

Joint Statement on the Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education

Signed by Student Government Representatives of
the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Virginia,
University of Arizona, Dartmouth College, University of
Pennsylvania, Brown University, and Vanderbilt University

The undersigned are the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Student Body President, Brown University Undergraduate Council of Students, University of Pennsylvania Undergraduate Assembly Executive Board, Dartmouth College Student Body Vice President, University of Virginia Student Council President, Vanderbilt University Student Government, and University of Arizona Student Body President.

On October 1st, 2025, the White House sent the Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education to our seven universities, outlining expectations universities must meet to continue receiving federal benefits.

Although the compact's full implications remain unclear, the document outlines unprecedented expectations universities must meet to receive federal benefits. This could systemically alter the mission of higher education and erode the independence that has long defined our universities. We must not allow these attempts to control what can be taught, studied, or spoken on our campuses.

Our universities represent the full spectrum of American higher education, from liberal arts colleges to leading research institutions. As students, this directly impacts us, and thus, our voices must be heard. We know firsthand that institutional autonomy is instrumental to the perpetuation of innovation and progress. As the Compact itself acknowledges, "American higher education is the envy of the world and represents a key strategic benefit for our Nation," yet the document undermines the very principles that make this statement true. Our administrations have been presented with a false choice between their commitments to knowledge and education and our access to the resources that sustain them. To preserve our status as world leaders in education, we must remain true to the foundation of academic freedom that has propelled us forward.

As student representatives, we stand in united opposition to the outlined conditions. We call on our community of students, faculty, alumni, and leadership to reaffirm our commitment to reject political interference and federal overreach. Academic freedom is not negotiable.

- Alice Hall, Student Body President, Massachusetts Institute of Technology '26
- Clay Dickerson, Student Council President, University of Virginia '26
- Adriana Grijalva, Student Body President, University of Arizona '26
- Favion Harvard, Student Body Vice President, Dartmouth College '26
- Undergraduate Assembly Executive Board, University of Pennsylvania
- Brown University Undergraduate Council of Students
- Vanderbilt University Student Government