

Attacks on tenure, course content, free speech and science

Compiled by Bob Parker for the AAUP UIUC Policy Committee

List updated monthly

November 2022

The [AAUP responds](#) to the nonsensical understanding of academic freedom in Florida's Stop WOKE Act. Florida's defense of the bill argues that there is [no right to academic freedom and that classroom instruction in state schools and universities is government speech](#) and therefore subject to government regulation.

[Legislative interference](#) at the University of North Carolina. More on the conflict over [politics and university governance](#) in North Carolina.

[Firing faculty](#) at Emporia State. (Professor Colson, featured in this article, earned his PhD at UIUC.)

U of Florida Faculty Senate votes [no confidence on the presidential search process](#) that selected Nebraska Senator Ben Sasse for the presidency of the U of Florida. In the wake of Sasse's candidacy, the [current president has banned indoor protests](#).

October 2022

A [complicated dispute](#) over academic freedom, free speech, and targeted harassment in the context of trans activism and transphobia.

On [faculty political speech](#) at the University of North Carolina.

Emporia State University [prepares to fire tenured faculty](#). One [professor's perspective](#) on the new ESU policy, with lots more detail. [Students respond](#) to the announcement about fired faculty.

The Chronicle of Higher Education takes a deep dive into the [academic freedom controversy](#) at the University of Florida.

Faculty speak out for [freedom of speech at UNC](#). This article addresses many key issues and controversies at UNC and beyond.

Florida's [argument against academic free speech](#) and against the idea that individual faculty (as opposed to the university itself) have academic freedom. Scroll down a bit to see more of the argument than you will see at first, or go to [this short article](#).

How the State University System of Florida [hired its new chancellor](#).

The University of Idaho [restricts speech about abortion](#). The AAUP [responds](#).

September 2022

University of Florida [seemingly endorses](#) state's new anti-CRT law.

An [overview of the new legislation in Florida](#), including requirements to post syllabi publicly and concerns about chilling speech and a proposal to include records of political donations in tenure files

[Controversy over a professor's tweets](#) at Georgetown

Student journalism on [AAUP's report on academic freedom at the U of North Carolina](#)

Governor [DeSantis's plans for Florida universities](#) (long, but worth reading all the way through)

DeSantis signs [bill requiring Florida students, professors to register political views](#) with state.

The bill says that you can't limit speech in the classroom, but apparently it does not address the concurrent Florida law that says that you can't say gay.

Governor [Youngkin involves his administration in search](#) for Virginia community colleges chancellor.

Major [universities outsourcing their teaching for profit](#). (This *Wall Street Journal* article does not present its story as an AAUP concern, but I believe it is an AAUP concern, because it describes a way of replacing university faculty.)

On [the costs of eliminating tenure](#) in Wisconsin.

Audio [interview with Michael Bérubé](#) about *It's Not Free Speech*, his new book—co-authored with Jennifer Ruth—about the relation between free speech and academic freedom.

On [diversity, equity, and inclusion statements](#), which UIUC now requires for promotion.

Former chair of the UNC Board of Governors [alleges interference from State Senate](#) leader.

Judge's [temporary injunction against Florida legislation](#) restricting academic freedom did not pass his decision not to allow it. (The odd wording here is not a typo.) See also [here](#).

Teaching under the "[stop woke](#)" act in Florida.

How much are [public university presidents](#) paid?

Do masks and vaccine mandates work at universities? One scholar assembles [evidence](#).

A spirited [defense of academic freedom in a Canadian](#) context.

May 2022

If there is a pattern to the last month's AAUP-related news, it would be the attacks on tenure across many southern states.

Texas Lt. Governor Patrick, one of the stars of this monthly series of links—the same charmer who said, early in the pandemic, that older people should die so that younger people could keep the economy running—has [ordered a review of tenure](#) at public universities in Texas.

Florida [surveys students and faculty](#) and allows students to record classes without permission.

Florida Governor DeSantis [attacks](#) tenure and accreditation agencies.

Mississippi [revises the decision-making process](#) for tenure and for selecting a new president at state universities. More [here](#).

Louisiana [Senate creates task force](#) to reconsider tenure.

A Twitter thread on [teaching history in Florida](#) under the new restrictions.

PEN America on the current conditions of [educational gag orders](#) in K-12, colleges, and universities.

April 2022

On [pending legislation to censor teaching](#) in Ohio.

[Educational gag order](#) in Tennessee.

[Professor wins court suit against the University of Texas](#) for discriminating against her on the basis of pregnancy and sex in a tenure decision.

UCLA has attracted a lot of attention online by advertising for an assistant adjunct professor position in chemistry and biochemistry with an advertisement that says the position is “on a without salary basis. Applicants must understand there will be no compensation for this position.”

Georgia [bill to limit so-called divisive concepts](#) moves forward for K-12 but not for universities.

Video [honoring Matt Finkin](#).

Texas Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick’s [effort](#) to ban critical race theory, end tenure, and decide university curricula.

Time Magazine describes Tennessee and South Dakota leading the [movement to restrict so-called divisive concepts](#) in higher education.

The Nation on faculty [organizing to defend academic freedom](#).

Inside Higher Education on the [UIUC’s new policy](#) to require diversity, equity, and inclusion statements for promotion and tenure.

Florida’s [new limits on curricula](#) extending to public colleges and universities.

March 2022

Wyoming Senate [votes to defund](#) the University of Wyoming’s Gender and Women’s Studies program because they do not like the course descriptions.

AAUP manages to [delay bill to end tenure](#) in South Carolina.

I’m seeing statements about academic freedom from some of the states where politicians are most threatening it, including a [departmental statement at Texas A&M](#) and an AAUP [statement at George Mason University](#).

Given our discussion of departmental statements, it may be of interest to provide [this statement](#) from the UIUC Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures and the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center. It has also been endorsed by the Program in Jewish Culture and Society.

U of Missouri President [cuts selected faculty salaries](#) by 10-25%, as AAUP objects. (I have seen reports that his salary is 530,000.) (Long article, but easy to skim if you prefer.)

Against the votes of every Black lawmaker, Mississippi legislature [votes to ban critical race theory](#) from all public schools—K-12, community colleges, and universities. Also of interest, this [article](#) on the only course in Mississippi on CRT.

A [response to the attacks on tenure](#) from the Texas lieutenant governor and others.

February 2022

Mississippi [bans critical race theory](#) (I do not know whether this applies to public universities). Similar bans are proliferating across many states, as you have probably seen, some getting a lot of publicity (for example, Virginia) and some not (for example, Idaho), some just for K-12 and some—with varying degrees of explicitness—impinging on colleges and universities, all the more as they have the proverbial chilling effect.

The AAUP has built a [website](#) that tracks state legislation with educational gag orders, including public hearings and testimony.

‘In a blistering opinion, [a federal judge ruled](#) that the University of Florida may not block professors from testifying against the state under the institution’s conflict-of-interest policy.’

The AAUP [opposes proposed legislative restrictions](#) on searches for Florida university presidents. Here is the [AAUP Statement on Presidential Searches](#).

Chapman University [argues](#) that legal work (by one of the former president’s attorneys) on political matters is not appropriate for university email and does not qualify for attorney-client privilege.

[Allegations of political interference](#) in the selection of a new chancellor for the Georgia University system. This controversy is getting extended and increasing coverage in Georgia.

Our colleague, chapter past-President Leslie Struble recommended this episode of Fresh Air on [“From slavery to socialism, new legislation restricts what teachers can discuss.”](#)

From the Florida House of Representatives, [video](#) (2:13) from the debate over the bill to make searches for university presidents secretive.

January 2022

Faculty organize nationally to pass a [resolution](#) “Defending Academic Freedom to Teach About Race and Gender Justice and Critical Race Theory.”

This [article](#) reviews the national acceleration of threats to academic freedom, including examples both familiar and unfamiliar (at least unfamiliar to me).

[Direct reporting](#) of one notable example (which was not familiar to me) in the article above.

A [proposed bill](#) to expand new restrictions on what K-12 teachers can teach in New Hampshire by making the restrictions apply to public universities.

Penn State AAUP chapter [opposes actions](#) that may lead to terminating tenure-track assistant professor.

New book by Matthew C. Ehrlich on academic freedom at UIUC, with [February 3 event](#).

“In Heated Hearing, Lawyer Says Professors Who Sued U. of Florida Have ‘Unclean Hands’”: an [update](#) in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* on the suit by U of Florida professors against the university’s limits on the right of faculty to provide expert testimony (available for free to those who sign up for the *Chronicle*).

December 2021

[Tenure at risk](#) in South Carolina. The national AAUP has issued a [statement](#).

[Legislative interference in Nebraska](#) as state senators call for the resignation of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln Chancellor after his new plan for diversity and inclusion.

The University of Florida has continued to enhance its reputation for academic freedom by [denying a new program](#) called “Critical Study of Race, Ethnicity, and Culture in Education” because it uses the words critical and race.

In yet another development in the Sunshine State, the University of Florida trustees doubled down on [endorsing restrictions on the rights of faculty](#) to testify as expert witnesses (an issue noted in last month’s president’s report).

November 2021

On the spate of laws that restrict academic freedom in the teaching of race, from the [AAUP](#).

In a still developing story, the University of Florida committed a major violation of academic freedom by refusing to allow faculty who disagree with the governor to testify as expert witnesses, as reported [here](#) in the *New York Times*. (If you cannot get to this October 29 article because of the paywall, you can reach it through the University Library website.) [Here](#) is a political scientist’s response to the Florida debacle. In response to continuing pressure, the University of Florida has since [shifted its policy](#). They now plan, as well, to review their policy, but I have seen concerns expressed that the administrators who used the policy to violate academic freedom chose the committee members who will review them.

October 2021

[US Rightwing Group Targets Academics](#)

[U of Georgia’s proposed revision of tenure](#)

[More from Georgia](#)

And in the category of you can't make this stuff up, the Wisconsin House of Representatives has passed a bill to ban critical race theory in K-12 (where it doesn't exist anyway) and to restrict the vocabulary that teachers can use in the K-12 classroom. At this writing, the bill has not yet passed the Senate, and if it does, it will likely be vetoed by the governor. What starts in K-12 could spread to colleges and universities, and in some states is already doing so. This [article](#) includes a list of the banned words and phrases.

September 2021

Florida, June 2021, bans critical race theory and restricts the teaching of American history (not clear whether this applies to public universities or only to K-12)

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/06/10/us/critical-race-theory-florida-ban-trnd/index.html>

Florida, June 2021, surveys campuses for students' and faculty's political perspectives

<https://thehill.com/changing-america/enrichment/education/559881-florida-gov-signs-law-requiring-students-and-faculty-be>

Pennsylvania, June 2021, a bill proposed that would limit which speakers could speak and which readings could be assigned (p. 3)

<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/PN/Public/btCheck.cfm?txtType=PDF&sessYr=2021&sessInd=0&billBody=H&billTyp=B&billNbr=1532&pn=1679>

South Carolina members of Congress seek to eradicate critical race theory from state universities, July 2021

<https://twitter.com/RepRalphNorman/status/1407080014139596804?s=20>

Oklahoma, the chilling effect of anti-critical race theory legislation, July 2021

<https://www.thefire.org/chilling-effect-remains-as-oklahomas-divisive-concepts-law-becomes-effective/>

The Penn State faculty has voted no confidence in the university's COVID

policy: <https://www.centredaily.com/news/local/education/penn-state/article253466809.html>

The University of Iowa imposes a partial gag order on faculty's right to address masks in the classroom. See FAQ #3: <https://provost.uiowa.edu/fall-2021-faq-instructors>

Iowa revises its policy: <https://dailyiowan.com/2021/08/17/ui-walks-back-policy-barring-instructors-from-discussing-masks/>

Nebraska, chair of the state university board and candidate for governor proposes prohibition on critical race theory, July 2021

<https://academeblog.org/2021/07/23/notes-from-the-crt-front-in-nebraska/>

August: The Nebraska prohibition is voted down:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2021/08/13/nebraska-regents-shoot-down-anti-critical-race-theory-proposal#>

May 2021

Various:

<https://theintercept.com/2021/04/10/campus-reform-koch-young-americans-for-freedom-leadership-institute/>

https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2021/03/23/former-professor-says-yale-fired-her-over-tweet-on-trump-dershowitz/?utm_source=iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=campaign_2137990_nl_Daily-Briefing_date_20210324&cid=db&source=ams&sourceId=117228

State legislators telling professors how to teach:

https://americanindependent.com/florida-bill-allow-students-record-instructors-without-consent-universities-colleges-schools-professors-free-speech-cancel/?utm_content=buffer896b1&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer

<https://www.aaup.org/news/statement-opposes-florida-viewpoint-diversity-legislation#.YHWndOhKg2w>

<https://pocatellochubbuckobserver.com/2021/04/22/breaking-idaho-house-passes-bill-to-ban-teaching-of-critical-race-theory-in-state/>

https://www.idahopress.com/eyeonboise/education-groups-issue-joint-statement-opposing-hb-377/article_3c170c49-38d0-5daf-ba2e-f5a189e12a7b.html

[https://www.spokanepublicradio.org/post/idaho-house-votes-limit-teaching-critical-race-theory*stream/0;lw!!DZ3fjg!r9mp5yOowYqSQolkfYtVd8AcFi7ovKXdtLRTa8HWvqOXOLPPIY6MDukPYD6XL5psQ\\$](https://www.spokanepublicradio.org/post/idaho-house-votes-limit-teaching-critical-race-theory*stream/0;lw!!DZ3fjg!r9mp5yOowYqSQolkfYtVd8AcFi7ovKXdtLRTa8HWvqOXOLPPIY6MDukPYD6XL5psQ$)

AAUP investigations:

[https://www.aaup.org/article/state-profession-twin-crises;!!DZ3fjg!ug5jjSZLOk9VyuAC1gVgkiCeW2F1sCpa-VGgp4vcaPfgEOzilStNH_gbHh200XNZa\\$](https://www.aaup.org/article/state-profession-twin-crises;!!DZ3fjg!ug5jjSZLOk9VyuAC1gVgkiCeW2F1sCpa-VGgp4vcaPfgEOzilStNH_gbHh200XNZa$)

<https://www.aaup.org/article/data-snapshot-whom-does-campus-reform-target-and-what-are-effects#.YJFUhJNKjer>

Zoom censorship:

<https://academeblog.org/2021/04/14/zoom-on-academic-freedom-in-higher-education/>

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/04/19/zoom-addresses-academic-freedom-and-censorship-concerns#.YH2B9QDINTk.twitter>

April 2021

[https://urldefense.com/v3/https://www.knoe.com/2021/04/06/la-lawmaker-files-bill-making-it-potentially-illegal-to-teach-about-racism-sexism-says-bill-promotes-equality-in-education-system/ ;!!DZ3fig!udlTgH33ju2FLDSu8Fn3iZX1KB4A0VY8iWn7OkNyxNeGhcU3CxOlwyySuInOlgynQ\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://www.knoe.com/2021/04/06/la-lawmaker-files-bill-making-it-potentially-illegal-to-teach-about-racism-sexism-says-bill-promotes-equality-in-education-system/)

<https://www.thegazette.com/subject/news/government/iowa-bill-banning-race-and-sex-scapegoating-expands-from-schools-universities-to-all-government-agencies-20210323>

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/03/18/boise-state-suspends-diversity-course-1300-students#>

<https://www.thefire.org/cancellation-of-52-diversity-classes-at-boise-state-as-lawmakers-seek-to-rein-in-social-justice/>

[https://urldefense.com/v3/https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/545035-tennessee-gop-bill-would-ban-textbooks-with-lgbtq-content ;!!DZ3fig!sEvXd1QAciMpT Zj-OuE mVg8ObwxDAQfjEG7AoloLLi9YS3uGrvHPyJpGkXdgMd3g\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/545035-tennessee-gop-bill-would-ban-textbooks-with-lgbtq-content ;!!DZ3fig!sEvXd1QAciMpT Zj-OuE mVg8ObwxDAQfjEG7AoloLLi9YS3uGrvHPyJpGkXdgMd3g$)

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/when-academic-bullies-claim-the-mantle-of-free-speech>

<https://academeblog.org/2021/03/21/claiming-the-mantle-of-academic-freedom/>

<https://tmb.apaopen.org/pub/nonverbal-overload/release/1>

https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2021/03/23/former-professor-says-yale-fired-her-over-tweet-on-trump-dershowitz/?utm_source=iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=campaign_2137990_n | Daily-Briefing_date_20210324&cid=db&source=ams&sourceid=117228

March 2021

https://littlevillagemag.com/letter-to-the-editor-top-10-ways-tenure-benefits-students-and-all-iowans/?link_id=10&can_id=8d0f86690a33dde7365409eb023f48a1&source=email-january-chapter-leader-digest-3&email_referrer=email_1087824&email_subject=february-chapter-leader-digest

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/evangerstmann/2021/02/22/should-universities-end-tenure/?sh=54cd6a4b3bd6>

<https://www.aaup.org/news/statement-iowa-legislatures-threats-academic-freedom-and-tenure>

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-great-contraction>

February 2021

<https://www.ajc.com/education/ga-lawmakers-white-privilege-teaching-inquiry-sparks-anger-support/HCUeVLVXZFGefOXLYMALH3GG5M/>

<https://www.newsweek.com/georgia-educators-outraged-after-state-lawmaker-asked-if-theyre-teaching-about-white-privilege-1565420>

