

July 6, 2026

Via email

Maurie McInnis, President, Yale University
Board of Trustees, Yale University

Dear President McInnis and the Board of Trustees,

The AAUP, AFT Connecticut, and the national AFT call on Yale University to reject any negotiated settlement with the Trump administration that would compromise academic freedom, shared governance, due process, or institutional independence. Yale has legal and moral obligations to comply with civil rights law and to protect students, faculty, staff, and patients from discrimination, but those obligations cannot be fulfilled through a closed-door agreement that gives federal officials continuing leverage over admissions, hiring, curriculum, research, medical practice, campus speech, student discipline, or faculty governance.

Recent reporting indicates that the Trump administration is conducting a far-reaching investigation into Yale's admissions practices, beginning with the School of Medicine and extending to undergraduate and law school admissions. The administration has said little publicly about its evidence beyond a May letter concerning the medical school; unlike in other university cases, it has not yet used research-funding cutoffs against Yale, relying instead on the threat of litigation. Yale is entitled to defend its admissions practices through lawful, transparent, and procedurally regular means. It should not respond to political pressure by preemptively surrendering university autonomy.

The administration's legal theory also rests on an overbroad reading of *Students for Fair Admissions*. That decision barred the use of racial status as an admissions preference, but it preserved universities' ability to consider an applicant's individualized account of how race affected that applicant's life. Courts have likewise rejected efforts to extend *FFA* into areas the decision did not govern, including classroom speech and curricular choices.

The choice before Yale is not simply whether to settle one investigation. It is whether to participate in a broader campaign to turn civil rights enforcement into a mechanism of political control over higher education. The AAUP has long insisted that antidiscrimination, academic freedom, and free expression are mutually reinforcing commitments.

Nor should Yale assume that settlement will buy peace. Recent agreements have often converted acute federal pressure into continuing federal leverage. Columbia's settlement required substantial payments, restored access to federal grants, and imposed an independent monitor, and continued reporting obligations, admissions data disclosures, audits, and oversight touching faculty and administrative hiring. Columbia was not left alone; it was placed

under a regime of supervision. Brown's settlement likewise did not insulate it from further demands: After agreeing to provide the government with admissions and discrimination-related information, Brown was soon asked to sign the Trump administration's Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education, which it rejected as a threat to academic freedom and self-governance. Cornell and the University of Virginia also entered agreements requiring continuing data disclosure or compliance reporting. These are not ordinary settlements of discrete legal disputes; they are instruments for ongoing supervision of universities by political actors.

There is another path. Harvard rejected federal demands by saying they exceeded the government's lawful authority and infringed on the university's independence and constitutional rights, and it joined the AAUP in litigation against the administration. UCLA and the University of California also resisted sweeping federal demands; in response to a wall-to-wall labor union lawsuit, including the AAUP and AFT, a federal judge blocked the administration from conditioning UC funding on politically driven requirements and from using threatened penalties to force a \$1.2 billion settlement. And when the Trump administration offered its higher education compact to an initial group of universities, seven of the nine publicly rejected it, including Brown, the University of Virginia, Dartmouth, MIT, Penn, Arizona, and the University of Southern California.

Yale should join the institutions that have recognized that academic freedom and institutional independence are not bargaining chips. Civil rights law must be enforced, and universities must address discrimination seriously and promptly, but enforcement must be evidence-based, procedurally regular, legally tailored, and consistent with academic freedom. A coerced settlement that trades away institutional independence does not protect students. It endangers the conditions under which all students learn, all faculty teach and research, and all members of a university community speak, debate, dissent, and pursue knowledge.

Yale has the resources, stature, and responsibility to stand firm. It should not negotiate away the rights of its faculty, students, staff, and patients in private. It should defend academic freedom in public in solidarity with the broader higher education community, and in accordance with the principles that make a university worthy of the name.

Sincerely,



Todd Wolfson
AAUP President



Daniel Martinez-HoSang
President, Yale AAUP



Jan Hochadel
President, AFT Connecticut



Randi Weingarten
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