

Retired Faculty Take a Stand on Higher Education

April 5, 2025

The Retired Faculty of the University of Florida (RFUF), a half-century old organization deeply invested in the future of our institution, is greatly troubled by emerging attacks on the value and fiscal stability of institutions of higher education, both in place and proposed, by state and federal agencies. These efforts appear to target reducing institutional autonomy, evidence-based thinking, academic freedom, diversity, and the scientific and cultural contributions of universities and colleges that are the centerpieces of a free country.

RFUF, more than 250 retirees strong representing every college of the University of Florida, strongly endorses the proposition that the advancement *and support* of higher education is and must remain among the highest of national priorities. Since the founding of the first American universities in the early 1600s, Americans and people around the world have benefitted from the original thinking and efforts of faculty members in teaching, research, and services outreach of our universities.

The tangible output of our universities, including but not limited to healthcare breakthroughs, advances in science and technology, agricultural extension services, innovative public-school education, and creativity in the arts fuel the American economy, providing growth of employment opportunities for those who can participate in the workforce and sustaining support for those who cannot.

Lifesaving advances in medical sciences do not typically originate in private industry but instead from university research laboratories powered by state and federal investment. Life changing advances in computing, engineering, agriculture, weather forecasting, communications, and other facets of modern life similarly are often products of university-generated research.

Undiminished funding of our institutions of higher education is absolutely essential to maintain competitiveness in our economy and in world leadership. The fortune of future generations depends upon the resources and opportunities provided by today's universities. Universities empower individuals to achieve their full potential while also ensuring progress and the well-being of our country. Dare we risk these advantages and values by short-sighted cutbacks to higher education at this consequential time in history?

Robust support, coming from the American people, has made our universities the envy of the world and kept us at the forefront of global progress and development. The United States has generously helped to lay the foundation for groundbreaking discoveries and advancements that will shape the future of civilization. The lion's share of Nobel Prizes

in Physics, Chemistry, Physiology or Medicine, Literature, Peace, and Economics have been awarded to American university faculty members. Our community colleges have also offered both excellent academic and job training skills for our citizens.

Yet the very programs that have proven to attract creative talent to American universities, such as diversity programs and direct partnerships with federal agencies including the NIH, NSF, USDA, EPA, DOD, NASA, and many others, are currently at extreme risk of disabling and foolhardy reductions or complete elimination. Such previously unthinkable losses will undoubtedly reduce the quantity and quality of education, research, and currently undiscovered tools to improve the lives of all inhabitants of this planet.

We, the Retired Faculty of the University of Florida, are convinced that the inventive minds harbored in our universities and colleges are the essential keys to feeding our people, saving lives, stimulating economic growth, protecting our environment, and improving the well-being of the citizens of the United States if not the world.

It is time for all Americans to demand, as we do, that responsible leaders take us forward with thoughtful and unwaveringly strong support of institutions of higher education, not backward.

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