



## Reform Is Coming to American Universities

**T**he cancer within our universities revealed itself as college students joined pro-Palestinian demonstrations across the country in October chanting, “From sea to river, Palestine will be free.” This Hamas slogan calls for Palestinians to reoccupy Israel from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River—in short, the annihilation of Israel.

While pro-Palestinian demonstrations broke out on campuses, a group of Clemson University students protested the removal of tampon machines from men’s bathrooms at the college.<sup>1</sup>

These students manifest the insane to the inane on college campuses today. One wonders if these students all understand what they are demanding.

Perhaps more worrisome is that surveys show a deep anti-American bias among today’s college students. This anti-Americanism follows massive federal largesse to universities over the last 75 years. The result is exorbitant tuitions, huge student debt, mostly left-wing faculty, bloated administrations and poor education.

The results can be dismaying. But the good news is that we see the beginnings of a reformation of the university, as state legislatures are creating distinct programs that focus on foundational civics principles.

Following the 1957 surprise Soviet launch of the first man-made satellite, Sputnik, President Dwight D. Eisenhower championed the National Defense Education Act to improve American education in science and math. The act, signed in 1958, provided federal aid to schools and low-interest federal loans for higher education to promising students of math, science and other defense-related subjects such as modern foreign languages. This began a long history of ever-increasing federal subsidies for education at all levels, with decidedly disappointing results.

The greatest expansion of federal aid to education came in Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society in the mid-1960s. The Higher Education Act (1965) provided incentives to disadvantaged

youth to attend college through financial aid programs, work-study programs and Pell Grants. With the 1992 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, the student loan program was expanded. In 2010, President Barack Obama signed into law the Health and Education Reconciliation Act, which ended the public/private partnership that had existed for student loans and allowed students to borrow directly from the federal government. This law, along with other extensions of the Higher Education Act, further expanded the federal role.

After 75 years of unrestrained federal spending on higher education, where do we stand today? For starters, the number of students going to college has soared. This is especially true for students from low-income families.

### Federal Claws in Education

**S**tudents pay to go to college by taking out loans. Today student debt stands at \$1.6 trillion, and the Biden administration has been trying to shift as much of the cost to taxpayers as possible.

College administrators know they can hike tuition fees because students and their families are willing to pay sky-high tuitions by relying on readily available federally subsidized student loans. College prices have skyrocketed in the last 30 years. Average tuition for public colleges went up from \$4,160 to \$10,740 and private non-profit colleges and universities from \$19,360 to \$38,070, not counting the cost of room and board and adjusted for inflation.<sup>2</sup> Administrators discovered that students with federally backed loans are cash cows.

With federal funds flowing in, colleges spent like crazy and continue to spend. The University of Kentucky expended an average of \$805,000 a day for the past decade to upgrade its campus. Those going to that university in 2021-22 paid on average \$18,693 a year in tuition. Spendthrift Penn State went hog-wild with its spending and now has a budget crisis. The University of Oklahoma spent millions of dollars, including the renovation of a 32,000-square-foot Italian monastery for its study abroad program.

These universities are not alone. Spending at a median flagship university increased 38 percent between 2002 and 2022.<sup>3</sup> As many state legislatures cut back on funding, universities increased tuition and fee revenue.

What are students getting in return for their tuition? Now *colleges spend less on instruction than they do on administration.*<sup>4</sup> University administrators, being good capitalists (even though they might not like capitalism), have cut labor costs of instructors, while expanding the number of administrators and paying them more than ever. College administrators found that labor costs could be reduced by hiring more contract instructors, who are given annual contracts instead of tenure-track jobs. Tenure-track jobs became increasingly reserved for “opportunity hires” (racial and ethnic minorities) to fulfill the institutional commitment to “diversity, equity and inclusion.” Of course, paying instructors less, having them teach more, and reserving tenure-track slots for “opportunity hires” is hardly diverse, equitable or inclusive.

While cutting instructional costs, college administrations expanded. The number of employees with the title of dean, associate dean, director or associate director mushroomed. At the University of Florida, for example, in 2022 there are listed 160 assistant, associate, executive and other types of deans—up from 130 such deans five years ago. At Yale University, administrative employees grew an extraordinary 50 percent in the last decade.<sup>5</sup>

### Costly, Divisive Deans

**I**n colleges today, administrators outnumber teachers. The average salary for a college dean is around \$120,000 per year but ranges much higher at flagship state universities. The typical dean is not your dean of old, who was usually an older and distinguished professor. Today’s deans are managers, often with little interest in the classroom.

At the same time a whole assortment of deans, associate deans and college officers are assigned to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) oversight. This means creating required training programs and videos for faculty and staff. DEI administrators use critical race theory as the basis of training programs.

Christopher Rufo in *America’s Cultural Revolution* (2023) examines how critical race theory and neo-Marxist theory permeate universities today. He notes that between 1987 and 2012, U.S. colleges and universities added 500,000 administrators, and by 2015 the total number of administrators reached nearly one million. These administrators are overwhelmingly left-wing, nearly at a 12:1

ratio of those identifying themselves as “liberal” or “very liberal” compared to “conservative” or “very conservative.”<sup>6</sup>

Many of these administrators are assigned enforcers of race-based policies. The University of California, Berkeley in its Equity and Inclusion Division has 400 employees and a budget of \$25 million; the University of Michigan has 163 DEI employees with a \$14 million budget.

What we see is a nation that has spent lavishly on educating its youth, and not only have things gotten worse, but many of the youth are unappreciative that a nation with such wealth enabled them to be educated.

### Turning Out Unpatriotic Youth

**A**ccording to the Harvard Kennedy School in 2020, the percentage of American youth who considered themselves patriotic stood at 62 percent. Of these, nearly a majority said “only somewhat” patriotic. More recently, a *Wall Street Journal* poll in March 2023 showed an overall decline in patriotism across the population. The poll found that *of young people aged 18-29, only 22 percent said they were patriotic.* Among those aged 65+, close to 60 percent called themselves patriotic. This shows a wide gap between the young and the old when it comes to standing up for our country.<sup>7</sup>

The reasons for the decline in patriotism are multiple, but many grade school and high school classrooms seem to be given to political indoctrination rather than teaching the basics—especially civics. The result is that many students enter college already infused with a leftist bias. In college their political biases are reinforced by left-wing or left-leaning faculty. We know from many surveys that college faculty, especially in the humanities and social sciences, overwhelmingly identify themselves on the left.

Fortunately, *at last some state legislatures are fighting back.* Civics education is being mandated in public schools. Parental rights groups have organized, taking control of district school boards and resisting sex education that promotes non-binary gender identity theory. State legislatures in Florida, North Carolina, Texas and Arizona have established academic programs in their public universities that emphasize classics in literature, ancient philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, the American Founders and principles of the U.S. Constitution.<sup>8</sup> *And the U.S. Supreme Court struck a blow against DEI practices when it held in June that race-based admission to universities is unconstitutional.*

What we are witnessing is the beginning of a reformation in higher education in America today. Much more is needed. A

noteworthy new commission report contains useful analysis and ideas for improvement.

## Commission on U.S. History Teaching

Former Wisconsin governor Scott Walker, now president of Young America's Foundation, Mary Fallin, former governor of Oklahoma, and Newt Gingrich, former speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, have just issued a national report that calls for further reform in American universities and colleges. The report of the National Commission on the Teaching of American History in Our Universities reveals just how bad the teaching of U.S. history is, and makes specific recommendations as to how these institutions can be reformed by their governing bodies and state legislatures.<sup>9</sup>

The report is based on a year-long research project sponsored by the newly established Center for American Institutions at Arizona State University. (The Center relies primarily on private funding.) Researchers surveyed college syllabi for introductory courses in American history. What they found was shocking, worse than might be expected even by the most pessimistic of observers of higher education. *The report, released this month, revealed course after course of introductory U.S. History emphasizing identity theory—race and gender—for understanding the nation's history.*

Course syllabi gathered from large and small institutions, both public and private, uniformly use terms such as “white supremacy” to explain American history. Researchers discovered the following:

- Instructors place an emphasis on identity-focused topics, e.g., race, gender, sexuality and sexual identity.
- Greater attention is given to radical feminism, homosexuality and gay liberation than to the U.S. Constitution.
- These syllabi express overtly anti-market bias through an emphasis on “exploitation and oppression of workers, derision of consumerism, and the persistence of inequity without an examination of actual economic data.”
- Syllabi highlight the decline of America as a major theme for understanding American history, especially in the second half of year-long survey courses.

Notably lacking in the syllabi is attention to traditional and foundational topics including the following:

- The U.S. Constitution, including federalism and American political institutions, and the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention
- The Industrial Revolution, other than to note the increase of inequality, the exploitation of American workers and the growth of urban poverty

- Business leaders such as Andrew Carnegie, Harvey Firestone, Thomas Edison or J. P. Morgan
- Democratization of American politics, including expansion of suffrage to women and minorities
- The role of religion in the founding documents, in abolitionism, in women's suffrage, and in the temperance and civil rights movements.

The researchers found that all syllabi include at least one mention of identity-related terms such as “gender,” “racism,” “imperialism” and “inclusion.” No syllabus mentions “rule of law” or “Western tradition,” and less than 40 percent mention “liberty” or “freedom.”

*The consistent themes that run through all the syllabi are inequality, conquest and imperialism, gender and masculine toxicity, and violence as endemic to American culture.*

## Documenting the Distortions

Syllabi for the second half of a year-long Introduction to U.S. History (1877 to the Present) devote entire class periods to the decline of America, characterizing various events as leading to this decline, including the election of Ronald Reagan, the rise of conservatism, the Iraq War, and the election of Donald Trump in 2016.

*Only one syllabus refers to American exceptionalism.* Even in this course, the discussion of American exceptionalism is qualified.

Many of the courses do not use a standard textbook. The socialist Howard Zinn's *Voices of a People's History of the United States* and Jordan T. Camp's *Incarcerating the Crisis: Freedom Struggles and the Rise of the Neo-Liberal State* are assigned in a few classes. For those not familiar with Camp's book, it maintains falsely that the United States has the largest prison population on the planet, and that over the last four decades structural unemployment, urban poverty and homelessness have become permanent features of the political economy.

A review of supplemental readings in these courses showed a heavy emphasis on social activism, especially revolutionary black nationalism and militant feminism. Supplemental required readings focus on the gay and queer activist experience.

The National Commission on the Teaching of American History in Our Universities makes a number of practical recommendations within the current structure of higher education. In addition, it offers more ambitious ideas for envisioning a new curriculum.

## Recommendations for Reform

The Commission calls for state legislatures and boards of regents to enact an “educational transparency” measure. This measure would require every academic unit within a college or university to provide links on the first page of their web pages to course syllabi, a two-year report of occupational outcomes for majors, and other relevant information.

The Commission stresses the importance of *intellectually* diversifying the faculty. This effort needs to begin with upper administrators and deans, who should insist that faculty searches *not* be restricted to candidates focused solely on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity.

In addition, the Commission recommends that searches for faculty be conducted in fields that allow for greater intellectual diversity, such as: history of the presidency; business history; economic history; Constitutional history; American political history; and the history of American conservatism.

The Commission’s most far-reaching recommendations call for the rethinking of the curriculum. The Commission endorses the classical and traditional education found at some universities and colleges. The commissioners also understand that most students are focused on finding jobs after they graduate from college. These students need to be prepared for a new world of technology and data collection, requiring quantitative skills. Therefore, the Commission recommends the development of new curriculum incorporating both classical education and the development of employment skills for students. This can be accomplished, the Commission posits, by creating truly interdisciplinary academic departments.

One of the advantages of studying and teaching history in a republic is the ability to criticize the past. Progress can come through historical and contemporary criticism. At the same

time, a republic, if it is to thrive and endure, needs well-educated citizens and leaders who understand foundational principles, the origins and nature of citizens’ rights, and knowledge of basic political institutions.

The April 2020 *Mindszenty Report* was titled “Can Higher Education Be Reformed?” We are heartened that some progress has been made since then, though there is still a long way to go. A reformation in our educational system has begun, and informed citizens can continue to push it forward.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.express.co.uk/news/us/1823892/Student-group-protests-against-removal-of-tampons-from-toilets>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/student-loans/average-student-loan-debt-statistics/>.

<sup>3</sup> This figure and the above examples are from the *Wall Street Journal*, August 10, 2023, [https://www.wsj.com/articles/state-university-tuition-increase-spending-41a58100?gclid=CjwKCAjw-KipBhBtEiwAWjgwrB01910DeTLrBNaRyg1Dt07uAhXIRe9ne7PkhvawNohxA\\_jCelC1hoCVHMqAvD\\_BwE&mod=&psid=WSJ\\_DSA\\_GOO-ACQ\\_NA&gclid=aw.ds&gad=1&ef\\_id=ZSrYrWAAAEIRSDjb:202310141](https://www.wsj.com/articles/state-university-tuition-increase-spending-41a58100?gclid=CjwKCAjw-KipBhBtEiwAWjgwrB01910DeTLrBNaRyg1Dt07uAhXIRe9ne7PkhvawNohxA_jCelC1hoCVHMqAvD_BwE&mod=&psid=WSJ_DSA_GOO-ACQ_NA&gclid=aw.ds&gad=1&ef_id=ZSrYrWAAAEIRSDjb:202310141).

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.usnews.com/education/articles/one-culprit-in-rising-college-costs>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2021/11/10/reluctance-on-the-part-of-its-leadership-to-lead-yales-administration-increases-by-nearly-50-percent/>.

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Rufo, *America’s Cultural Revolution* (2023), pp. 48-51.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.wsj.com/articles/americans-pull-back-from-values-that-once-defined-u-s-wsj-norc-poll-finds-df8534cd>; <https://www.poynter.org/fact-checking/2023/are-young-americans-less-proud-to-be-american-vivek-ramaswamy-is-partially-right/>. See also polls described in the January 2020 *Mindszenty Report*, “Social Conservatism, Millennials, and the Future.”

<sup>8</sup> <https://hamilton.center.ufl.edu/>; <https://www.gainesville.com/story/news/education/Campus/2022/07/15/university-florida-gets-3-million-classical-civics-program-backed-organization-linked-conservatives/10067439002/>; New College of Florida, <https://www.ncf.edu/about/mission-values/>; University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, <https://catalog.unc.edu/undergraduate/ideas-in-action/https://parcenter.unc.edu/>; Arizona State University, <https://scetl.asu.edu/curriculum/school-of-civic-and-economic-thought-and-leadership/>; University of Arizona, <https://moralscience.arizona.edu/ba-philosophy-politics-economics-and-law/>; University of Texas at Austin, <https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/coretexts/>. These public universities are joining a long list of private colleges that emphasize classical and traditional education, including Grove City College, Biola University, New Saint Andrews College, Baylor University, Patrick Henry College, Gordon College, Houston Baptist University, Wheaton College, University of Dallas, Ave Maria University, Thomas Aquinas College and Hillsdale College.

<sup>9</sup> Scott Walker, Newt Gingrich, Mary Fallin, *Report of the National Commission on the Teaching of American History in Our Universities* (ASU Center for American Institutions, Tempe, AZ, 2023), [cai.asu.edu](http://cai.asu.edu).

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