

NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION
of SCHOLARS

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

We urge you to rescue American higher education. You can lead Congress to pass a bailout linked to regulatory reform that will make our colleges and universities the greatest in the world.

The coronavirus pandemic threatens to destroy American higher education. Classrooms, laboratories, faculty offices, libraries, stadiums, and dormitories stand empty. The cost of the shutdown to colleges and universities is enormous and still growing. American higher education faces an unprecedented financial crisis.

Colleges and universities have announced a variety of cost-cutting measures, including salary freezes, hiring freezes, limits on purchases, furloughs of many employees, and lay-offs of untenured faculty members. But most colleges and universities expect that these measures will not be enough. They're counting on additional federal and state bailouts to stay afloat. Even schools such as Harvard, with an endowment of \$40 billion, are eager to secure millions of dollars in emergency federal support.

The National Association of Scholars (NAS) believes that America's colleges and universities will need a bailout. However, NAS also believes that legislators and regulators should tie bailout funds to reforms that address long-standing problems in American higher education. Colleges and universities can and must do better than just return to the status quo ante.

On April 15, you announced the "Great American Economic Revival Industry Groups." These included many sectors of the American economy, such as agriculture, banking, construction, defense, energy, financial services, food & beverage, healthcare, hospitality, manufacturing, real estate, retail, tech, telecommunications, transportation, and sports. Higher education was conspicuous by its absence.

Its exclusion from the list makes good sense. Higher education has shown little willingness to put its house in order. No amount of money can revive our colleges and universities until it does.

For far too long, American higher education has exploited the hopes of students and their families, as well as the good will of legislators and the American public. Millions of Americans have been

plunged deeply into insupportable debt in order to fund huge increases in college administrative costs over the last 30 years. Administrative positions, including non-instructional staff, now consume more than 50% of higher education payroll costs. At the same time, colleges and universities offer a trivialized curriculum marked by animosity to America.

Our country deserves much better—and we can get it.

Therefore, NAS proposes the following:

The President and Congress should demand that higher education cut administrative overhead by 50 percent as a minimum condition for any further bailout funds.

Colleges and universities that ask for financial assistance must commit themselves to ending run-away costs and diversions from serious academic purpose. Nothing is more wasteful and extravagant than the growth in administration.

NAS has prepared [*Critical Care*](#), a framework for allocating bailout funds among colleges and universities that have made these cuts. Our framework draws in part from our larger education agenda, the Freedom to Learn Amendments.

The first half of our framework reflects **basic economic priorities**:

- No bailout funds should go to the **wealthiest colleges** that have endowments sufficient to ride out this storm.
- No bailout funds should support the salaries or benefits of **administrators** or non-academic support staff, whose numbers have proliferated at the expense of faculty and whose “co-curriculum” seeks to replace teaching with indoctrination.
- Any bailout should reward institutions that uphold **academic rigor**, reform abuses of “**community-service**” work-study, encourage productive experimentation with **distance learning**, deliver liberal arts instruction to **community college** students, provide valuable **vocational education**, and excel in offering **low tuition**.
- Congress should **put students first** by reforming student debt lending practices and by ensuring that colleges and universities share the burden of students’ financial choices.

The second half of our framework reflects **America’s foundational principles**. America’s colleges and universities should:

- Sign an **intellectual freedom charter**.

- Respect **due process** in all investigatory and disciplinary proceedings—especially those involving grave charges, such as accusations of sexual misconduct.
- Commit themselves to promoting **First Amendment** rights and **intellectual diversity**.
- Prioritize practical disciplines critical to American **national security**.
- **Limit foreign dependence**, particularly on countries such as China that have demonstrated hostility to American interests.
- Support American immigration laws by **prohibiting illegal aliens**.

Colleges and universities only deserve taxpayer support if they control their runaway spending and support American principles.

This is just a beginning. Congress can restore higher education to good health only by reforming the Higher Education Act as a whole, as well as the rules governing colleges' eligibility to receive federal research grants.

Reform on that scale will take years. Establishing conditions on bailout funds can be completed quickly. These will provide a model for more far-reaching legislation—as well as demonstrate that such reform can be put into practice. Enacting reform tied to coronavirus relief is the most practical way toward achieving the ultimate goal of structural reform of higher education.

American higher education should marry love of learning with dedication to America's liberty, prosperity, and national security. Your leadership on this matter can remake American higher education, so that it is once more worthy of our great nation.

Respectfully yours,

Peter Wood
President
National Association of Scholars

And all those undersigned: