



Yale SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
Chief Executive Leadership Institute

The Campus as an Oasis of Trust: Advancing Knowledge, Truth, Opinion & Solvency

Executive Summary

Yale School of Management, Evans Hall • January 28, 2025



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Jonathan Alger, 16th President, American University
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Steve Wilkinson, Dean of Faculty of Arts & Sciences, Yale University
Judy Chevalier, Beinecke Professor of Economics, Yale School of Management

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Zach Messitte, Higher Education Practice, Russell Reynolds; 13th President, Ripon College

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Martin Lemelle, 11th President, Grambling State University
Elizabeth Chilton, 21st President, University of New Hampshire

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Andrea Chapdelaine, 12th President, Connecticut College
Frank Shushok, 12th President, Roanoke College
Karim Ismaili, 7th President, Eastern Connecticut State University
Manya Whitaker, Interim President, Colorado College

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David Siegel, Co-Founder & Co-Chair, Two Sigma; Member, MIT Executive Committee
 Ken Frazier, Executive Chair, Merck; Trustee, Harvard & Penn State
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 Afsaneh Beschloss, Founder & CEO, RockCreek Investments; Member, Georgetown Board
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 Rick Goings, Chair, Rollins College Board of Trustees
 Stacey Robertson, 11th President, Widener University
 Paul Beideman, Chair, Board of Trustees, Widener University
 Christian Hardigree, Regional Chancellor, University of South Florida
 Gregory S. Prince Jr., 4th President, Hampshire College

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 Jonathan Koppell, 9th President, Montclair State University
 Joe Bertolino, 6th President, Stockton University
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 Joanne Berger-Sweeney, 22nd President, Trinity College
 Linda Mills, 17th President, New York University

10th Yale Higher Education Leadership Summit

The Campus as an Oasis of Trust: Advancing Knowledge, Truth, Opinion & Solvency

Overview

This is a critical moment for higher education. Higher education is being criticized and demonized, and a large segment of America's public has lost confidence in higher education. This loss of confidence comes amid extensive evidence showing the value of higher education—to individuals, families, and society.

In this incredibly challenging environment, higher education leaders must double down on the core values of higher education—in providing access to diverse groups of students, bringing people together, spurring economic development, preparing students for tomorrow's workforce, conducting critical research, and more. Leaders also must loudly and persuasively make the case for higher education and show people the difference that higher education makes.

Context

Jeff Sonnenfeld, Senior Associate Dean of the Yale School of Management, along with Yale President Maurie McInnis, former US Secretary of Education and current Chancellor of SUNY John King, and Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont, kicked off the 10th Yale Higher Education Summit by framing some of the critical questions and topics to be discussed at this Summit.



Jeffrey A. Sonnenfeld, Senior Associate Dean, Yale School of Management

Key Takeaways

This is an important, urgent moment for higher education.

Over the past 10 years, there has been a large drop in the American public's confidence in higher education. Factors affecting this loss in confidence include the cost of higher education, questions about whether a traditional liberal arts education adequately prepares students for the workforce, and the political climate on many campuses. As a result of this erosion in confidence and questions about the value and purpose of higher education, "This year feels more timely and critical than ever."

"There is a political climate where there are increasing attacks and demonization of the work that we do."

Higher education leaders must focus on the fundamental role and purpose of higher education.

As higher education comes under fire, it is necessary for education leaders to reflect on the essential roles of higher education, which include:

- **Preserving democracy and achieving a more just and equitable society.** Higher education institutions are in a unique position to bring together people to develop understanding of and better solutions to society's greatest challenges. "This is a moment to double down on our civic mission."
- **Serving as an engine for America's economy and national security.** Through research and scholarship, colleges and universities drive innovation, spur the economy, and prepare students for the jobs of the future. This is a vital role of higher education.

Despite overwhelming evidence about the value of a college degree and of higher education in general, institutions are under attack. This is a time to recommit to the values of higher education in making education more accessible and serving more students—low-income students, first-generation students, veterans, students of color, rural students, adult learners, and so many others who can benefit from a college education.

"Higher education can change the trajectory of individuals and families for generations. . . We've got to make the case loudly and we shouldn't be frightened. We should be urgent."



John King, 15th Chancellor, SUNY; 10th US Secretary of Education

Higher education leaders must make the case loudly and urgently for higher education.

The evidence and the case for higher education are incredibly strong. In fact, higher education is one of America's greatest strengths, which is why the best and the brightest from around the world come to the United States for college.

Unfortunately, not enough people understand and believe in the value of higher education. That's why it is essential for higher education leaders to engage in outreach and repeatedly make the case for higher education.

"You have to step up every day to explain why what you do is so important . . . you've got to show every day why it makes a difference in people's lives . . . you have to tell that story."



Gov. Ned Lamont, 89th Governor, State of Connecticut

Institutions can be even more effective when partnering.

In this challenging environment, it is important for institutions and leaders to work together. This includes partnering in new ways across sectors. For example, in Connecticut, institutions have partnered on multiple initiatives, including a quantum technology initiative and an initiative to help address the shortage of teachers in New Haven.

"This is a moment where we all need to be working together and partnering together, perhaps in new ways . . . there are ways we can work together in our local communities, across our states, and more broadly across the nation to demonstrate the value that higher education brings to our communities to transform lives."



Maurie McInnis, 24th President, Yale University

The Costs vs. Value of Higher Education

Do Higher Costs Mean Lower Value?

Overview

The cost of higher education and access to college remain major issues. However, despite the high costs, higher education has a powerful value proposition: the ROI of higher education is high, and universities are engines of workforce and economic development. Higher education leaders need to do a better job of making the case and conveying the value proposition of higher education to an increasingly skeptical public. Higher education has a good story to tell; the challenge is telling that story.

Context

Participants focused on the costs and value of higher education, and the need to make the case for higher education.

Key Takeaways

While affordability remains an enormous issue, the ROI of higher education is high.

Data from McKinsey shows that while the published sticker price for college tuition is high, the growth in published tuition has risen only 2.7% per year from 2011 to 2022, which was in line with inflation. During this time, due to grants and scholarships, the net cost of college rose by 1.7%, which is lower than the rate of inflation.

McKinsey research also shows that the value of a degree and the ROI of being a college graduate is high. The keys in looking at the ROI of college are completion and looking at the value over the long term.

“The things that matter are completion . . . and thinking about education as a long-term investment.”

Polling of Summit participants shows that a majority of higher education leaders believe the costs of higher education are too high; a majority believe that higher education alleviates structural inequity in society; participants were evenly divided about whether attracting revenue or managing expenses is more difficult; and all presidents agree that higher education needs to do a better job of conveying its value proposition.

Real-time poll question	Agree	Disagree
The costs of higher education are too high for students.	63%	37%
Higher education is exacerbating, rather than alleviating, structural inequality within society.	28%	72%
I am concerned by the number of prospective college students who choose not to attend college.	91%	9%
We have more trouble attracting student revenues than managing administrative expenses.	51%	49%
Universities need to do a better job of conveying their value proposition.	100%	0%

Poll results among university presidents, officials, trustees

A problem with the high sticker price of college education is that potential students are scared off and choose not to attend college. One president shared research from her institution that asked admitted students who didn't come to the university what they elected to do. Ten years ago, 20% chose not to go to college. Now, 40% are choosing not to go to college. As the poll showed, 91% of higher education leaders are concerned by the number of prospective students who choose not to attend college, with the perceived cost as a major factor.



Suzanne Lyman, Partner, McKinsey & Company



Ann Cudd, 11th President, Portland State University

Another president said that many college applicants don't realize that few students pay the published sticker price, making college less expensive than most students and families realize. It is essential for institutions to combat misinformation and educate stakeholders about the real costs of college and opportunities for aid.



Lawrence Schovanec, 17th President, Texas Tech University

In particular, community colleges often have a strong value proposition. One president whose institution targets adult learners has several programs – which cost around \$5,000 per year, before aid – where graduates can significantly increase their wages within a year or two. These programs provide an immediate ROI, and have strong participation.



Kenneth Adams, 4th President, LaGuardia Community College

College affordability is a particular problem for students from middle-income families.

Wealthy families are able to afford college for their children. And, many elite, selective institutions have created programs to make college affordable (even free) for poor families. But middle-class families don't have enough money to afford college, but aren't poor enough to qualify for a free education; these families and children feel left out.

"What universities have done is they've tried to increase the number of genuinely disadvantaged students who get into elite universities, which is obviously a good thing, but has caused the political reaction that these elite universities are conspiracies of the rich and the poor against the middle class, because the disadvantaged kids have disproportionately taken middle class spots."



Daniel Markovits, Professor, Yale Law School; Author, *The Meritocracy Trap*

Even at a community college, students in the lowest income brackets will qualify for Pell Grants and other aid, enabling them to attend college essentially tuition free. But if the family makes \$75,000 or \$80,000 – which in many geographies is not middle class – they won't qualify for a Pell Grant and will struggle to pay for college. This has a ripple effect in that it constrains building wealth.

"There is a squeeze on the middle class. . . It really sticks it to the people who don't get financial aid."



Jonathan Koppell, 9th President Montclair State University

While many institutions have created programs focused on attracting and supporting lower-class students, few have implemented initiatives focused on the middle class. However, that is beginning to change. Presidents of elite colleges described new programs, with tiered costs based on income, targeting the middle class. While early, these programs are showing positive results by attracting more middle-class applicants.



David Greene, 20th President, Colby College

One president commented that since demand for college is so high, programs to attract and support more middle-class students need to be complemented by efforts of elite colleges to grow the number of spots available for undergraduate students.

While presidents generally commended these programs – and described other, similar programs – two critiques emerged:

- **It's a reallocation of resources.** One president bluntly stated that a program to provide more spots and support for middle-income students simply means the institution is choosing to reallocate resources. Supporting one group means taking away resources from another.

"It's great if you're giving more to middle-income students, but it's coming from somewhere."

- **It's not scalable.** These programs to support the middle class are admirable, but they only affect a small number of students at elite colleges; they aren't scalable and aren't moving the needle. To move the needle requires large-scale programs at big public institutions.

To make college affordable at scale for the middle class likely requires government-supported programs, along with internship programs that work in conjunction with the labor market in a state. However, with many states decreasing funding of higher education and with the federal government's support for education in question, there is uncertainty around any such efforts coming to fruition in the near future.

Colleges are moving forward with strategies focused on workforce and economic development.

Several presidents explained their institution's strategies to develop and prepare talent and to be engines of economic development in their cities, states, and regions.

- **Xavier University of Louisiana:** Xavier is focused on creating a pipeline of talented doctors, researchers, scientists, and other professions. For years, Xavier has prepared more African American students to become MDs than any school in the country.



Reynold Verret, 6th President, Xavier University of Louisiana

- **Pace University:** With its main campus near Wall Street, Pace educates many first-generation students and students from working-class families to give them the skills they need to get their first job and a lifetime of jobs. In addition to a degree, it is important to create a social network to help individuals as they advance in their careers.



Marvin Krislov, 8th President, Pace University

- **UConn:** The University of Connecticut is contributing to the state through workforce development, technological innovations, and infrastructure advances. Through targeted outreach, UConn is

attracting more first-generation students. After graduation, more than 70% of UConn graduates stay in the state, helping fuel Connecticut's economic engine.



Radenka Maric, 17th President, University of Connecticut

- **University of Tulsa:** The University of Tulsa is creating a 25- to 50-year plan to revolutionize the city and region, as the area transitions away from a hydrocarbon economy to an economy of the future.



Brad Carson, 21st President, The University of Tulsa

- **University of Pittsburgh:** The University of Pittsburgh has created metrics that assign quantitative value measuring Pitt's value to the community. Pitt has issued its first report that publicizes these metrics and shows the progress that has been made.



Joan Gabel, 19th Chancellor, University of Pittsburgh

Several leaders mentioned the importance of partnerships with other institutions. This includes a partnership among multiple schools in Connecticut, focused on quantum, as well as collaborations between HBCUs and other institutions.

"One thing I want to inject is the value of collaborative work between institutions in different parts of the sector that create pathways for students."



Adam Falk, President, Alfred P. Sloan Foundation; 17th President, Williams College

Lowering the Boom on Higher Education

Correcting Campus Critics

Overview

Vocal critics of higher education see numerous problems including excessive costs, administrative bloat, institutional bias, intolerance, lack of free speech, insularity, and a general failure to listen to criticism. Critics argue that the failure of higher education leaders to make changes has made the situation worse, putting higher education in crisis. Critics believe that unless current higher education leaders act with urgency to bring about change, change may be forced.

Context

This session gave voice to higher education critics, who sounded the alarm on the need for significant changes.

Key Takeaways

Critics laid out numerous issues with higher education in America today, and called for urgent changes.

Some vocal, prominent critics shared a litany of issues they say are plaguing higher education.

“The crisis in higher education is real. It’s been coming for a very long time. It was slow and gradual; now it’s happening all at once. It’s catastrophic and secular at the same time . . . It would be a huge mistake to believe this is just a matter of perception . . . there needs to be urgency here.”

These critiques included:

- **The prevailing cultural view that everyone needs a four-year college degree.** A college education has become embedded in American culture as a necessity. However, one critic suggested, “At some point, we ought to ask the question, does everybody need to have a four-year college education? . . . Maybe there are alternative paths.”
- **Colleges and universities have exploited their position.** Since American culture has determined that everyone needs a college degree, and since colleges and universities have a monopoly in granting bachelor’s degrees, they have exploited this position. Results have included higher costs, higher tuition, an explosion in debt, massive bureaucracies, and lack of accountability.
- **Liberalism and intolerance.** Critics see an overwhelming number of liberal faculty members and institutions that pursue their own

agendas versus educating students. One participant cited research indicating that:

- **Faculty.** In the recent presidential election, 78% of faculty members nationally said they were voting for Harris while 8% were voting for Trump. “Conservatives don’t have any power at universities,” said one critic.
- **Speaker cancellations:** Since 2020, more than 90% of the speakers cancelled on college campuses were conservatives or held a conservative position.

“This has been happening for a long time—the cost, the bloat, the flight from undergraduate teaching, insularity of higher education, the illiberalism of higher education . . . the stifling intolerance that has now exploded in this national crisis.”



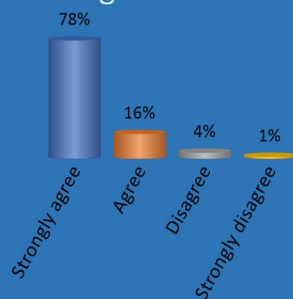
Charlie Sykes, Editor-in-Chief, The Bulwark; Commentator, MSNBC; Author, *Fail U*.

- **Insularity, not listening to critics.** In the view of one critic, higher education leaders have not listened to or acknowledged criticism, have not responded to it, and have not reformed higher education. If the current (largely liberal) leaders don’t reform higher educa-

tion, then when others gain power – as has occurred – they will. This could happen sooner, rather than later, as 94% of participants believe the Trump administration is at war with higher education.

13. Agree/Disagree: I believe the Trump Administration is at war with higher education.

- A. Strongly agree
- B. Agree
- C. Disagree
- D. Strongly disagree



- **Perceived student fragility.** In the view of critics, students often equate speech with harm. A university's administration then protects students' feelings instead of protecting free speech. "If you accept the fragility model that speech is violence and harm, you're headed down a rabbit hole. . . If you say, this is a university, we need to protect free speech; you are students, you are not victims of having to hear an unpopular opinion, that's a defensible position."

"Speech is not the same as violence.
You are not harmed by ideas. This is
why you come to a university."

One response is that there is no right to free speech on campus; private universities can decide what is appropriate speech, and a public university is not a public square.

"As leaders, our obligation is to make
our universities thrive with the widest
possible free speech, consistent with
restricting threats of violence and
assaults on people."

- **Wealthy donors have decreased their support.** One critic said that frustration with elite schools like Harvard, Yale, Penn, and Columbia is leading some wealthy donors to stop supporting these institutions and to encourage their children to attend institutions like the University of Florida and the University of Alabama, which are not such hotbeds of liberalism.

"Consumers are saying something."

- **A pipeline problem.** There is an educational crisis in America, with children lagging behind in reading, math, and science. This situation is severe and urgent, but among elected officials, there doesn't seem to be interest or willingness to deal with this crisis.

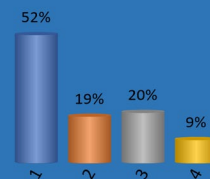


Charlie Gasparino, Senior Correspondent, Fox Business Network

Summit attendees view the most accurate criticism of higher education as the prohibitive cost, followed by lack of contribution to communities and the world, and lack of a free speech culture.

21. What is the most accurate criticism of higher education?

- A. Prohibitive costs and student debt
- B. Faculty political bias and lack of free speech culture
- C. Separation from/lack of contribution to communities and the world
- D. Unfair admissions perpetuating inequality/failures in delivering for underrepresented groups
- E. Anti-international student bias



Public higher education in Florida is delivering what the state's constituents and taxpayers want.

Florida is a politically conservative state, with a Republican governor and a Republican legislature; these are the leaders constituents voted for. These political leaders are investing in the public university system – which includes 12 institutions that educate 430,000 students. These investments have kept tuition at about \$6,300 per year, the lowest tuition in the country for a public university. Florida also provides the most financial aid of any state other than California and the most merit-based financial aid.

"We're a public university system, which
means we answer to the taxpayers
. . . when you have legislators who
are investing in a public university
system, they're going to make sure
their investment reflects the will of the
voters who elected them."



Raymond Rodriguez, 12th Chancellor, State University System of Florida

Leaders in Florida have established a core curriculum and eliminated funding for DEI and CRT. Florida's public universities respect First Amendment rights but ensure that rules—such as no encampments—are followed. Divisive concepts haven't been banned, but they've been removed from the general education curriculum because they don't support the state's defined standards for general education.

"In Florida, we've had protests on our campuses. First Amendment rights have been respected but our state statutes and university policies have been enforced everywhere."

Florida's public universities are not the only higher education institutions in the state. There are private institutions that continue to attract large numbers of applications.



Grant Cornwell, 15th President, Rollins College

Various ratings attempt to measure campus speech and environments.

Having seen antisemitism explode on campuses, The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) created a rating system to assess how well

institutions are doing in combating antisemitism. These provide an objective guideline for students and parents to use in making college decisions.

Another rating system is the Foundation for Individual Rights/Expression (FIRE), which ranks free speech on campuses.

Of note, while US News ranked Harvard as the #1 best university, ADL gave Harvard an "F" and FIRE ranked Harvard last out of 251 universities. Yale, ranked #5 by US News, received a "D" from ADL and was ranked 155 by FIRE.

Several presidents believe FIRE's methodology is not clear, the rankings aren't accurate (70% of presidents agree), and one incident on campus can dramatically skew the results. One president mentioned an improvement in her institution's ranking, even though the institution didn't make any changes. In response to presidents who want to engage with FIRE, the organization would be open to engagement and collaboration.



Connor Murnane, Campus Advocacy, Foundation for Individual Rights/Expression (FIRE)

Despite dissension about the validity of FIRE rankings, higher education leaders see value in building the institutional capacity to have open conversation among diverse groups of stakeholders.

"Over the last couple of years, we've been trying to build the ability to have conversations across differences, including formal programs as well as informal dialogues."

Recently, media reports suggest that Jay Bhattacharya, nominated as Director of the NIH, may use FIRE rankings to allocate research grants. Institutions with high FIRE rankings would be more likely to receive grants while institutions with lower FIRE free speech rankings would be penalized by not receiving grants. The vast majority of Summit participants, 96%, including a representative from FIRE, don't believe FIRE rankings should be used to allocate NIH funds.

"I think FIRE has great value, but one of its values is not deciding who is doing the best science."

Do College Presidents Have the Wind At Their Backs? Or Are They Shouting Into The Wind?

Overview

As higher education wrestles with student protests and numerous controversies, many institutions and boards are opting for institutional neutrality. This means the institution and president don't speak out and don't take a position on a controversial topic.

The majority of participants disagree with that strategy. Most believe presidents have an obligation and a responsibility to speak out. While some favor speaking out only on a limited basis, others believe presidents must take the lead in shaping conversations. Presidents should clarify when speaking personally or on behalf of the institution, must listen to others, and must strive to create an atmosphere of civility and engagement, where groups can engage in civil, evidence-based conversations. But presidents and institutions shouldn't shy away from controversial topics. Instead, presidents can model how to speak up responsibly, based on a foundation of values.

Context

Summit participants debated whether and when higher education institutions and presidents should use their voice.

Key Takeaways

Many higher education leaders disagree with the shift toward institutional neutrality.

In the aftermath of the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack on Israel, which triggered protests on many American campuses, higher education has grappled with whether institutions and leaders can and should use their voice and express their views. Some institutions have invoked the Kalven Report and the University of Chicago's position on institutional neutrality.

The majority of leaders at this Summit disagreed with institutional neutrality and with the notion that presidents should remain silent and not have a voice. Among the arguments presented were:

- **Institutional voice does not chill dissent.** The rationale behind the Kalven Report was that if the institution takes a position, this would chill the voice of faculty, students, and other stakeholders. Multiple presidents argued there is no evidence that an institutional position chills dissent; faculty and students are not hesitant or shy about expressing their views.

"I don't buy the philosophical argument that Kalven makes that we are chilling the speech of others."

- **Leaders in other sectors speak out; so too should higher education leaders.** Today, business leaders speak out, as do religious leaders, political leaders, and others. Higher education leaders have a role to play and a responsibility to speak out, especially in areas where they have relevant knowledge and expertise.

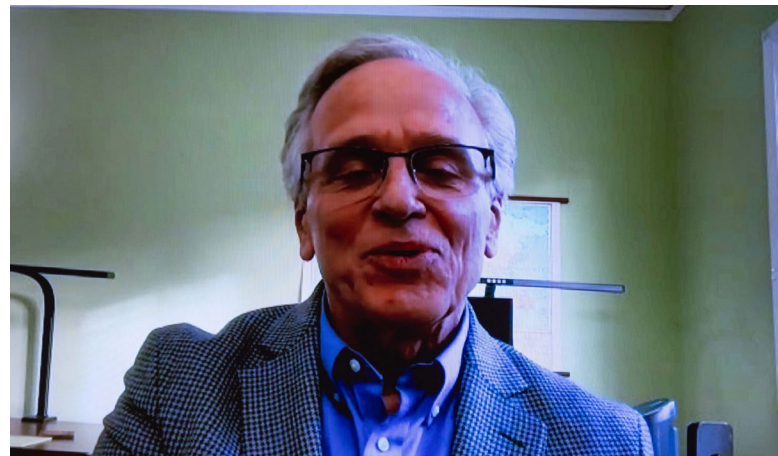
"This [institutional neutrality] is just the bureaucratization of cowardice."



Michael Roth, 16th President, Wesleyan University

- **Educational institutions shouldn't be afraid of having a point of view.** Educational institutions have missions and purposes, and are based on values. As such, it is appropriate for institutions to have a position on a topic that is consistent with its mission and values. While an institution's perspective may be controversial, leaders shouldn't be afraid of controversy.

"Controversy is opportunity, because people are paying attention . . . universities are lightning rods for every issue in society. We shouldn't abdicate that role. That's who we are and we shouldn't be afraid of it."



Rev. John Jenkins, 17th President, University of Notre Dame

For example, institutions founded by or based on a particular faith reflect the values of that faith. If the institution or president were to speak out, the voice would be based on these underlying values.

"It is our mission to be a prophetic presence in an everchanging world . . . and to live our Catholic identity, making sure we're educating hearts and minds and not just 'training.' . . . educating students who have a moral compass."



Stanton McNeely, 19th President, University of Holy Cross

Some presidents favor using their voice on a limited basis.

Several Summit participants believe that presidents should use their voice—but on a limited basis, when they have a relevant perspective, when speaking on a topic is in the interest of the institution, and when speaking out is consistent with the institution's values.

"The key point is restrained expression . . . where I feel it is in the interest of our university and the values that we stand for, for me to speak up . . . that's very few matters."



Joanne Berger-Sweeney, 22nd President, Trinity College; Sunil Kumar, 14th President, Tufts University

Others commented that there are times when a president wants to speak up but faces pressure and limitations from trustees, who may want to avoid controversy and preserve institutional neutrality.

"I think it's not fair to assume that we get to say everything we want every time we want . . . I wanted to be a lot less neutral than the board wanted me to be."

While every situation is different, several examples were shared of leaders who spoke out on a topic based on their personal values, without first asking for their board's support. Speaking up and standing alone requires great courage—and is not appropriate in every situation.

"How many of us will stand in this moment? How many of us will be intellectually courageous? . . . It's a moment of great challenge and who stands in this moment will be quite telling."



Roslyn Clark Artis, 14th President, Benedict College

Some participants believe presidents must actively speak out and lead important conversations.

While choosing institutional neutrality or a limited voice may be a pragmatic approach that may be appropriate for some institutions and leaders, others called for a bolder approach, where higher institution leaders actively seek to lead and shape conversations.

"I think that institutional neutrality and restraint . . . is neither sufficient nor adequate. . . we need to change the conversation and need to lead in changing conversations. . . We have to find ways in which we continue to speak boldly, loudly, significantly as a sector because we have a lot to say about where the world is going."



Linda Mills, 17th President, New York University

Others see a responsibility of higher education leaders in speaking out, leading, and being catalysts of change in critical areas, where society needs leadership.

“When do universities lead by contributing to societal rebirth, and when do they follow by reinforcing the status quo and social inequities? . . . We must have the moral courage to speak out.”



Lynn C. Pasquerella, 14th President, American Association of Colleges & Universities

However, even among presidents who support speaking up, some emphasized the need to make it clear when the president is using their own voice versus speaking on behalf of the institution.

“It is important to clarify when you’re speaking for yourself versus when you’re speaking for the institution.”

Institutional voice is more than just what a president says.

While much of the discussion focused on the statements a president makes, others said institutional voice goes further. An institution’s voice encompasses what is said on its websites, what types of programs and initiatives are undertaken, and the atmosphere on a campus.

“Our institutional voice is not just about the statement we put out . . . it is about whether we take off DEI from our websites . . . it’s really about a much broader responsibility to create an atmosphere.”



Laura Walker, 11th President, Bennington College

To navigate in this environment, presidents need core values.

In commenting about the session’s title, one participant said presidents neither have the wind at their back nor are they shouting into the wind. “The real problem is swaying with the wind and not knowing your core principles of leadership.”

In leading a campus, leaders must view free speech as both a right and a responsibility. In many cases, people are focused on the right of free speech but overlook the responsibility that comes with it. Higher education leaders must model both.

“[Free speech] is an enforceable right and comes with an unenforceable responsibility. . . It’s part of the joy of our positions that we have this ability to teach by modeling—the right of free speech and the responsibility to use it wisely.”



Amy Gutmann, 8th President, University of Pennsylvania

The challenges higher education leaders face will get worse.

In concluding the session, one leader warned that the environment for higher education will only get worse. It is therefore incumbent on higher education leaders to know how and when to speak up—and not to sit idly by while allowing hate speech on campus. “We should not tolerate many things . . . and simply let them go.”

“If we lose our ability to speak to one another and speak for one another in support of one another, then we will have lost the war. We have to be strong. We have to be present. We have to be reasonable. We have to listen . . . When I talk with students about freedom of speech, it comes with an obligation to listen. In our case, it comes with an obligation to speak.”



Dannel Malloy, 6th Chancellor, University of Maine System; 88th Governor, Connecticut



The Taking Charge Process – Reflections of Presidents

New and Old . . . What Are Two Things You Wish You'd Known

Overview

Becoming a new president isn't easy. Those who have been through this experience have learned the importance of getting to know and building relationships with key internal and external stakeholders, determining what to try to change immediately and where changes can take more time, and the importance of communicating intentionally and strategically.

Context

More than a dozen presidents shared reflections on what they wish they had known before becoming a president or an important lesson learned after becoming president.

Key Takeaways

Define your core values, live by them, and stick to them. A new president will face numerous challenges and inevitable chaos. To make decisions, it is essential to be guided by a set of core values. The lesson shared by multiple presidents is to figure out your core values, know where to draw lines, and stick to them.

"Figure out your core issues and where you're going to draw your lines."



Tania Tetlow, 33rd President, Fordham University

Similarly, one president stressed the importance of defining and sticking to personal boundaries.

Get to know all key stakeholders. As an outsider who is new to a campus, it is essential to get to know the key stakeholders. This includes the faculty, especially department chairs, and students.



Melissa Gilliam, 11th President, Boston University

Presidents also stressed the importance of getting to know the trustees, even going so far as getting to know each trustee personally.



Manya Whitaker, Interim President, Colorado College

Other presidents emphasized the importance of getting to know both internal and external stakeholders, including political leaders, which – depending on the institution and situation – might include the governor, legislators, and the mayor.

"I didn't know how much I needed to establish a broad range of constituencies that weren't only internal but were also getting to know the state and local community."



Jennifer Mnookin, 30th Chancellor, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Act quickly and boldly. One president said conventional wisdom is to proceed with change slowly and carefully. He challenged this thinking and invoked Machiavelli, who suggested (to paraphrase) making a list of all of the crimes you need to commit and doing them quickly, all at once, so you aren't "constantly holding a bloody knife." For new presidents, the idea is to be bold, initiate change, act quickly, and deal with any criticism in one fell swoop, versus constantly making changes and hearing criticism over time.

"New presidents need to act. They need to figure out what they need to do, and they need to do it relatively quickly so that they can be effective and forgiven over time."



Edward Wingenbach, 8th President, Hampshire College

However, another president offered a more pragmatic perspective. She suggested relying on personal experience to determine which de-

cisions and actions needed to be made immediately and which should take more time.

A third president has learned through experience to quickly size up and prioritize the key issues facing the institution. These may relate to the geopolitical environment, funding, infrastructure, labor issues, or something else.

Challenge fixed assumptions. Some stakeholders often come to believe that assumptions are fixed and unchangeable. This might include assumptions around costs, revenues, or organizational capabilities. New leaders need to challenge assumptions and persuade stakeholders that some assumptions, which were previously thought to be fixed – such as organizational costs – can be changed.

Humanize your communication. A new president learned, over time, the importance of personalizing his communication by weaving his own story and experiences into his communication. Personalizing and humanizing communication improves the ability to deliver strategic messages for the university.



Eric Turner, 10th President, Lasell University

Don't talk about your prior institution. A new president learned that frequent mentions of prior institutions alienated people at the new institution, because they felt the president was comparing their current and previous institutions.

You can't always control the narrative. As important as it is for presidents to be proactive in attempting to control their message and narrative, at times, controlling the narrative is impossible. A situation may unexpectedly arise that results in media or social media attention, and the president may not be able to comment, due to confidentiality or for some other reason. When this occurs, remain calm and accept that you can't control everything.

Recognize that every institution is different. There are large and small institutions; private and public institutions; and even among public institutions, every state is different. For example, in New Hampshire, the governor sits on the board of trustees, there are eight legislative appointees to the board, and the state has a House of Representatives with 430 members. Everything the president says or does is public and is scrutinized. In this environment, choosing to speak out on a topic isn't brave or courageous; it might be foolish.

The lesson is that every situation and institution is different, making it necessary to understand each institution's history, culture, and stakeholders.

"The only thing I would have done differently would be to establish closer relationships with elected officials."

Have a network of trusted personal confidants. Every president needs a small group of other presidents whom they trust, whom they can speak openly and honestly with.



Elizabeth Chilton, 21st President, University of New Hampshire



The Board Perspective

What Do You Mean, We?

Overview

In some situations, college and university board members don't understand what they've signed up for and don't understand their role and responsibilities. Unfortunately, when a crisis arises, they will become quite aware of what serving on a higher education board is all about.

Board members have a fiduciary responsibility, must provide institutional oversight, and need to ensure accountability. The board is responsible for hiring and overseeing the president, ensuring an appropriate tone at the top, and requiring compliance, where relevant. Too often board members and trustees are fans and boosters as opposed to engaged, responsible fiduciaries and stewards of the institution.

Context

Using board crises as case studies, board members described their experiences and lessons learned.

Key Takeaways

A board crisis at Penn State offers lessons that are broadly applicable.

To summarize the situation, a grand jury indictment and report was unsealed charging an assistant football coach at Penn State with child sexual abuse that occurred on the university campus, at the football facility. This indictment triggered an immediate crisis, as the legendary football coach, the university president, and other senior administrators were all involved based on a failure to report. The indictment led to media scrutiny along with loss of trust among the faculty, alumni, and public.

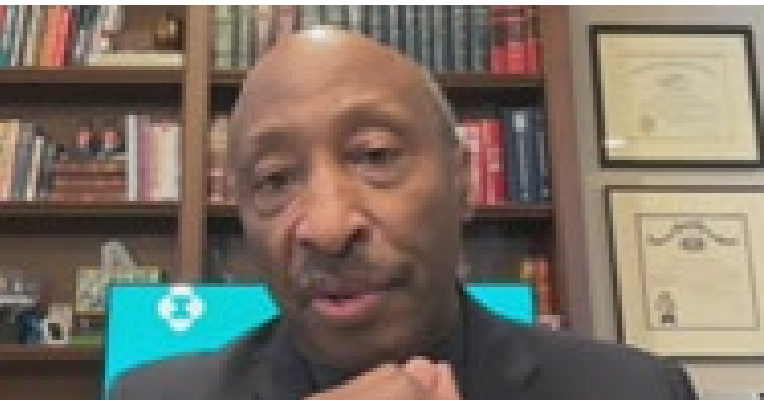
The board was forced to make immediate decisions. One significant decision was hiring former federal judge and FBI director Louis Freeh to conduct a full-scale investigation. Freeh's report placed significant blame on the board of trustees for failing to exercise oversight and reasonable inquiry responsibilities.

Among the lessons from this incident related to board governance are:

- **Trustees need to establish a level of accountability**, and hold everyone accountable. The board must oversee and hold accountable the president and head football coach, even if they are esteemed figures. This hadn't been done at Penn State.
- **Boards need to set clear expectations for everyone** at the university, drive the agenda in consultation with the president, and make sure the proper things are getting done.
- **The "tone at the top" starts with the board.** At Penn State, the tone seemed to be "football first," where football was placed ahead of accountability. Having the proper tone means giving all people, in all roles and at all levels, permission to speak up if something isn't right.
- **Boards need good information systems** to collect necessary information in order to provide proper oversight. Penn State had lacked proper systems and communication channels.
- **Trustees are fiduciaries, not boosters.** In some cases, people who are trustees don't understand their responsibilities, which is to be a fiduciary of the institution.

"Trustees need to remember that we are first and foremost responsible for not just the image and reputation of the school, but its humanistic, moral, and ethical values."

At Penn State several individuals, including the president, were convicted for failing to report. The incident led to numerous structural changes to create better governance, more accountability, and better oversight.



Ken Frazier, Executive Chair, Merck; Trustee, Harvard & Penn State



Judy D. Olian, 9th President, Quinnipiac University

Other boards have faced different crises and challenges that also offer valuable lessons.

At Georgetown, the board faced an enormous challenge as the university's admired, beloved, longtime president suffered a stroke. Having not conducted a search or experienced a transition in 22 years, the trustees came together—and decided not to rush to action, but to take their time to determine the most appropriate path forward.



Afsaneh Beschloss, Founder & CEO, RockCreek Investments; Member, Georgetown Board

Columbia University's board has experienced challenges in the past year related to student protests and encampments. Trustees had to make difficult decisions related to freedom of speech, involving or not involving the police, and allowing or taking down encampments.

Each board member had to reflect on their own core values. One trustee, with an extensive security background, concluded that no constitutional right is absolute, meaning that an organization—including a college or university—has to be able to regulate time, place, and manner. Further, this individual concluded that safety is paramount.

"Our paramount responsibility is the health and safety and welfare of the students that have been entrusted to us."

This trustees' perspective was that ultimately, trustees advise and give counsel, but the president must make the final decisions. "Ultimately, as trustees, we have to defer to the president."



Jeh Johnson, Partner, Paul Weiss; 4th US Secretary of Homeland Security; Columbia Board

Another crisis occurred when a governor decided not to reappoint 50% of the board, leading to a very different board than the one that had hired the president. The president saw this as an opportunity to educate the new board and to lead and drive change.

"The challenge . . . is educating a new board on how to be board members, particularly when most of these individuals have never been a board member or they served under an entirely different model or entirely different leadership style."



Joe Bertolino, 6th President, Stockton University

Legend in Leadership Award

Amy Gutmann, 8th President, University of Pennsylvania, Former Ambassador to Germany

Presentation

Maurie McInnis, 24th President, Yale University

Peter Salovey, 23rd President, Yale University

Joanne Berger-Sweeney, 22nd President, Trinity College

Linda Mills, 17th President, New York University

Amy Gutmann was recognized as an accomplished scholar and a revered higher education leader. During her tenure as President at the University of Pennsylvania, she made accessibility and affordability key priorities, more than doubling the number of students from low-income and first-generation college families. In working with Philadelphia's leaders, Gutmann modeled how an academic institution can forge a mutually beneficial partnership with a city and reimaged Penn's global engagement by creating the University's first global strategic framework, realizing a vision of "Bring the world to Penn and Penn to the world."

But Gutmann's accomplishments go beyond Penn. She has been a mentor for many leaders across higher education and served as US Ambassador to Germany – the daughter of a Holocaust survivor returning to her father's native land as America's top diplomat.

In accepting this award, Gutmann humbly attributed her success to her parents and to the many talented, dedicated, diverse people with whom she has worked. She recognized that American democracy has made her life and freedom possible. She has devoted her life to working with allies to advance values of democracy, freedom, and opportunity.

In receiving this award just one day after International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Gutmann recalled how her father fled Germany almost 90 years ago, as fascism was sweeping across Europe and as the Nazis were overrunning Germany's universities; at the time, some of the world's foremost universities.

Right now, the stakes for democracy and freedom in America and across the globe could not be higher. "Our institutions of higher education must serve as the staunchest lines of defense against bigotry, hatred, and discrimination," she said. Gutmann called for alliances and collective action, recalling Benjamin Franklin's words, "We must all hang together, or assuredly, we shall all hang separately."



Peter Salovey, 23rd President, Yale University; Joanne Berger-Sweeney, 22nd President, Trinity College; Amy Gutmann, 8th President, University of Pennsylvania, Former Ambassador to Germany; Maurice McInnis, 24th President, Yale University; Linda Mills, 17th President, New York University



Amy Gutmann, 8th President, University of Pennsylvania, Former Ambassador to Germany