement, the services of their legal counsel, governance experts, and public affairs offices to coordinate a unified and vigorous response, including but not limited to: Legal representation and countersuit actions; strategic public communication; amicus briefs and expert testimony; legislative advocacy and coalition-building; related topical research as needed.

Be it further resolved that, this resolution be transmitted to the leadership of all Public and Colleges and Universities and all institutions of higher education in the state of New Jersey as well their shared governance bodies