

Prospects for Academic Freedom Under the Trump Regime

By [Hank Reichman](#)

The following is the text of a talk I delivered on January 30 at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington. I want to thank the Whitman AAUP chapter, the faculty committee on academic freedom and due process, and the Whitman administration for their invitation, hospitality and support during my illuminating two-day visit.

On November 9, we all awoke to the shocking — and for many of us terrifying — realization that Donald J. Trump would be the next President of the United States. Many people wondered what this would mean for our country. What would Trump really do now that he had so unexpectedly won the election?

We are now ten days into the Trump regime and it is becoming crystal clear that President Trump will in fact do exactly what candidate Trump promised to do: try to enact an extremist version of the Republican Party's recent program; launch assaults on Muslims and immigrants; build some sort of "wall" between the U.S. and Mexico; and overall promote an agenda that its own proponents proudly call "white nationalism."

Within hours of Trump's electoral college victory, the AAUP issued [a statement](#) to its members. While acknowledging that our Association does not engage in partisan politics and has never endorsed a candidate for national office, we also recognized the widespread fear among our members that Trump's campaign had "threatened some of the core institutions of our democracy and may be the greatest threat to academic freedom since the McCarthy period." We noted in particular that Trump's remarks about minorities, immigrants, and women on some campuses had a chilling effect on the rights of students and faculty members to speak out. At some events Trump held on college campuses, students who opposed him said they had been harassed or threatened. We noted as well that Trump's call for an "ideological screening test" for admission to the United States could make it difficult for colleges and universities to attract students and scholars from other countries and to engage in the international exchange of ideas so vital to academic freedom and the pursuit of knowledge. And lastly we noted with alarm that the Republican denial of climate change and, indeed, of the very validity of science itself represents a dangerous frontal assault on the essential core of higher education's very mission.

In response, the AAUP pledged to redouble our efforts in four areas. We vowed to

- 1) Oppose the privatization of our public higher education system and fight for higher education as a common good, accessible and affordable to all.
- 2) Oppose discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion or national origin and fight for an equitable and welcoming educational environment in which all can freely and safely learn, discuss, differ, debate, and grow.

- 3) Oppose attacks on unions and the economic security of college and university faculty and staff and fight for expanding and strengthening the rights of all faculty members — tenure-track, contingent, and graduate employees — to organize and bargain collectively.
- 4) Oppose violations of academic freedom and of the broader rights to free expression in the academic community and fight for strengthened protections for and renewed commitment to the principles of the 1940 [Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#) and the 1966 [Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#).

We also emphasized that “the problems facing higher education today and the growing assault on the professionalism and freedoms of faculty members over the past several decades can hardly be attributed to the results of a single election. Many of these problems stem from ill-conceived policies developed and implemented on a bipartisan basis.” However, it is clear today, in the light of Trump’s initial appointments and executive orders, that under his presidency these assaults will surely intensify.

I want to focus on each of these four pledges in turn, shedding some light, I hope, on what has already occurred, what may yet occur, and on what the AAUP is trying to do in response.

Well before Donald Trump emerged as a national political figure the AAUP was concerned about the now decades-long movement to privatize our public colleges and universities and the concomitant tendency to “corporatize” management of many private institutions. In his terrific new book, [The Great Mistake: How We Wrecked Public Universities and How We Can Fix Them](#), University of California professor Christopher Newfield wrote:

Submitting public universities to private sector standards hasn’t increased their overall wealth and made their education more efficient. It has increased their costs and shifted resources from the educational core. . . . Private sector “reforms” are not the cure for the college cost disease — they *are* the college cost disease.

Some thirty years of privatization have yielded only declining quality, decreased access, and burgeoning student debt. Underlying these developments has been a fundamental abandonment of the foundational principle that the AAUP has stressed ever since its founding in 1915: **higher education, both public and private, is a common good, not a private commodity**. Indeed, as early as our republic’s founding years, our second president, John Adams, wrote: “The whole people must take upon themselves the education of the whole people, and must be willing to bear the expense of it.” He was referring to primary education, but given today’s complex economy and the need for a more informed citizenry than ever before, this principle must now govern higher education as well.

Today, however, higher education is increasingly treated as simply a private benefit available only to those able to pay for it, or those willing to amass crushing debt to gain its benefits.

To be sure, there have been important signs that the mood is changing. Last week I attended the annual meeting of the [American Association of Colleges and Universities](#) where a remarkable opening plenary focused precisely on the need to defend higher education as a public good. Indeed, the necessity of conceiving higher education as a public good and not a private benefit was the central message of AACU president Lynn Pasquerella’s splendid opening remarks. Another member of the plenary panel, Temple University professor Sara Goldrick-Rab, author of a highly praised [new book on the student debt crisis](#),

said, “Colleges and universities promote the idea that ‘We’re worth it, debt is worth it, taking a loan to come here is very much worth it.’ We’ve not only shifted sort of our own rhetoric about this,” she added,

but the major mechanism of financial aid at the federal level has become loans and not grants over time. And part of that has been facilitated by the rhetoric that says, ‘We can charge what we want because what we’re providing is a value, and we will discount it for those who have need, and we will do so effectively’ — what’s called the high-tuition, high-aid model — despite the fact that over 30 to 40 years, we’ve failed to actually implement that model. We told ourselves a story over and over where our students are actually all right, or they must be, or we wouldn’t be able to sleep at night, quite frankly.

But our students are NOT all right. Now, as previously underserved populations — ethnic minorities, the poor, immigrants — have entered higher education, the resources provided to serve them have diminished. As some have put it, as the students get browner, the funding gets lower.

Attending that AACU meeting, I began to feel for the first time in years some optimism that maybe college and university administrators and we faculty members, who so frequently find ourselves in conflict with each other, may yet be able to make common cause around this issue. And, to be frank, we’d better make common cause against the privatization agenda — and quickly — if higher education as a public good is to survive under the Trump regime.

For although Trump has yet to articulate even the vague outlines of a program for higher education, I don’t think it’s too audacious to say that his administration is most likely to embrace and accelerate rather than resist the privatization agenda, with its ominous implications for educational quality and ultimately for the survival of academic freedom and shared governance. For one thing, the deep cuts to public higher education under Republican governors like Scott Walker in Wisconsin, Bruce Rauner in Illinois, John Kasich in Ohio, and, yes, Mike Pence in Indiana, suggest the likelihood of similar cuts in federal aid, including student aid, under Trump. Trump’s nominee to lead the Department of Education, [Betsy DeVos](#), appears to be a blank slate and woefully ignorant about higher education (among other things), but her demonstrated devotion to the unrestrained privatization of K-12 education in Michigan through largely unregulated charter schools hardly bodes well for our sector. And one must assume as well that efforts begun under President Obama to rein in the abuses characteristic of so many for-profit institutions are now quite unlikely to continue.

Let me turn now to the issue of discrimination. In recent years student demands, mainly at elite institutions, for so-called “safe spaces” have come under criticism, with a few voices charging — quite inaccurately in my opinion — that such student demands have become the principal threat to academic freedom and free expression more generally on campus. Now, to be sure, there have been abuses. As the libertarian scholar [Jacob Levy has observed](#),

I’ve got my own list of wacky, ridiculous, and sometimes quite wicked excesses of identity politics and political correctness. I suspect that most people who spend much time on university campuses, and aren’t themselves very far on the left, do. It turns out that 18-year-olds seized of the conviction of their own righteousness are prone to immoderation and simplistic views. (Who knew?)

Far more dangerous, however, have been those who would deny that college and university campuses must be, as the UC Berkeley economist Bradford DeLong put it, “first of all, a safe space for ideas; second, a safe place for scholars.” And increasingly it is the safety of scholars — both students and their faculty — that is truly endangered. If assaults on such safety are not resisted as forcefully as possible, it will not be very long before ideas themselves will be even more threatened.

In the immediate wake of the election U.S. college and university campuses experienced an unprecedented spike in hate crimes, both physical and verbal. These were directed against African Americans, immigrants, members of the LGBTQ community, religious minorities, women, and people with disabilities. In some instances the perpetrators invoked the president-elect in support of their heinous actions.

In response, the AAUP national Council, at its November meeting, passed [a resolution](#) to unequivocally condemn these attacks and to call on college and university administrators, faculty, staff, and students to unite against them. “Violence, threats of violence, and harassment have no place on campus,” we declared. The Council resolution continued:

In our 1994 statement [On Freedom of Expression and Campus Speech Codes](#) the AAUP declared: “On a campus that is free and open, no idea can be banned or forbidden. No viewpoint or message may be deemed so hateful or disturbing that it may not be expressed.” But threats and harassment differ from expressions of ideas that some or even most may find repulsive. They intimidate and silence. The free exchange of ideas is incompatible with an atmosphere of fear. Colleges and universities must be places where all ideas and even prejudices may be freely and openly debated and discussed, but such discussion cannot happen when some members of the community are threatened or excluded. Our goal must be to provide safety for both ideas and for all those who wish to engage with them.

The resolution went on to note the special importance of attacks on “those among our students who are undocumented, many of whom have been in this country since early childhood” and declared the AAUP’s support of the movement for sanctuary campuses. “While colleges and universities must obey the law,” the resolution declared,

administrations must make all efforts to guarantee the privacy of immigrant students and pledge not to grant access to information that might reveal their immigration status unless so ordered by a court of law. Nor should colleges and universities gather information about the citizenship or immigration status of people who have interactions with the administration, including with campus police. College and university police should not themselves participate in any efforts to enforce immigration laws, which are under federal jurisdiction. Faculty members should join efforts to resist all attempts to intimidate or inappropriately investigate undocumented students or to deny them their full rights to due process and a fair hearing.

The Trump administration has yet to make clear how it will treat the status, for instance, of the “dreamers,” those students who came to this country illegally as children with their families and who are now protected by the Obama administration’s DACA program. But the dramatic events of this past weekend centering around the president’s notorious executive order banning immigration from a number of Muslim countries hardly bode well.

In response to that executive order thousands of academics [as of this writing, 27,000, to be precise], including as many as 51 Nobel laureates, rushed to sign [an online petition](#) opposing the immigration ban on three grounds. And here I will quote directly from the petition:

1. **This Executive Order is discriminatory.** The EO unfairly targets a large group of immigrants and non-immigrants on the basis of their countries of origin, all of which are nations with a majority Muslim population. This is a major step towards implementing the stringent racial and religious profiling promised on the campaign trail. The United States is a democratic nation, and ethnic and religious profiling are in stark contrast to the values and principles we hold.
2. **This Executive Order is detrimental to the national interests of the United States.** The EO significantly damages American leadership in higher education and research. US research institutes host a significant number of researchers from the nations subjected to the upcoming restrictions. From Iran alone, more than 3000 students have received PhDs from American universities in the past 3 years. The proposed EO limits collaborations with researchers from these nations by restricting entry of these researchers to the US and can potentially lead to departure of many talented individuals who are current and future researchers and entrepreneurs in the US. We strongly believe the immediate and long term consequences of this EO do not serve our national interests.
3. **This Executive Order imposes undue burden on members of our community:** The people whose status in the United States would be reconsidered under this EO are our students, friends, colleagues, and members of our communities. The implementation of this EO will necessarily tear families apart by restricting entry for family members who live outside of the US and limiting the ability to travel for those who reside and work in the US. These restrictions would be applied to nearly all individuals from these countries, regardless of their immigration status or any other circumstances. This measure is fatally disruptive to the lives of these immigrants, their families, and the communities of which they form an integral part. It is inhumane, ineffective, and un-American.

I fear, however, that Trump's action on immigration is just the beginning. I believe we need to be prepared for further assaults by the Trump regime on the rights of a broad array of minority groups on our campuses. We will need to stand firmly in defense of the rights of those so assaulted. We must also be prepared for efforts by individuals and groups who support the Trumpist "white nationalist" agenda to intimidate and silence opposition on campus. To be sure, efforts to deny such individuals, for instance the notorious and noxious provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos, their own right to speak are misguided, if perhaps understandable. But we cannot let legally protected, if invidious speech, become genuine harassment and intimidation. The rights of all members of our campus community not only to speak freely but to develop, test, and debate their views in safety must be protected.

I turn now to the third pledge we made on November 9, to oppose attacks on unions and the economic security of college and university faculty and staff and to expand and strengthen the right of all faculty members to organize and bargain collectively. Since Whitman is a private college, you are probably aware that ever since the U.S. Supreme Court's 1980 decision in the *Yeshiva University* case most tenure-track faculty in private institutions are considered to be "managers" under the National Labor Relations Act and hence ineligible for federal protection of efforts to organize unions and bargain collectively. And in a majority of states faculty in public colleges and universities also lack such rights.

Still, as the use — and widespread abuse — of faculty on short-term, often part-time, contingent contracts has expanded exponentially — what some have labeled the “adjunctification” of the faculty — efforts to organize faculty members into unions have intensified. Indeed, for the growing numbers excluded from the tenure system — which for over a century the AAUP has seen as the best and most important protection for academic freedom — unionization is perhaps the only way such freedom can be effectively defended.

Before the election it seemed the legal environment for organizing, at least at the federal level, was improving. In several key decisions [the National Labor Relations Board made it easier for instructors at private institutions](#), including [graduate student employees](#), to organize. And a little less than a year ago I recall sitting in a hotel lobby in San Diego where I learned of the passing of Justice Antonin Scalia, which ensured that the U.S. Supreme Court would not be able to muster a majority in [the *Friedrichs* case](#) and overturn forty years of precedent to rule that the practice in the public sector of collecting agency fees — obligatory fees paid by non-union members to a union to cover the costs of representation — violates the First Amendment and is hence illegal in all states.

Now, however, the situation is quite different. During the campaign Trump pledged to nominate Supreme Court justices like Scalia, and it is highly likely that not long after the Scalia seat is finally filled a new case will come before the court much like *Friedrichs* and that the result will deal a body blow to public unions, including unions of faculty members. And Trump is also likely, as would any Republican president, to appoint individuals hostile to labor to the NLRB, making the reversal of the important Obama-era decisions of that board a real possibility, if not a strong likelihood.

Of course, assaults on unions and collective bargaining in states where Republicans dominate legislatures and governorships predate the Trump electoral victory. Wisconsin is clearly the model. There, as you’ll recall, Governor Scott Walker successfully pushed through legislation that almost entirely destroyed public employee unions, including unions of public university faculty. And this was followed, as I will discuss in a few minutes, by an assault on the tenure system. Now, however, as Professor Goldrick-Rab put it at the AACU meeting, “We’re all living in Wisconsin.”

Such efforts can, however, be resisted. In Wisconsin, the devastation of the unions was followed by a remarkable growth of interest in the AAUP, with new advocacy chapters and growing membership emerging at multiple University of Wisconsin campuses. And Ohio Governor Kasich’s effort a few years ago to destroy public employee unions in that state was reversed by an overwhelming 2/3 majority in a public referendum, in which the Ohio AAUP chapters, I’m proud to say, played a critical and highly public role. Still, the AAUP and other faculty unions must now be prepared to absorb the blows to our finances and our ability to organize that Trump’s potential appointments are likely to bring.

Finally, in November we pledged to

Oppose violations of academic freedom and of the broader rights to free expression in the academic community and fight for strengthened protections for and renewed commitment to the principles of the 1940 [Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#) and the 1966 [Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#).

Here, I think, the threats will come not only from the Trump administration directly. Indeed, I expect the kinds of threats we have seen from various sources — politicians, donors, media, for examples — to

continue, but that those who threaten the faculty's rights and responsibilities will be further emboldened by the administration's rhetoric and its policy decisions.

In [a post to the AAUP's Academe blog](#) this past weekend, Stephen Mumme, co-president of our Colorado Conference, described the threat well:

Enamored of Alt-Facts and an unhealthy skepticism of science itself, the new administration has unleashed a barrage of policy measures that fully implemented as given could hobble higher education for years to come. And professors are right in the bullseye.

The attack on science-centered federal agencies—think Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Energy, and Health and Human Services—has thus far received the lion's share of attention from the press. In addition to the agency-hating politicians designated to run these agencies, an immediate muzzling of agency communications and efforts to witch hunt and target expertise on climate change, reproductive health, and other specialties within these offices presages what is likely to be a thoroughgoing review and retrenchment in federal support for university research programs in these fields.

The attack on science is paralleled by a broadside volley on public support for the arts and humanities. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting and public journalism are on the line. So too the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities both of which are slated for elimination. If Congress goes along we are sure to see political co-religionists at the state level target state arts programs, leaving universities and faculty solely reliant on the vagaries of private philanthropy for research funding and support. . . .

The collateral damage issuing from these immediate attacks on university research and scholarship is just as worrisome. Critics of contemporary innovations in teaching and pedagogy have emerged from the woodwork. Case in point is the National Association of Scholars' report in early January blasting service learning in all its forms and savaging service learning and other means of student engagement as a dangerous undercutting of American civics education at the college level, targeting specific programs, courses, and faculty in the process.

But in some ways most concerning is that the Trump regime's rhetoric will embolden private assaults on academic freedom. Take, for example, the so-called [Professor Watchlist](#). This is nothing less than a McCarthyite blacklist of professors that purports to expose faculty who "advance leftist propaganda in the classroom." This comes on the heels of other blacklists of scholars whose positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict run counter to a presumed pro-Israeli orthodoxy, most notoriously the so-called [Amcha Initiative](#) and [Canary Mission](#) sites, which have encouraged harassing emails and efforts to deny employment both to established scholars and graduate students.

It is encouraging, however, that faculty members have resisted these efforts. In 2014, a broad group of [prominent scholars in Jewish Studies](#) declared that the Amcha Initiative "closes off all but the most narrow intellectual directions and has a chilling effect on research and teaching." They concluded that, "AMCHA's tactics are designed to stifle debate on issues debated in Israel and around the world, and the presumption that students must be protected from their own universities is misguided and destructive. Efforts such as these do not promote academic integrity, but rather serve to deaden the kind of spirited academic exchange that is the lifeblood of the university."

More recently the AAUP, inspired by an independent action taken by faculty members at Notre Dame, initiated [an open letter](#) to the sponsors of the Professor Watchlist and invited our members and supporters to sign. The letter concluded, “We support and stand with our colleagues whose academic freedom your list threatens. Therefore, we, the undersigned, ask that you add our names to the list.” We gathered more than 12,000 signatures.

Some have suggested that our response actually gave this rather amateurish blacklisting effort more publicity and credit than it merits. We have been told by some that the Professor Watchlist is best ignored. I disagree. That was the approach, unfortunately, that the AAUP took in the 1950s when blacklists of alleged Communists resulted in the dismissals of dozens of faculty members across the country. The position of silence taken by the AAUP at the time was a disgraceful mistake. And so long as I am an officer of the Association it is a mistake we will not repeat.

In recent years the AAUP has argued that the single greatest threat to academic freedom has been the erosion of the tenure system resulting from the overreliance on part-time and contingent faculty, a product, I would argue, of corporatization and privatization. But now we are seeing once again a frontal assault on tenure that I fear will only intensify under the Trump regime, even if the new president is not directly implicated.

It begins, once again, in [Wisconsin](#), where prior to Scott Walker tenure for public college and university faculty members was enshrined in statute. Walker successfully removed this provision from the state’s laws, leaving it to the University of Wisconsin’s governing board to ensure tenure protections via university policy. But last year the policy adopted by that board, which was already flawed, was amended further to provide for the dismissal of faculty members after post-tenure review without any appeal and on the sole initiative of an administrator. In other words, although tenure exists in principle, in practice any tenured faculty member may now, in Wisconsin, be dismissed without a faculty hearing or even a reasonable explanation.

Now this has been followed by even more direct assaults on tenure in Iowa and Missouri. Proposed legislation in both states would, if adopted, bar any public college or university in those states from providing tenured status to any faculty member. In a public statement, the AAUP called these bills “[a concerted attack on academic freedom](#).” That statement declared:

Academic tenure safeguards academic freedom and higher education’s contribution to a functioning democracy. In today’s political climate, with academics and independent media under attack, what is needed is certainly not less due process or fewer protections for open debate, dialogue, and research.

In fact, it is already the case that many educators lack the protection of tenure. The regressive attacks on tenure that we are now seeing are part of a general attack on education and an educated citizenry. They come hand-in-hand with the defunding of public higher education and are being conducted by the same players who wage right-to-work battles against working people and seek to privatize our public services in a race to the bottom. Recent legislative assaults on higher education in Wisconsin were a model, and they are being replicated by a large network with deep pockets.

It is unclear whether these proposals will succeed. This past weekend Iowa faculty members and their supporters turned out in droves to a public meeting held by the legislator who sponsored this bill. And there is evidence to suggest that support for these proposals is at least incomplete among even

conservative Republicans. Still, there is good reason to be concerned that these efforts may just be opening salvos in an all-out attack on a tenure system — and hence on academic freedom itself — already dangerously weakened by adjunctification.

Almost as central to the defense of academic freedom as tenure is a system of shared governance as described in the 1966 [Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#). As the AAUP put it in our 1994 statement, [On the Relationship of Faculty Governance to Academic Freedom](#), “a sound system of institutional governance is a necessary condition for the protection of faculty rights and thereby for the most productive exercise of essential faculty freedoms. Correspondingly, the protection of the academic freedom of faculty members in addressing issues of institutional governance is a prerequisite for the practice of governance unhampered by fear of retribution.”

Unfortunately, however, at both private and public colleges and universities shared governance is increasingly under siege. The poisonous notion that institutions of higher education should be run more like business enterprises — a concept central to the disastrous privatization and corporatization project — has increasingly empowered dictatorial administrators and out-of-touch governing boards at the expense of faculty expertise and participation.

The examples are legion. The AAUP has long maintained a list of institutions censured for violations of academic freedom. In the 1990s we initiated a similar list of institutions sanctioned for violations of governance standards. Two such institutions on this list will serve as illustrations of the kinds of problems that are emerging with greater frequency.

In 2011, the Idaho State Board of Education voted to suspend the operation and bylaws of the faculty senate at [Idaho State University](#) — not too far from here — and to direct the ISU president to “implement an interim faculty advisory structure.” The board acted on the recommendation of the president, one week after the faculty voted no confidence in his leadership. When faculty members elected to lead the new structure the same individuals they had elected previously, the body was summarily dissolved and its chair, a professor of physics, now a member of the AAUP’s national Council, was deprived of the ability even to send emails to the faculty.

In 2014, the administration of [Union County College](#) in New Jersey, with the apparent concurrence of the trustees and governors, ended, or severely restricted, the faculty’s role in choosing its own representatives to committees; eliminated most faculty committees, including the key Faculty Executive Committee; and replaced departments headed by faculty-chosen chairs with new academic divisions headed by deans selected with little or no faculty involvement.

One especially troubling development has been the growing tendency of governing boards to conduct searches for college and university presidents, chancellors, and provosts entirely in secret, with no public vetting of finalists. In November 2015, the AAUP issued a [statement on presidential searches](#), which read in part:

In recent months at a number of colleges and universities across the country controversy has emerged over decisions by governing boards to conduct searches for new presidents or chancellors in secret, abandoning the previously standard practice of inviting a select group of finalists to visit the campus and meet publicly with faculty and other members of the campus community. The rationale for such secrecy

is that open meetings discourage applications from highly qualified candidates, although no evidence has ever been offered to suggest that this is in fact the case.

AAUP policy statements make clear that such decisions to forgo public campus visits and public forums by finalists violate longstanding principles of shared governance. Shared governance helps ensure that universities and colleges serve the public interest. Serving this interest is why we have public universities and colleges and why we grant special tax status to nonprofit private universities and colleges.

However, even ostensibly open searches may be subject to abuse. Take, for instance, the search for a new president of the University of Iowa in 2015. Although in that search four finalists were invited to campus and met publicly with faculty members and other stakeholders, in fact, [an AAUP investigation](#) determined that, in contrast to historical practice at the university, which had been to involve faculty fully in presidential searches, the board designed this search process specifically to prevent any meaningful faculty role in the selection of the final candidate. The AAUP's investigation concluded:

The board acted throughout in bad faith, and not toward the faculty alone. The board allowed prominent administrators from major institutions of higher education to believe they were participating as candidates in an honest, open search when the process in actuality was being manipulated to reach a foreordained result. It is difficult to see how anyone of intelligence and probity would permit himself or herself to be considered for a future presidency in Iowa. In this, the board has done serious disservice to the people of the state as well as the institutions to which it owes the highest standard of care.

That investigation report also warned that

there may well be an emerging crisis in American public higher education. The crisis is occasioned by headstrong, thoughtless action by politically appointed regents who lack any respect for the faculties of the institutions over which they preside. The remedy, so long as these institutions remain under public control, must be found in an informed public opinion, in the expression of the public's sense that such actions by members of a governing board not only undermine the ideals and purposes of the university but also affront the citizenry the board ostensibly serves.

It is difficult to imagine that, under the Trump regime, this troubling crisis will not worsen, at least in public colleges and universities.

I want to save some time for questions and comments, so I will move now to conclude these remarks. I recognize that I have not been very optimistic about the imminent future of academic freedom under the new national administration. And, indeed, I am deeply troubled and even a bit frightened. But I want to end on a more optimistic note. If there is a silver lining for academic freedom in the result of last November's election it is that many faculty members are now more alert to the dangers we face and many of us are organizing to respond. The remarkable women's marches, which involved between 3 and 4 million people nationwide, have resonated especially on college and university campuses. And the extraordinary rapid response of so many, including many college and university faculty members as well as administrators, to the proposed immigration ban is another reason for optimism.

But outrage and protest can only go so far. It is not the role of the AAUP to participate in the organization of a partisan political movement. But it is most definitely our role to organize faculty members to stand up and fight for our profession and our lives, for academic freedom and shared

governance, and most centrally for higher education — public and private — as a common good essential to a free and democratic society.

In just ten days I will celebrate my 70th birthday. I have spent virtually my entire adult life in higher education, as student, professor, academic senator, and union activist. Never before have I seen so many dangers ahead. Never before have I so feared for the future of academic freedom and of scholarship itself. But at the same time never before have I witnessed the kind of energy and commitment that I see emerging among our colleagues.

It used to be almost a truism that only senior, aging professors like me cared about things like academic freedom and shared governance. Junior faculty, it was said, were too cowed, too career-oriented, too cautious to get involved. I'm not sure that was ever really the case, but I know it isn't the case now. Everywhere I go I meet young and mid-career faculty members eager to step beyond the narrow concerns of their disciplines and their departments to engage the big professional questions. And this encourages me.

This is no time for complacency. But engagement alone is insufficient. We need organization. And, frankly, that means **we need the AAUP**. I will be the first to acknowledge that the AAUP has made its share of mistakes and that even now we are far from perfect. But we have survived for over a century — transforming ourselves, sometimes painfully, in response to changes in our profession — for good reason. I often encounter colleagues who tell me how much they admire the AAUP and a few among them even believe that simply by being a professor they are automatically members. But running an organization demands more than admiration, and membership is not automatic. Applauding from the sidelines is no longer adequate — more is called for.

If you are not yet a member of the AAUP, [please join](#). To be blunt, we need your dues to help us meet the challenges we face. If you're already a member, please consider making additional [donations to the AAUP Foundation](#).

But we need more than money, we need involvement. You are fortunate at Whitman to have an active AAUP chapter with engaged leaders. But don't think they can do it all. Become active yourself. Speak out. Organize others. As we face the coming four years, faculty advocacy and activism have never been more important to safeguard academic freedom and shared governance, and to defend programs that are critical to the life of the mind and the improvement and protection of the common good in a diverse and democratic society.

Thank you.