

PEN America

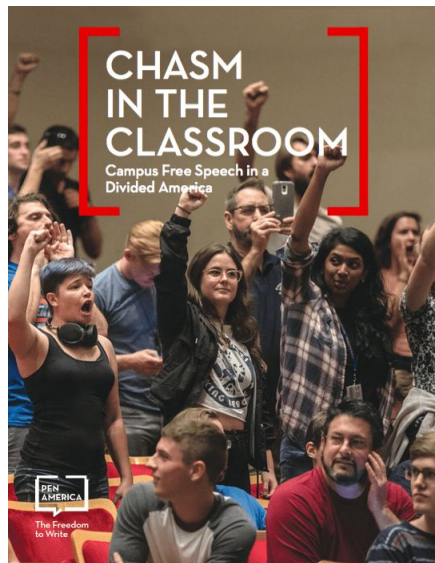
Amy Reid - Freedom to Learn Senior Manager

Founded over a century ago, PEN America:
(one of 140 PEN Centers worldwide) celebrates literature and defends the freedoms that make it possible, including academic freedom and the freedom of expression

Freedom to Learn Program: Combats state-level censorship legislation aimed at higher education

2025: breaking records for state censorship of higher education

- 70+ HE censorship bills introduced across the country
- 16 enacted higher education restrictions in 15 states
- 7 educational gag orders in 6 states
- 14 autonomy restrictions (DEI, gen ed, tenure, accreditation, shared governance, institutional neutrality)



Academic Freedom : The Freedom to Learn

At PEN America, we champion academic freedom as ensuring the student's freedom to learn. Faculty need to be able to research and teach up to the ethical standards of their fields, so that students can access an education free from government censorship.

- **AAUP**
 - "Academic freedom is the freedom of a teacher or researcher in higher education to investigate and discuss the issues in his or her academic field, and to teach and publish findings without interference from administrators, boards of trustees, political figures, donors, or other entities. Academic freedom also protects the right of a faculty member to speak freely when participating in institutional governance, as well as to speak freely as a citizen."
- **European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Definition**
 - "Academic freedom can be understood to comprise the freedom to learn, to teach and to research, with each of these freedoms entailing the freedom to think, to question, and to share ideas, both inside and outside the higher education sector... Academic freedom is also an essential element of democracy. Societies cannot be genuinely democratic without honouring academic freedom."
- **Magna Charta Universitatum (1988 & 2020) on academic freedom and institutional autonomy**
 - "Research and teaching must be intellectually and morally independent of all political influence and economic interests."
 - "Academic freedom is their lifeblood; open enquiry and dialogue their nourishment."

Resources from PEN America



- **America's Censored Classrooms** – issued annually in October
- **Campus Free Speech Guide**
- **A Five Alarm Fire for Free Speech: The Trump Administration's 100 Day Assault on Free Expression**
- **A Pledge to Our Democracy**
 - Authored by the Champions of Higher Education and signed by over 130 former college and university presidents
- **Statements & blog posts**
 - Indiana University Investigation of Tenured Professor for “Intellectual Diversity” Law an Egregious Threat to Academic Freedom
 - Texas Bill Would Strip Faculty Authority and Silence Campus Voices
 - Is University Shared Governance on the Way Out? How State Legislators Are Shifting Power to Themselves
 - Disciplining NYU and GW Students for Commencement Speeches is Wrongheaded

THANK YOU

Keep in touch

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Learn more here:

