

February 28, 2025

Via email

Kathy Hochul, Governor of New York  
Félix V. Matos Rodriguez, Chancellor, City University of New York

As president of the American Association of University Professors (“AAUP”), I write to you to express the AAUP’s strong opposition to your demand that Hunter College remove its posted advertisement for a position in Palestine Studies. Political interference into academic research, scholarship, teaching, and academic decision making violates basic principles of academic freedom and governance and is never acceptable in a free society.

As the AAUP’s 1915 *Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure* reflects, intervention by governing boards—and certainly by elected officials—into matters of what is researched, debated, and taught “destroys the essential nature of the university . . . in which the conclusions expressed are the tested conclusions of trained scholars”—and not of politicians.

Under the longstanding and well-established principles of shared governance, the university faculty—and not the governor—holds chief competence over educational policy. As the *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities* (which was jointly formulated by the American Association of University Professors, the American Council on Education, and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges and which has guided the actions of colleges and universities for nearly six decades) put it, the university faculty are responsible for such fundamental areas as “curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status,” etc. This primary responsibility falls to the faculty because they are best placed to judge which courses and scholarship represent the state of knowledge within scholarly disciplines.

Unfortunately, during moments of political and social unrest, this central tenet of academic freedom and governance is occasionally tested. We are in precisely such a moment. Over the last few weeks, the executive branch has subjected our universities to (in our view, unlawful and overbroad) scrutiny of university governance and academic life. This effort builds upon previous efforts on the state level in Florida and North Carolina and in private institutions such as Hamline University to restrict the ability of faculty to teach their disciplines truthfully and of students to learn. Amidst this

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extraordinarily repressive climate, it is imperative that both government and university leaders serve as bulwarks against authoritarian interference—not as further impediments to academic freedom and inquiry.

We urge you to withdraw your intervention into the CUNY faculty's judgment regarding appropriate scholarly and educational expertise. If academic freedom in teaching and scholarship can be overridden by the dicta of politicians and administrators, then the right to learn will not survive our present moment.

Sincerely,

Todd Wolfson

President, American Association of University Professors