



Columbia Alumni for Academic Freedom

1,200+ Columbia Alumni File Brief Supporting Harvard's Lawsuit Against Trump Administration

4,700+ Columbia alumni emphasized need to push back forcefully against Trump administration's punitive actions against Columbia as dangerous threats to academic freedom

(BOSTON - June 10, 2025) The Columbia Alumni for Academic Freedom filed an amicus curiae brief Monday signed by more than 1,200 Columbia alumni supporting Harvard University's lawsuit against the Trump administration, [*Harvard v. HHS*](#), for its unconstitutional use of federal power to intimidate universities.

The amicus brief argues the Trump administration is violating Harvard's first amendment free speech constitutional protections, federal civil rights law, and the [*Administrative Procedure Act*](#), a federal law that establishes procedural safeguards for agency actions, by arbitrarily [*freezing \\$2.2 billion in federal grants*](#) to Harvard. It explains the Administration's punitive actions against Columbia closely resemble those against Harvard, including the use of summary cutoffs of critical research funding, the lack of compliance with core Title VI requirements, and the efforts to assert control over Columbia's academics and administration.

"What the Trump administration is doing to Columbia, Harvard and other universities flagrantly violates core constitutional freedoms that have helped make American universities engines of creativity and economic progress, and the envy of the world," said [*Sean H. Donahue of Donahue, Goldberg & Herzog*](#), counsel for Columbia Alumni for Academic Freedom (CC 1989): "The Administration's vindictive campaign also violates the substantial procedural protections provided by the civil rights law that provides the pretext for this vindictive campaign."

The brief concludes by urging the court to grant Harvard's motion for summary judgment, arguing that the Administration's actions are unlawful and pose grave risks to American democracy and prosperity. The brief is posted at: <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.mad.283718/gov.uscourts.mad.283718.124.0.pdf>.

Many Columbia University alumni are frustrated with their alma mater's handling of the Trump administration's demands, which were framed [*as a "precondition" for negotiations*](#) to restore \$400 million in federal funding for university research that the Trump administration abruptly cancelled this spring. Despite [*Columbia's concessions*](#), last Wednesday, the [*Trump administration escalated its attack on the university*](#) by threatening its accreditation, a key credential that U.S. universities need to receive federal student aid.

"While there are a lot of diverse views about how Columbia handled recent protests on campus, there's actually tremendous support for Columbia to stand up to Trump's assaults" said Alex Protopapas, Columbia College alumnus (1990). "The feedback we've received from alums is that they don't want their school to become the new Trump University."

In April, under the backing of the Columbia Alumni for Academic Freedom, a group of Columbia alumni issued a [statement](#), signed by more than 4,700 alumni, calling upon the university to stand up for institutional integrity and for academic freedom (www.ColumbiaAlumniForAcademicFreedom.org).

“We have organized to fight on behalf of Columbia's alumni to ensure academic freedom for Columbia students, faculty, alumni and for all Americans,” said Jeremy Manning, Columbia College alumnus (1990). “We fight for academic freedom on behalf of Harvard now because if Harvard falls, Columbia alumni and indeed, our entire nation will suffer harmful, long-lasting and irreversible effects.”

“Alumni across colleges and universities nationwide are standing together for our freedoms and values,” said Anurima Bhargava, Columbia Law School alumnus (2002). “The community and solidarity across educational institutions and in every corner of America is palpable - the fight for the freedom to learn is a fight that serves us all.”

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