

Recommendation on Collaborative Defense of Higher Education

May 14, 2025 - approved by the University Senate

The University Senate recommends that the University Administration, including the President of the University and the Board of Trustees, continue to actively engage and collaborate across the higher-education sector in order to protect and advance higher-education institutions and their overall capacity to realize their essential missions and roles.

Specifically, the University Senate endorses and recommends continued engagement of the University with:

- I. relevant associations such as the The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), The Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, etc.;
- II. the Governor, Attorney General, and Legislature of the State of New Jersey;

in the formulation and execution of responses and substantive proactive measures that protect the integrity and appropriate autonomy of Montclair State University and other institutions. As an example, the Senate notes the role of President of Montclair State University in the promulgation of A Call for Constructive Engagement from the AAC&U¹ and renewed membership in that organization.

Moreover, the Senate recommends direct engagement, outreach, and collaboration with other higher-education institutions in New Jersey, and beyond, as well as the American Federation of Teachers, and its local affiliates, as best serves the interests of our Institution as well as higher education more generally in New Jersey and the United States.

In furtherance of such efforts, the Senate recommends that the Administration communicate with and appropriately inform the Senate Executive, University Senate, and the University Community of significant actions in response to further developments and engage them in support of the same.

Rationale

The Federal Government of the United States has, for at least eighty years, played a significant role in supporting higher education, including increasing accessibility, major support for research, and other institutional support. Along with most institutions of higher learning, the ability of Montclair State University significantly depends on such Federal support to fully realize its mission.

However, under the current Federal Administration, agencies of the Federal Government, including those agencies central to the relationships between the Federal Government and institutions of higher education, have been subject to disruption in the exercise of their respective missions in an

¹ <https://www.aacu.org/newsroom/a-call-for-constructive-engagement>

unprecedented and unpredictable manner, sometimes with rationales contrary to long standing policies and practices. Moreover, the current Federal Administration has used administrative, regulatory, and financial means to threaten the academic integrity and autonomy of universities and colleges, the rights of international students, as well as freedom of expression both within and beyond the Academy.

These developments create an imperative for stakeholders of the various higher-education institutions to act in protection of the integrity of their individual institutions and the academic enterprise as a whole.

In the face of these developments, the University Senate of Montclair State affirms, for ourselves and on behalf of our constituents, a commitment to maintaining the core values of the academic enterprise appropriate to our free and democratic society, and specifically to Montclair State University as a Public Research University and access institution. Among these are: freedom of inquiry and expression in research, scholarship, creative work, and instruction; integrity in intellectual work and in the supporting administration of our institution; support for the well-being and basic rights of students as well as their freedom of expression; broad inclusion and access, with a cultivated sense of belonging, to the many aspects of the University; and collaborative civic engagement in service of the public good. These values serve as essential guides in the operations of the University as well as our individual and collaborative efforts as stewards of the development and application of knowledge and creative expression.

At several institutions across the United States, including Rutgers, and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, the respective senates have passed resolutions calling for collaborative mutual defense of among institutions of higher education². This Recommendation is made in solidarity with our colleagues at these institutions, and others, with a shared belief that collaboration and collective action are effective as both a moral support of common values and in their concrete results.

² cf. <https://www.umass.edu/senate/madcs-tracker>