

Editors' Introduction: Landscapes of Power and Academic Freedom

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The landscape of higher education in the United States is now radically changed: academic freedom is no longer guaranteed across the entire country. Professors self-censor their lectures and publications; students cannot engage with key explanations and discussions about the history of their very institution, state, and country; and books have been banned from local libraries. In multiple US states, concepts such as “structural racism,” “environmental racism,” “intersectionality” and the open study of the “relationship among race, racism, and power” (Delgado, Stefancic, and Harris 2017, 3) have been terminated after being characterized as “divisive” and “controversial” by a cascade of gag laws and executive orders. The impact of these political encroachments into the autonomy of institutions of higher education to produce knowledge and to freely understand the workings of settler colonialism, of the lasting impacts of slavery and of racial segregation, will haunt the United States for decades to come. These overt forms of censorship will have long-lasting effects on the ability of US citizens to understand the racial legacies of this postplantation, postcolonial society. A key notion underlying these moves is that any critical review or discussion of US history or racial divides in US society is unpatriotic or inherently “anti-American.” Proponents of these deep forms of thought-control implicitly define all stages of education as fundamentally destined to shape consensus, to advance and solidify national pride and develop what some define as modernity’s secular religion: nationalism (Anderson 1991). In other words, for modern-day inquisitors, education cannot critically review key power relations in society. The racial and gendered roots of social, political, and economic power and the long history and contemporary reality of racial apartheid in the United States cannot be named or studied; posing such questions is considered too disruptive and unpatriotic.

The opposition between proponents of gag laws and the defenders of critical race theory (CRT) is yet another battle in the long-lasting antagonism between faith-based scholarship and critical thinking, between untouchable dogmas and the unfettered search for truth. In this case, the faith being protected from critical inquiry is the belief in the greatness and exceptionality of the US nation. These gag laws are, then, the biggest success of the right-wing authoritarian Make America Great Again movement, even though most of them have been implemented over the last three years, after the failed reelection of the seditious forty-fifth president, a defendant currently being tried for his instigation of the assault on the Capitol on January 6, 2021. This well-defined pattern of disassembling democratic institutions and practices from within, of curtailing basic

freedoms to secure the agenda of an ethnonationalist movement seeking to reestablish the foundational narratives of white supremacy, and the privileges of the pre-civil rights era, has also effectively assaulted academic freedom in higher education in most states.

Authoritarian societies across the world have historically demonstrated how censorship and closely watched political control of education play out. At the beginning of this academic year, for instance, the *Washington Post* reported how “Professor” Vladimir Putin lectured a select group of high school students on the newest unit added to their history textbook, which narrates the need for Russia to invade an independent neighbor: Ukraine (Dixon and Abbakumova 2023). This “effort to instill militaristic patriotism” in young people is one of the visible trends in authoritarian ethnonationalism the world over, resulting in a direct effort to limit critical thinking and the academic freedom to review and analyze historical and political conflicts independently and cogently.

In our call for papers last fall, we underscored the need to understand the socioeconomic forces intent on dismantling and undermining academic freedom and the impact these attacks would have on democracy as we know it. The aftermath of these censoring legal efforts in the United States is still unclear, but the contributors to this volume have clearly demarcated the changed landscapes gag laws and censorship are already generating across this country and others. Critical narratives and analyses of historical and contemporary forms of social, racial, sexual, or gender injustice are increasingly limited by a loud and visible clique of partisan agents like Christopher Rufo who claim expertise in whatever field is politically expedient for them to amplify their agendas. In turn, the place for the conceptual frameworks and theories, research findings, and analyses by trained and qualified scholars is progressively eroded, their expertise questioned as biased, as mere “ideology.” Paradoxically, then, indoctrinators intent on recreating national mythologies accuse scholars of seeking to inculcate a divisive ideology, decrying critical methodologies and decades of careful inductive research. In Orwellian fashion, the script has been flipped, with academic freedom and expertise curtailed in the name of freedom. At this stage, we have to wonder if students in a college classroom could freely review, quote, or discuss the articles in this volume of the *Journal of Academic Freedom*. Is the content of this journal a de facto target of the bans set in motion across the United States over the past few years?

This year’s articles survey the deeper landscapes of social power that shape the historical development and contemporary status of academic freedom. Attacks on academic freedom are not new, isolated instances; rather, they are connected to larger historical processes. This selection of articles traces an arc across the landscapes of contemporary politics, cultural dynamics, and institutional forces in higher education. Because many of the articles wrestle with the rift between authoritarianism and democracy, we offer a brief discussion on the significance of social power in these broadly contending forms of social organization. We wish to distinguish the forms of social power that predominate the sociopolitical movements animating authoritarianism versus those that typically inspire democratic and inclusive forms of sociopolitical organization. Indeed,

it is our contention that beneath these very different political and ideological topographies are deeply rooted and competing hegemonies with distinct conceptions about human nature, society, and knowledge. In a very broad sense, the inclusive democratic paradigm tolerates and wrestles with academic freedom while authoritarianism seeks to extinguish it.

Authoritarianism and Social Power

Within the United States and internationally, we have witnessed the deleterious effects that authoritarian governments, unchecked corporate interests, reactionary movements, and partisan politics have on academic freedom. We could cite a wide range of impacts, from tenure denial, dismissal, and (self-)censorship to imprisonment, political exile, and “brain drain.” By observing the real threats autocracy and authoritarianism pose to academic freedom we can better grasp the contemporary precarity of both democracy and academic freedom. Indeed, several articles explore how academic freedom serves as a touchstone for democracy and, conversely, how state-sanctioned attacks on academic freedom signal the atrophy of more inclusive and democratized landscapes of power. They show the interdependency between academic freedom and democracy. Academic freedom differs from free speech in that it adheres to rigorous standards and expertise, unlike the unaccountable opinions often presented in free speech. Academic claims, subject to peer review and scrutiny, form a vetted body of knowledge, distinguishing them from ordinary opinions. This validated knowledge, central to a democratic society, acts as a safeguard against the harm to democracy and public knowledge caused by partisan attacks, profit-driven opinion manipulations, and disinformation campaigns. Academic freedom, therefore, is crucial, not just a matter of opinion, and is essential for maintaining an informed and democratic society. Starkly, we see in several articles in this volume how social power rooted in authoritarian practices, cultures, and identities sustains illiberal institutions and politics while forming a global threat to democracy and academic freedom. We refer to these rootholds as *landscapes of authoritarian power*.

From philosophy to cognitive psychology to political theory, a robust body of theoretical and scientific research explains the social, psychological, and intergroup political dynamics associated with authoritarianism and those who embrace it (Adorno et al. 1950; Altemeyer 1981; Sidanius and Pratto 1999). Authoritarianism encompasses a spectrum of personality traits, political cultures, and political systems characterized by a high concentration of power in an individual or a group and limited political freedoms. Authoritarianism at the level of personality or political culture refers to an individual or group identity that prefers strict obedience, hierarchical structures, and a control-oriented outlook, or a “social dominance orientation” (Sidanius and Pratto 1999). Politically, authoritarianism describes a governance system where power is centralized, often without constitutional accountability, limiting personal freedoms and political pluralism, suppressing opposition, and emphasizing the importance of authority and order over individual rights. Decades of research point to several factors in the emergence of authoritarian

personalities, or social dominance orientations, including punitive parenting, religious fundamentalism, and a family culture of innate hierarchy (Altemeyer and Hunsberger 1992; Duckitt and Sibley 2007; Hetherington and Weiler 2009; Milburn and Conrad 1996). Individuals exposed to these conditions are more likely to adopt a generalized prejudice toward out-groups and minorities, right-wing political ideologies, fundamentalist religious beliefs, and support for capital punishment, among other traits (Altemeyer and Hunsberger 1992; Duckitt and Sibley 2007; Hetherington and Weiler 2009; Milburn and Conrad 1996). It is this throughline from punitive parenting to political authoritarianism that tells the scientific backstory of the fever pitch in what Richard Hanley refers to, in his article in this volume, as the “antiwoke crusade” against academic freedom.

Kenneth Boulding’s impactful book *The Three Faces of Power* (1989) offers a framework for understanding multiple and competing power dynamics in society, where coercive power is embraced by authoritarians. Boulding identifies three main sources of social power spanning a wide range of human societies: coercive, exchange, and integrative. Coercive power is rooted in threats or force, and it’s seen everywhere from the home to international politics. It is often characterized as “power over others.” Its effectiveness depends on the credibility of the threat. Coercive strategies can range from government military threats to local group disputes. In essence, this power works on the principle of inducing fear and promoting obedience. It is often linked to domination structures in society. Exchange power is based on mutual benefit. For instance, purchasing goods from a store is a simple exchange. But, when there is a vast disparity in resources, exchange power can become exploitative, resembling and even morphing into coercive power (for example, threats of withholding resources, terminating jobs, and so on). Integrative power arises from collective sentiments and cooperation aimed at achieving a common good. This power emanates from shared values or objectives and relies on community members’ altruism. It’s seen in movements like those for India’s independence or for civil rights in the United States. While integrative power fosters unity, it isn’t always benign, as seen in Nazi Germany. When harnessed for coercive purposes, typically by agitating an “in-group” against an “out-group,” integrative power can be a source of great destruction. Consider how civic nationalism in social democracies can be contrasted quite sharply with ethnonationalism and other forms of aggressive patriotism in authoritarian dictatorships.

In many situations, a blend of these types of power is at play. Similarly, systems that rely on coercive power often need mass support, highlighting the role that integrative power plays in binding a dominant group to an authoritarian leader, state, or political movement. Authoritarianism relies first and foremost on institutionalized coercive power organized around conceptions of social hierarchy, often interpreted as natural or ordained inequalities, and the cultivation of in-group hostility toward various out-groups. The rise of ethnonationalist movements globally demonstrates this affinity between authoritarianism and right-wing racism (Brown, Gordon, and Pensky 2018). In the United States, white nationalism is propped up

politically by authoritarian political leaders' appeal to prejudices among white conservatives toward various racialized out-groups (Hibbard 2022). In fact, authoritarianism is the best predictor of support for Donald Trump (MacWilliams 2016). Generally, from households and workplaces to nations, coercive power is employed to promise benefits to the "in-group" and "punitive" control over "out-groups." More egalitarian and inclusive forms of social power are deemed weak and unnatural to the interests behind the authoritarian leader, party, or state (Sidanius and Pratto 1999). In contrast, more inclusive forms of democracy place checks and balances (in widely varying and often limited ways) on forms of coercive, authoritarian power. Usually this occurs through laws that (at least in principle) should be applied equally to all, resisting tendencies toward oligarchy. Antiracist campaigns notably seek to extend civil and social protections to racialized groups as a countermeasure to the tools of coercion and privilege used by authoritarianism.

When social relations are governed by forms of control rooted in threat, bribery, and deception, coercive power is infused in the social and political order. Academic freedom, and the robust systems of validated knowledge it facilitates, cannot survive for long under such arrangements because it relies on cooperation and trust in a principle centered on the common good. Thus we find in the contributions to this volume a recurring tension between landscapes of social power rooted in principles of "power with others" through inclusion and a common good versus those rooted in "power over others" through authoritarian forms of coercion and exclusion (including book bans, censorship, state-control of curricula, and so on).

In This Volume

Richard Hanley's article depicts ongoing attacks on academic freedom and the teaching of CRT across the country as an "antiwoke crusade" (AWC) often carried out paradoxically in the name of academic freedom while seeking to restrict or ban the productive framework offered by CRT. "Defense against the Dark Arts: Academic Freedom Meets the Antiwoke Crusade" traces the geographic expansion of the bans and restrictions now impacting forty-four states. Hanley demonstrates how such bans have been supported by the "dubious expertise" of advocates such as Carol Swain and Christopher Rufo, whose testimonies and opinion pieces have become key elements in hearings and policy-making decisions. In one instance, Hanley shows how, despite the lack of evidence in Rufo's claim that the Arizona Department of Education proposed that "babies develop the first signs of racism at three months old," the fib was echoed quickly by conservative media. The distinction between the original assertion, "babies notice racial differences," and Rufo's attribution, "babies develop racism," is clear and yet lost in the work of the antiwoke crusaders whose goal is to decry the notion that the United States is systemically racist. Hanley looks next at the historical and geographic lines that demonstrate the systemic nature of racism in the United States. The discussion about the necessary differentiation between systemic racism, tied to a history of injustice and revealed by specific social outcomes, and

“chauvinist” racism, present in discriminatory attitudes and behaviors, is particularly productive, and Hanley offers it as a possible amendment to CRT. The AWC and Rufo’s work are based on a denial of systemic racism and an understanding of racism as purely attitudinal and behavioral rather than historical or systemic, a contention that, Hanley says, academic freedom and academic integrity are capable of challenging.

Logan Johnson’s “Bad Precedent: The Trump-Pence Administration’s Executive Order 13950 as Pretext for Republican Attacks on Academic Freedom” excoriates the political assault on the teaching of race and the history of racism in the United States launched by the Trump administration (2017–21) and “the Republican ideological network.” Johnson surveys the origins and impact of gag orders and their interference with the principles of academic freedom in higher education. The suspension of antibias training across different administrations throughout the country had specific deleterious effects on humanities and social science classrooms in higher education across red states. The Trump administration had sought to ban antibias training programs under the accusation that they broadcast the idea that “all white people contribute to and benefit from racism,” a notion that allegedly “counters the values of the United States and provokes racial resentment in the workforce.” These impulses created a new landscape and a “bad precedent” for higher education across the country, with most red states launching multiple educational gag orders, an epidemic in US higher education with an identifiable origin in the “Republican ideological network” and Trump’s Executive Order 13950. The impacts of these gag orders are reviewed in the second half of the article, with a detailed discussion of how they have obstructed key mandates of higher education by restricting learning opportunities, hampering workforce development, and obfuscating higher education’s democratic function.

Authoritarianism uses coercive power to bind subordinates and followers to an in-group by excluding and marginalizing “out-groups,” often using bureaucratic and cultural authority to achieve these aims. Several articles in this volume explore landscapes of power that exclude, deny, and marginalize discourses, histories, entire programs, or groups on the basis of race and gender. In “All Education Is Political: Critical Race Theory, White Power, and the Killing of Black Academic Freedom,” **J. R. Caldwell Jr.** reports on the gag laws incorporated into legislation in states across the country and the racialized impact these new laws are having across the profession. Perhaps the most telling evidence of structural racism and really existing white power in the United States today is the current success of legislators and boards of regents in limiting and banning discussion of its very existence. Caldwell forcefully defines these bans as “deliberate acts of white power” that seek to “help retain white dominance and empower white interests in society.” CRT is targeted for elimination because it seeks to “disrupt white dominance and power,” and the rolling out of bans and gag laws amounts to a daylight demonstration of hegemonic power, of white power.

In “Chicana/os in the Academic Culture: Still Struggling for Inclusion and Voice,” authors **Adalberto Aguirre Jr.** and **Rubén O. Martinez** explore how the historical landscapes of racial

power are perpetuated within colleges and universities, impacting knowledge production and academic freedom, with Chicana/o studies programs and faculty often marginalized. Amid an increasingly antagonistic national political climate and cultural wars driven by conservatives, these programs face intensified attacks challenging their legitimacy in knowledge production. Consequently, Chicana/o studies faculty face restrictions on their research and teaching, with academic content increasingly influenced by conservative anti-indoctrination forces, counter to liberal views favoring intellectual development through diverse perspectives. The authors call for a critical examination of the status of Chicana/o studies in higher education and its relationship with academic freedom, advocating for the recognition and inclusion of Chicana/o voices in academia, which have historically been sidelined. This inclusion is crucial for challenging existing dynamics of domination, inequality, and oppression within academic culture and broader society.

In “Autocratic Legalism and the Threat to Academic Freedom: Are We Learning the Right Lessons from Europe?,” **Marc Weinstein** and **Joy Blanchard** capture the core concerns raised in our call for papers by defining and comparing autocratic legalism in Viktor Orbán’s Hungary and Ron DeSantis’s Florida. They recognize that academic freedom is under global attack, evident in the rise of antidemocratic trends within liberal democracies. Hungary’s legislative and constitutional changes, led by Orbán, illustrate how autocracy can emerge in a democracy. Mirroring Orbán, Florida governor DeSantis’s approach utilizes familiar gender wars and antipathy to ivory tower elites to institute a US Orbánism. In both Hungary and Florida, attacks on gender and sexuality run parallel to anti-immigrant posturing as a prelude to attacks on academic freedom and established curricula. The Hungarian case and DeSantis’s success in Florida underscore that foes of open society actively undermine academic freedom. Stepping back from their analysis, the authors call on US academics to safeguard academic freedom by realizing that “autocracy requires the suppression of academic freedom, just as democracy demands support of it.” Faculty unions are vital in safeguarding academic freedom amid legislative challenges, particularly in “right-to-work” states, where efforts to limit unions are prevalent. Academics must actively defend academic freedom, join and support faculty unions where these are available, engage in shared governance structures, and address the public’s resentment of perceived elitism in academia. This approach fosters an environment where diversity of ideas and people flourish, crucial for countering autocratic tendencies and upholding academic freedom in the education sector.

Dilys Schoorman and **Rosanna Gatens** further detail the Republican-dominated Florida government’s rollback of a more democratized and inclusive landscape in “A Threat to Democracy: Florida’s Agenda to Dismantle Public Higher Education.” Citing Chief US District Judge Mark Walker in *Pernell v. Florida*, Schoorman and Gatens explain how House Bill 7—which the Republican governor labeled the “Stop WOKE Act”—represents a “dystopian,” antidemocratic “blueprint for the nation.” The authors explore further the hostile political

takeover of New College of Florida, a public liberal arts college in Sarasota, as another example of how the ultraconservative wing of the Republican Party in Florida has not only decimated academic freedom protections across the state but also used state power to advance curricular censorship, silence critics, and punish defenders of teaching an inclusive and accurate history.

When Governor DeSantis replaced the trustees to reshape New College's academic direction, he appointed Christopher Rufo, who helped spark the attack on and misrepresentation of CRT. These new trustees formed a network linked to the larger ultraconservative elite in the United States. Consider Rufo's current and recent board affiliations. In addition to his new position at the New College of Florida, he is an advisory committee member with the Californians for Equal Rights Foundation, an anti-affirmative action, anti-CRT organization based in San Diego. He has served at ultraconservative organizations including the Manhattan Institute, the Discovery Institute Intelligent Design think tank, the Claremont Institute think tank, notable for its recent embrace of antidemocratic governance philosophies, and the Heritage Foundation. In appointing Rufo as a trustee, DeSantis was subordinating academic governance and freedom to a coercive political mandate, one rooted in right-wing authoritarianism. The consequences have been brutal, as faculty members exit and queer students face isolation and "unending stress," as one student explained in an op-ed (Paine 2023). Duke University sociologist Kieran Healy tweeted the cruel irony in the planned elimination of the gender studies program at New College: "The marketplace of ideas is when the government chooses which subjects colleges may teach. Academic freedom is when the state decides your subject shouldn't be allowed. The Classical Liberal Arts Tradition is when political appointees get to judge whether something is science."

Ricardo Phipps dives into the hostile reactions to the Advanced Placement (AP) African American studies curriculum in "When Truth Hurts: Reactions to the Piloted AP African American Studies Program." Under the pretext that it caused division, the curriculum has been altered under pressure, removing requirements to cover contemporary empowerment movements, controversial issues, and the names of several Black scholars associated with CRT and LGBTQ+ experiences. While the College Board insists that curriculum modifications were not influenced by external pressures, Florida officials claim their objections led to the changes. The AP program, launched in 1952, has expanded access over time, with increased participation from students of diverse backgrounds. These instances of government officials objecting to course content, especially regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) issues, raise concerns over academic freedom and the political ideologies influencing nationwide academic curricula.

Tabitha S. M. Morton explains, in "H.B. 1006 and H.B. 1607: The Eighty-Eighth Texas Legislature's Attack on Academic Freedom in Texas," how these recent legislative initiatives threaten academic freedom and the ability of public colleges and universities to create DEI programs. These will have lasting, severe impacts, leading to the loss of talented academics and challenges in recruiting faculty due to the restrictive environment, negatively affecting higher education and the economy. Public higher education systems in the state, including the Texas

A&M University, University of Texas, and University of Houston systems, must act to preserve academic freedom amid the likely introduction of more such bills. With a significant student enrollment, these institutions need to ensure that legislation does not hinder teaching crucial skills like social responsibility and critical thinking. They also need to provide a safe environment for the large number of faculty they employ, supporting their teaching and research activities while safeguarding tenure against ongoing conservative attacks. Although bills pushing a conservative agenda will persist, posing a threat to higher education, collaborative efforts between faculty and administrators can develop compliance strategies that shield institutions from legal actions and preserve academic freedom. By establishing protective procedures, processes, and programs through shared governance, they can safeguard their institutions and brace for future legislation aimed at terminating academic freedom.

Carmen Moreno-Nuño distills much of how academic freedom protects representations of the past that support a more inclusive and democratic present in “The Teaching of the ‘Dirty Past’ in the United States and Spain: A Comparative Analysis.” Moreno-Nuño explains how countries with histories of colonial violence, state terrorism, slavery, or totalitarian regimes, like the United States and Spain, are grappling with traumatic pasts that threaten their democracies. Each country’s approach to reconciling with this past is complex, often controversial, and can significantly influence the national psyche, public policies, and educational systems. In recent years, while Spain has made progressive strides in confronting and acknowledging its history, including the Civil War and the subsequent fascist dictatorship, the United States appears to be retreating from transparently addressing its own legacy of oppression and racism. In this global context, the accurate and inclusive teaching of history becomes imperative. It is crucial for fostering a more democratic and tolerant society, understanding the present, and avoiding the repetition of past mistakes. As countries continue to grapple with their “dirty” histories, the approach they adopt toward education will play a significant role in shaping societal values and the future of their democracies.

Helen Kapstein’s essay, “Bad Readers,” draws parallels between past censorship during South Africa’s apartheid system and current efforts to suppress CRT in the United States. During apartheid, censorship was used to suppress critiques of the regime, as demonstrated by the banning and unbanning of Nadine Gordimer’s novel *Burger’s Daughter*. This book was banned for being seen as offensive and detrimental to public morals, mirroring current censorship attempts in the United States with arguments reminiscent of apartheid-era logic. Legislation, like South Dakota’s House Bill 1337 and similar bills in Oklahoma, aims to restrict discussion of diversity, equality, and inclusion in education. Often, these bills, having strikingly similar language, are not grassroots efforts but are driven by well-funded, right-wing think tanks. These groups offer model legislation to further their agenda, similar to coordinated censorship efforts during apartheid. Censorship often involves deliberate misreading to take offense, as seen in apartheid-era bans, recent US legislation, and the Trump administration’s *1776 Report*. These

efforts contribute to suppressing academic freedoms, with several states passing legislation restricting teaching related to CRT. Such practices undermine open discourse, debate, and the understanding of historical and present realities, ultimately posing a significant threat to academic freedom and democracy itself.

Louis Edgar Esparza highlights the “pursuit of truth” as the core principle of academic freedom and higher learning that has been largely challenged by market interests and sociopolitical agendas. Citing Eric Fromm, Esparza’s “Escape from Academic Freedom” zeroes in on this debate by exploring how some interests are furthered “by finding the truth” and others “by destroying it.” The corporatized academic landscape has increasingly lost sight of the founding principle of knowledge production—that is, truth-seeking—as the private sector, and capitalism at large, operates by the “profit motive” and this regularly leads to the suppression of “unprofitable information.” Tracing this tension in the long history of universities across the West, Esparza places the current stress on academic freedom and truth seeking in the context of post-Cold War globalization and the conflation of “identity and emotion” by confusing “inclusion and acceptance” with “tolerance and acceptance of feelings and opinions.” Esparza goes on to depict a largely left-leaning professoriate as a politically homogenous workforce that has somehow made the pursuit of truth “subservient to the advancement of political agendas,” this despite his early recognition that scholars work in an increasingly corporatized and politically controlled intellectual space. Esparza’s article advances a criticism of the profession from an inquiring more conservative angle, opening up a debate about who are the marginalized truth-seekers in the contemporary political atmosphere, and who does ultimately wield the scripts of hegemonic thought, whether that be a true or false recital.

Christina M. Smith, in “No Confidence in the CSU,” explores a paradox in the California State University system where a series of leadership crises are contrasted with progress on other fronts. Across the system, Smith cites the numerous “votes of no confidence” by faculty senates in university leadership’s mismanagement, lack of transparency, or disregard for shared governance. The situation escalated with the mishandling of the resignation of former chancellor Joseph Castro, who was found to have assisted a colleague facing sexual harassment charges. Faculty across various campuses have expressed dismay over poor leadership, lack of accountability, and administrative overreach into curricula and budget allocations, leading to low morale and mistrust. Votes of no confidence in leaders have become a trend not only in the CSU system but also nationwide. Despite these votes, there is ambiguity regarding the processes and outcomes of no-confidence votes, often resulting in leaders resigning or moving to other institutions, sometimes with promotions. These votes highlight deeper issues in higher education governance and the urgent need for reform and active faculty participation in decision-making processes. Faculty and student activism, unionization, and strikes across the United States provide hope that more integrative power, from the bottom up and middle out, can help restore

shared governance and better ensure leadership accountability and transparency in higher education.

Accreditors have a key role to play in this changed landscape of plummeting academic standards, as academic freedom is attacked across the country. If academic freedom is no longer observed and the content of syllabi and academic discussions are policed by ideologues, hacks, and politicians ignoring basic academic standards such as peer review or tenure protections, accreditation of institutions of higher education should be reviewed and removed. "Accreditation, Academic Freedom, and Institutional Autonomy: Historical Precedents and Modern Imperatives," **Timothy Reese Cain's** perceptive and thorough review of this failsafe element in the ecosystem of US higher education, places a strong emphasis on the ability of accrediting bodies to intervene in the current wave of "undue external encroachment." Whether these important organizations will boldly step in, denounce the violation of academic standards in institutions that have been intellectually violated by state legislators and activist boards of trustees, and remove their accreditation remains to be seen. As Cain argues, such a move would strongly support the autonomy of the academic space, protecting authoritative knowledge, academic standards and methods, as well as academic freedom in those places where historiographic vigilantes have sought to erode them.

Carol J. Batker and **Jennifer E. Turpin**, in "Who Has the Final Say? Academic Freedom, Censorship, and Governance in Higher Education," trace the current attacks on academic freedom aimed at "silenc[ing] faculty by banning course content and materials, surveilling classrooms, eliminating tenure, and defunding programs." Their article explores how these encroachments on academic freedom "exacerbate a shift already underway, from faculty collective authority to external governance and control," resulting in a "displacement of faculty expertise across the country." A survey of the legislation deployed in states such as Florida and North Carolina demonstrates the politicization of boards of higher education through what Batker and Turpin define as "strategies of control." These strategies are a combination of surveillance, defunding, and an unequivocal effort to dismantle tenure. Batker and Turpin define these political battles not as a clash between liberals and conservatives but rather as "a battle between truth-seekers and propagandists." The last section of the article discusses the ways faculty unions and organizing have helped resist the larger, more general trend to disempower and displace faculty from traditional spheres of shared governance. Managerial, neoliberal reforms are a key context that has now been seconded by extremely biased political intrusion undermining academic freedom and shared governance.

Finally, a fearless plea to guard the space and time necessary for thinking creatively is at the center of the article "Space to Think: Defending 'Thought-Labor' as Essential to Academic Freedom" by **Michael Davis**, **Margaret Cotter-Lynch**, and **Kyle Lincoln**. Their discussion endorses the role of "unstructured inquiry" and the space needed for "thought-labor" as both a "bedrock" and an "idea genesis" for academic freedom and knowledge production. Davis,

Cotter-Lynch, and Lincoln highlight the challenges to “exploratory learning” and the central mission of free inquiry posed both by the “efficiency mode” and the proliferation of bureaucratic tasks that marshal and fill out the schedules of scholars. The article delves into the key issues of quantification of the necessary time for thinking freely and the challenge posed by the need for accountability amid the increased corporatization of academia. The emphasis placed by most institutions of higher education on specific outcomes and measurable practices, the prominence of quantity over quality, obscures the creative framework, the “thought-labor” needed for effective teaching and original research, while it also erodes the geographies of academic freedom.

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