



Statement Regarding Recent Political Attacks on Higher Education

For Immediate Release: April 8, 2025

We are writing in regards to the current events that have been unfolding on college campuses across the nation. The executive committee of the NMU-AAUP/AFT 6761, which represents the majority of faculty at Northern Michigan University, roundly and unanimously condemns the authoritarian actions undertaken by the current administration that threaten to undermine academic freedom and campus free speech. Incursions upon civil liberties and financial and linguistic threats directed at our institutions have caused many of our faculty to fear for their personal safety, worry about the future of our most vulnerable students, or fear retaliation for teaching topics they have studied and researched for the majority of their professional careers.

While not exhaustive, the alarming events include:

The warrantless arrest and detainment of former Columbia University student Mahmoud Khalil, who was legally residing in the United States, by Department of Homeland Security agents. Khalil was one of the leaders of the Winter 2024 pro-Palestinian encampment on the campus of Columbia University. He currently resides in ICE detention in Louisiana.

The discontinuance of \$400 million in research funds meant for Columbia University as a way to pressure their administration to, among other policies, place the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies on academic receivership. [As our fellow Columbia University's AAUP chapter says](#), "Taken together, these incidents are clear attacks on the university's fundamental purpose to create knowledge in an environment free of intimidation and political coercion, and on the wider right in this country to peaceful protest and political speech."

The detainment of Tufts University doctoral student Rumeysa Ozturk one year after she authored [an op-ed in the Tufts University student newspaper](#) encouraging administration to adopt formal resolutions regarding the "Palestinian genocide" presented to them by Tufts University undergraduate students. Ozturk currently resides in detention in Louisiana.

The use of banned terms to prohibit scientific research based on ideological grounds and/or to steer said research away from pressing topics related to issues of identity, power, marginalization, or the crisis of the health of our earth. This includes attacks on research geared towards addressing the ongoing threat of climate change and the realities of disproportionate health impacts associated with environmental injustices.

The issuance of the [“dear colleague” letter](#), which sought to pressure educational institutions across the nation into procedural compliance with an ideology that considers DEI programs and policies to be forms of “overt and covert racial discrimination.” A notable recent example of compliance with the letter, as well as related executive orders, includes the University of Michigan’s decision to discontinue its Offices of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Health Equity and Inclusion, and reassign core DEI leaders on campus.

The AAUP/AFT 6761 has already [signed onto a letter](#) supporting our colleagues at Columbia University, and our executive committee members have been involved in organizing meetings at regional and national levels. We anticipate undertaking demonstrations on a continuous basis, and will continue to monitor the response of our university to actions in Washington. We encourage our membership to do the same. We also encourage faculty to contact President Mengyan, any member of the executive committee, or your faculty council representative if you have concerns regarding your personal safety or the maintenance of your academic freedom.

The AAUP at NMU was born out of the fight to ensure faculty and students alike experience a campus that supports free and open inquiry, and we will not stop fighting for that cause.

Signed,

NMU-AAUP/AFT Local 6761 Executive Committee:

Robin Bond, College of Arts and Sciences Representative

Brandon Canfield, Data Analyst

Cam Contois, Committee C Chair

Jaime Crabb, Chief Negotiator, College of Health Sciences and Professional Studies Representative

Joshua Ewalt, Information Officer

Norma Froelich, College of Arts and Sciences Representative

Robbie Goodrich, Contract Officer

Lynne Johnson, Secretary

Scott Jordan, College of Health Sciences and Professional Studies Representative

Chris Kirk, Treasurer

Jimmy Ludwig, College of Arts and Sciences Representative

Rick Mengyan, President

Amy Orf, Vice President, Committee O Chair

Bruce Sarjeant, College of Business/Library and Informational Sciences Representative

Jud Sojourn, Committee I Chair