

1      **Defending the Integrity of Higher Education Against Authoritarian Assaults**

2

3    *Whereas* the Office of the State Comptroller calls New York's colleges and universities  
4    "anchors for our communities by employing tens of thousands of people, conducting  
5    world-class research and development, attracting new residents, training the workforce  
6    and bringing vibrancy to neighborhoods"; warns that federal actions on student aid,  
7    international student enrollment, and research funding threaten our higher education  
8    institutions; and observes that New York's competitiveness is put at risk by "recently  
9    enacted federal law, upcoming budget appropriations budget appropriations for federal  
10   fiscal year 2026, and Executive action";<sup>1</sup>

11

12   *Whereas* the Trump regime has placed extortionate conditions on universities to access  
13   federal funding for research and other critical academic initiatives, including a coercive  
14   "invitation" to nine prominent universities to accept a "Compact for Academic Excellence  
15   in Higher Education," tantamount to an oath of loyalty to the MAGA agenda, in  
16   exchange for favorable access to federal funding;

17

18   *Whereas* the effort to extract concessions from high-profile universities is just one  
19   component of a broad effort to defund and discredit all institutions of higher education  
20   unless they relinquish their traditional independence and authority over curriculum,  
21   pedagogy, hiring, and other core academic functions;

22

23   *Whereas* the vital role of faculty and staff in shared governance has been dangerously  
24   targeted as an antiquated feature of higher education requiring reform by external  
25   actors when institutions refuse to conform to political or financial expediency;<sup>2</sup>

26

27   *Whereas* academic freedom, the lifeblood of higher education, means that faculty must  
28   be evaluated by their disciplinary peers, not by elected officials or self-appointed  
29   monitors, and that all instructional staff possess a collective right to pursue truth in their  
30   research, teaching, and curricular development, whether or not it adheres to the  
31   priorities of any politician;

32

33   *Whereas* the courts have found that the Trump regime has unlawfully withheld and  
34   placed overly restrictive conditions on grant funding from federal agencies including the  
35   NSF, NIH, NEH, NEA, and Department of Education;

36

37   *Whereas* the courts have found that the Trump regime has weaponized Title VI of the  
38   1964 Civil Rights Act, a provision already expanded during prior administrations, and  
39   used it as a pretext to repress freedom of speech and academic freedom, with particular  
40   risks to protected speech for Palestinian rights;<sup>3</sup>

41    *Whereas* college and university classrooms are spaces of learning in which students  
42    should be challenged intellectually and ethically while being supported as learners, and  
43    campuses have been and should remain spaces of contestation over the salient issues  
44    of our times, including the exercise of freedom of speech and assembly, fundamental  
45    features of a democracy;

46

47    *Whereas* the Trump regime's attack on international students and workers and  
48    politicization of the H-1B visa program restricts students' right to learn, diminishes the  
49    quality of education for all, and puts at particular risk U.S. graduate and professional  
50    programs that are the envy of the world;

51

52    *Whereas* the immigrant families of many of our students and members have been  
53    subjected to vicious, unrelenting assaults by ICE and other branches of the U.S.  
54    Department of Homeland Security, including the arrest of more than 2,600 children  
55    nationwide in the first 10 months of 2025 alone, the aim of which is to instill fear, tear  
56    the social fabric, and pit the residents of our communities against each other;<sup>4</sup>

57

58    *Whereas* the signature budgetary accomplishment of the 119th U.S. Congress, the One  
59    Big Beautiful Bill Act, delivered tax relief to super-wealthy individuals and the most  
60    profitable corporations at the expense of working people, such that states like New York  
61    must direct funding that could otherwise support education toward Medicaid, SNAP, and  
62    other social safety net programs now slashed by the federal government, resulting in  
63    large projected state budget deficits;

64

65    *Whereas* resistance to the Trump regime's campaign to defund and discredit higher  
66    education has been waged effectively through litigation and organizing among faculty,  
67    staff, and students, an anti-authoritarian opposition that academic unions must lead;<sup>5</sup>  
68    therefore, be it

69

70    ***Resolved*** that the PSC will

71

- 72    • Support legislation to expand academic freedom and require just cause to  
73    terminate academic workers;
- 74    • Support legislation including the New York for All Act (S2235/A3506), the Access  
75    to Representation Act (S141/A270), and the New York City Trust Act (Int 214) to  
76    protect communities and prohibit state and local resources from being used to  
77    carry out the cruel, inhumane federal deportation agenda;
- 78    • Demand that the CUNY administration refuse to accommodate or cooperate with  
79    unlawful attempts by the federal government to access information about the  
80    immigration status of students and workers;

81     ● Demand that the CUNY administration increase full-time staffing at each college  
82        to meet the needs of non-citizen and immigrant students and workers;  
83     ● Redouble our effort to organize members, collaborate with other unions and  
84        AAUP chapters, and coordinate with our state and national affiliates to defeat  
85        authoritarianism.

86

87 **Resolved** that the PSC calls on NYSUT and the AFT to

88

89     ● Support litigation to maintain the integrity of the US Department of Education;<sup>6</sup>  
90     ● Commit resources to NYSUT and AFT locals engaged in defending higher  
91        education in New York State and across the nation;  
92     ● Develop and prioritize robust campaigns to protect the rights of higher education  
93        workers and defend our public colleges and universities.

94

95 **– Submitted by the PSC Executive Council, December 18, 2025**

---

96

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.osc.ny.gov/reports/budget/fed-funding-ny/federal-impact-higher-education>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.aaup.org/reports-publications/aaup-policies-reports/topical-reports/defense-independent-and-representative>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/sep/11/campus-investigations-professors-gaza-antisemitism>

[https://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/2025-11/Discriminating-Against-Dissent\\_0.pdf](https://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/2025-11/Discriminating-Against-Dissent_0.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/07/nyregion/queens-migrant-boy-detained-rally.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.aft.org/news/universities-roundly-reject-trumps-loyalty-oath>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2025/11.2025-Changes-at-the-Department-of-Education.pdf>