

# Woke Free

## Campus Guide for Students, Faculty & Alumni



Establishing a “Woke Free” Environment on Campus  
by Abolishing DEI Bureaucracies and Restoring  
Equality (NOT Equity) in America’s Universities

Corey Lee Wilson

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**Christopher F. Rufo** – Is an American conservative activist, contributing editor of *City Journal*, New College of Florida board member, senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, and leading the fight against Progressivism madness in American institutions. He is a vocal opponent of critical race theory, former documentary filmmaker and fellow at the Discovery Institute, the Claremont Institute, The Heritage Foundation, and the Foundation Against Intolerance and Racism. In 2022, he earned a Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies from Harvard Extension School.

***City Journal***: Is a public policy magazine and website, published by the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, that covers a range of topics on urban affairs, such as policing, education, housing, and other issues. The *City Journal* and its authors were the most widely used resource for *Education Madness*.

**Heritage Foundation, The** – Is an American conservative think tank that is primarily geared toward public policy and the foundation took a leading role in the conservative movement during the presidency of Ronald Reagan, whose policies were taken from Heritage's policy study Mandate for Leadership. The Heritage Foundation has partnered with congruent organizations to provide various model legislation, including their own, that states can use to protect education freedom. Their Save Our Schools Parental Rights Resources are extensive with instructional, legislative, and school board training resources.

**S.A.P.I.E.N.T. Being** – The Society Advancing Personal Intelligence and Enlightenment Now Together (S.A.P.I.E.N.T.) Being is the leading anti-woke

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and anti-progressivism madness organization and think tank in the USA. They publish *Education Madness: A SAPIENT Being's Guide to Fixing America's Dysfunctional & Illiberal Educational Systems*, a textbook from their Sapient Conservative Textbook (SCT) Program, an alternative social studies textbooks program to counter woke and progressive madness in America's educational institutions, and help return conservative values, viewpoint diversity, and sapience to high school and college campuses.

### A Woke Free Campus Introduction

Leaders of elite schools disgrace themselves before Congress—and expose the rot at the core of American higher education after being summoned to account for the surging anti-Semitism on their campuses, the presidents of Harvard, MIT, and the University of Pennsylvania delivered a masterclass in obfuscation.

As noted in the Liel Leibovitz “The Big University Fail” *City Journal* December 2023 report: When New York representative Elise Stefanik asked them whether calling for the genocide of the Jewish people violated the codes of conduct of their respective institutions, for example, all three presidents responded by saying that—well, it’s complicated.

“It is a context-dependent decision,” Penn’s Liz Magill answered, driving Stefanik—and anyone else watching with half a heart and a brain—to wonder just what was so difficult or context-dependent about cheering for the murder of every Jewish man, woman, and child.

The hearing made headlines, and rightly so. But it would be a mistake to focus on the trio’s failure to sound remotely empathic when discussing the safety and wellbeing of their Jewish students. The problem with Harvard, Penn, MIT, and others isn’t merely that these previously august institutions condone, or at the very least tolerate, anti-Semitism. It goes much deeper, and you could sum it up in three letters: DEI—or diversity, equity, and inclusion, the ongoing effort to regulate a host of policies pertaining to race, sexual orientation, and other identity markers.

Consider Harvard. Our nation’s most lauded university is currently home to 7,240 undergraduate students and 7,024 administrators, or nearly one administrator for each young adult. Some of these officials, it’s possible, are doing important work. But if you’re wondering what the rest are up to, you needn’t look much further than the *Crimson*, the university’s long-running student newspaper. Recently, the *Harvard Crimson* reported on the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) Task Force on Visual Culture and Signage, created on the recommendation of the Presidential Task Force on Inclusion and Belonging. The Visual Culture and Signage task force’s 24 members, including nine administrators, toiled for months and interviewed

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more than 500 people before delivering a 26-page report that included recommendations like one urging Harvard to “clarify institutional authority over FAS visual culture and signage.” This farce ended the only way it could have—with the minting of a new administrative post, the FAS campus curator, and a new committee, the FAS Standing Committee on Visual Culture and Signage, to help facilitate the curator’s all-important work.

It’s easy to laugh all this off as fussy ivory tower nonsense, but DEI isn’t just another campus pastime. It’s a mechanism for the forging and dissemination of an ideological construct that, before the progressive assault on words and their meaning, used to be called racism. Or, for that matter, anti-Semitism: singling out Jews or the Jewish state for calumny used to be frowned upon, but, under the aegis of DEI, it passes as a respectable, even essential pursuit.

That’s because, as Stanley Goldfarb explained in *City Journal* recently, “at the heart of DEI is a simple binary: the world is divided between oppressors and the oppressed.” And Jews confound these categories because Judaism is both a belief system and an extended family with roots everywhere from Yemen to Yekaterinburg.

None of DEI’s grotesque simplifications holds up when applied to the Jews, which is why the Jews must be singled out for scorn. Take these ancient, stiff-necked people and their persistent faith seriously, and the whole con collapses. Write them off as just a particularly nefarious example of whites exercising undue power and influence on poor people of color somewhere far away, and your thwarted worldview can remain undisturbed.

Delivering what was possibly the congressional hearing’s most poignant moment, Utah representative Burgess Owens asked the university presidents a series of simple questions. “Harvard now has graduations for black-only graduates, Hispanic-only graduates, and gay-only graduates,” he asked Harvard’s Claudine Gay. “How does that bring us together as opposed to dividing us based on color, creed, and all the other things? And, by the way, is it okay for a white group to say ‘we don’t want minorities to be a part of our graduation’?”

Gay started in on an evasive response, but Burgess cut her off.

“Is it okay to segregate people based on their color?” he asked.

“I oppose segregation,” Gay replied.

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“Okay,” Owens shot back, “I do, too. But it’s happening on your campus.”

This Grand Guignol went on for many minutes, with every president loudly denouncing separating students based on the color of their skin yet failing to explain why such separation was appropriate on their campuses when practiced by minority groups. You hardly needed a Ph.D. from MIT to realize that the presidents’ declamations were idiotic. But anyone watching might have been excused for asking just why these formerly venerable institutions would stoop so low as to peddle such rank illogic.

Sincere ideological conviction, of course, provides one answer. It’s possible that Gay and her colleagues truly believe that black-only dorms are good, while similar set-ups by those with a different skin color is racism. But there’s another explanation, too, and it has to do with money.

Earlier this year, three partners in the management consulting firm Bain and Company published a rousing defense of DEI in the Harvard Business Review. Their argument wasn’t that DEI made organizations more just, or society more diverse, equitable, or inclusive. It was that DEI helped enhance an organization’s “change power,” or its ability to be more adaptable and profitable in the marketplace.

By that metric, our universities have change superpowers. In 1969, for example, about 78 percent of faculty members in American universities and colleges held tenured or tenure-track positions. Today, the number is roughly 20 percent, which means that the majority of classes are taught by poorly paid adjuncts. A decade ago, when I was still a professor at NYU, two-thirds of the classes in my department were taught by adjuncts (the university-wide rate is about 53 percent), who earned, on average, something like \$800 a month. Even the most dedicated adjuncts could not afford to invest too much time and energy in their students’ education.

It should come as no surprise, then, that the overall quality of a university education has plummeted. One federal survey, conducted about a decade ago, tested the literacy (defined as “using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one’s goals and to develop one’s knowledge and potential”) of college-educated Americans. It found that only a quarter of those surveyed met these basic criteria.

At the same time, our universities found new and exciting ways to make money. The easiest way was to hike tuition: in 2001, the cost of a university

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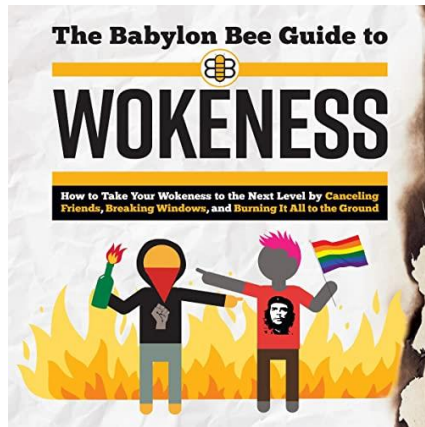
education was 23 percent of median annual earnings. By 2011, the number had reached 38 percent, and student debt, as if by design, doubled.

But students and their parents are a relatively limited and non-renewable source of revenue, which is why American universities learned the same lesson that helped make, say, Arby's or Wendy's great—if you want to grow big, sell franchises. To name just one example of many, NYU has twin degree-granting campuses in Abu Dhabi and in Shanghai, as well as locations in Accra, Berlin, Buenos Aires, Florence, London, Los Angeles, Madrid, Paris, Prague, Sydney, Tel Aviv, and Washington, D.C. No cluster of wealthy people need go far to acquire the prestige of an NYU degree.

If you think of students as consumers, as American universities now do, DEI is a convenient organizing principle, not only tapping into trends that animate the young but also replacing that stubborn and unruly thing—an independent community of scholars dedicated to one another and to the unfettered exchange of ideas—with atomized clusters of competing identity groups, all depending on the administration for validation and resources. If you want to cultivate perpetual clients eager to pay for the privilege of your validation, just give each client an administrator.

It's no wonder, then, that Penn president Magill smirked when confronted with her university's moral failings. She likely realizes, as so many others have yet to do, that American universities are no longer interested in the improvement of minds, hearts, and souls but rather in the fattening of coffers that becomes possible when you're an integral part of the global corporate complex. As for the Jews? They are, as always, the canary in the coal mine: institutions that turn on the Jews usually expedite their own spectacular implosion. If history is any guide, this week, in Washington, we witnessed the beginning of another such episode.

# 1 – Where Did Wokeness Come From? Who Are These Progressives?



*Credit: Babylon Bee.*

As extensively documented, our universities have been swept up into a new cultural movement, the so-called “social justice” movement, a key component of wokeness.

“Social justice” ideology is based on the Marxist vision that the world is divided into oppressor classes and oppressed classes as noted in the Minding the Campus article “What Happened to Our Universities?” by Philip Carl Salzman, in October 2018 and is from their Free Speech in Peril collection.

Unlike classical Marxism that divides the world into a bourgeois oppressor class and a proletarian oppressed class — that is capitalists oppressing workers — neo-Marxist “social justice” theory divides the world into gender, racial, sexual, and religious classes: male oppressors and female victims; white oppressors and people of color victims; heterosexual oppressors and gay, lesbian, transsexual, etc. etc. victims; Christian and Jewish oppressors and Muslim victims.



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“Social justice” ideology leads to the rejection of oppressive institutions such as capitalism and Western Civilization. Universalistic criteria such as merit, achievement, and excellence are rejected today in universities and beyond because they allegedly disadvantage members of victim categories.

### **What Happened to Our Universities?**

Preferential measures on behalf of victims have been adopted as the overriding and primary purpose of universities today. Course topics, course substance, course references, recruitment of students, provision of special facilities and events for “victim” categories, hiring of academic and administrative staff, all are aimed to benefit members of “victim” categories and to exclude and marginalize members of “oppressor” categories.

Sociology, anthropology, political science, English, history, women’s and gender studies, black studies, social work, education, and law have all jettisoned their traditional fields of study to become “social justice” subjects, vilifying men, whites, heterosexuals, the West, capitalism, and advocating for women, people of color, gays etc., and Muslims.

Now there is a full-throttle attack on the natural sciences and on STEM fields to infuse them with “victims,” whatever these “victim” preferences and abilities might be, and to turn STEM into “social justice” fields, so that there would no longer be “science,” but “feminist science” that is “socially just.”

### **How did all of this happen? What brought about this almost universal change in institutions of “higher learning”?**

Given the normality of closed absolutist theological and moral systems, nothing is so abnormal in human history and culture as an open, self-correcting system. Among all the cultures of the world throughout history, the only two self-correcting systems known are products of the Enlightenment: science and democracy.

Science and its technological offspring were slow to develop, but by the 20th century, they were central to Western society, while religion was removed from societal institutions and limited to the personal. This did not stop closed ideological movements such as Nazism and Communism from appropriating science and technology to advance their absolutist ideological goals. But with the self-destruction of Nazism and Communism,

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science itself has remained an open culture.

Since the eclipse of theology in the 19th century, science has been the backbone of higher education in the West. As the most successful method for understanding the world, it was taken as a model for most academic work. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, social studies emulated the natural sciences, as best they could, in the hope of producing valid findings.

**Academics commonly feel that they cannot simply repeat what their teachers and the founders of their field said. To gain any attention and stature, academics, especially in the social sciences and humanities, must come up with something original to say.**

Furthermore, while natural scientists can express their creativity by discovering or refining a relationship between natural phenomena, social scientists and humanists do not get very far by dwelling on ethnographic or statistical or historical details. Rather, to make a splash, they must invent a new theory, a new “ism,” a new epistemology. So new theoretical arguments in the social sciences and humanities tend to come not from responding to the bulk of scientific evidence, but from professional and career considerations.

By the 1980s, the social sciences and humanities had taken what some called “the postmodern turn,” also characterized as a “paradigm shift.” This included a rejection of attempts to be objective, and, in its place, a celebration of subjectivity.

Absoluteness, as in absolute truth, was rejected in favor of relativism. Academics came to say that “everyone has their own truth.” Science was rejected as a model for studies of humanity. The ideas of “data” and “evidence” were set aside in favor of “interpretation.” Scientific laws, generalizations, and “master narratives,” were rejected as unfeasible and oppressive.

Anthropology’s contributions to this turn were substantial. “Cultural relativism,” which had been conceptualized in the first half of the 20th century by Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict as a mental attitude to make researchers more receptive to understanding cultures other than their own, had morphed into moral relativism by the second half of the 20th century as shown by the rejection of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the American Anthropological Association on the grounds that it was based on Western cultural ideas.

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The most influential anthropologist of the second half of the 20th century, Clifford Geertz, who was followed closely in all the social sciences and humanities, turned away from cultural anthropology as a scientific study, instead likening it to literary criticism.

Perhaps Geertz was influenced in this by deconstructionism, fashionable in literary studies. The main thrust of Geertz's theory was that, in ethnographic research, we interpret what we see and hear, and present that interpretation as our understanding. In the much-lauded Introduction of *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Geertz says that "what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to." This is reflected in his famous definition of culture:

"The concept of culture I espouse,...is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning."

With the scientific spirit rejected by the social sciences and humanities, and the idea of authoritative knowledge rejected in favor of allegedly valid subjective truths, what role can the university play? The discovery and passing on of new knowledge have, in the postmodern turn, been judged invalid.

In the absence of knowledge, what then is the purpose of research and scholarship and teaching? The answer was found in turn to moralism and political activism. This drew on the critical Marxist anthropology of the 1970s and came to fruition in the most popular anthropology book of the 1980s, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* by George E. Marcus and Michael M. J. Fischer.

**In the following decades, the neo-Marxist "social justice" ideology and movement flowered. Our society is condemned in universities for being racist, sexist, homophobic, Islamophobic, and oppressive.**

To correct this, professors and administrators advocate for programs benefitting the "victims of oppression," that is, females, people of color, gays—lesbian—transsexuals, etc., and Muslims, such as preferential admission for student applicants, separate housing, eating, and support facilities, special ceremonies, and preferential hiring as professors and

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administrators.

The disfavored “oppressors,” males, whites, heterosexuals, and Christians are to be marginalized and sidelined, certainly not to receive any benefits or opportunities. (Asians are now honorary whites because they have worked too hard and are too successful, so they too are condemned and discriminated against.)

The rejection of truth and of evidence has now made its way into university administrations. Disciplinary tribunals have now accepted that “everyone has their own truth,” and they accept the “truths” of the oppressed victims and dispense with “evidence” that might be presented on behalf of accused “oppressors.”

This rejection of truth and evidence has diffused far beyond universities, to businesses, funding agencies, government agencies, and departments of education, and has now made its way to the U.S. Senate in the Kavanaugh hearings. What someone did or did not do is no longer important; the only thing that is important in universities and beyond is what category someone belongs to. After all, that is the only way that “social justice” is enforced.

### **Universities Must Choose One Telos: Truth or Social Justice**

On the Heterodox Academy website, Dr. Jonathan Haidt explains eloquently why universities must choose one telos: truth or social justice. Furthermore, he elaborates that Aristotle often evaluated a thing with respect to its “telos”—its purpose, end, or goal. The telos of a knife is to cut. The telos of a physician is health or healing. What is the telos of university?

The most obvious answer is “truth”—the word appears on so many university crests. But increasingly, many of America’s top universities are embracing social justice as their telos, or as a second and equal telos. But can any institution or profession have two teloses (or teloi)? What happens if they conflict?

Haidt believes that the conflict between truth and social justice is likely to become unmanageable. Universities will have to choose, and be explicit about their choice, so that potential students and faculty recruits can make an informed choice. Universities that try to honor both will face increasing incoherence and internal conflict.

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To further illuminate his point, consider two quotations:

*The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.— Karl Marx, 1845*

*He who knows only his own side of the case knows little of that. His reasons may be good, and no one may have been able to refute them. But if he is equally unable to refute the reasons on the opposite side, if he does not so much as know what they are, he has no ground for preferring either opinion...— John Stuart Mill, 1859*

As Haidt puts it: Marx is the patron saint of what he calls “Social Justice U,” which is oriented around changing the world in part by overthrowing power structures and privilege. It sees political diversity as an obstacle to action.

Mill is the patron saint of what he calls “Truth U,” which sees truth as a process in which flawed individuals challenge each other’s biased and incomplete reasoning. In this process, all become smarter. However, Truth U dies when it becomes intellectually uniform or politically orthodox.

### **What’s it Going to Be: Truth or Social Justice?**

Truth is paramount to sapience, and the antithesis to sapience is modern progressivism. Not only does progressivism deny commonly held truths across all cultures of the world, today’s progressivism has evolved to many degrees into a twentieth century version of Marxism lite—without the horrific calories of human sacrifice, failed regimes, and economic ruin.

When progressivism madness is incubated in the right condition on campus, illiberalism will follow, and when illiberalism follows, so do social justice warriors and campus radicals. Put simply enough by Haidt, “no university can have Truth and Social Justice as dual teloses. Each university must pick one.

## **Universities Have Become Ground Zero for the Progressive Neo-Racism of DEI**

Critical race theorists have been dominant in colleges and universities for years, but their impact on public policy was limited until recently. The precepts of CRT have now burst outside the universities, affecting K-12 schools, workplaces, state and federal governments, and even the military. This has sparked resistance from Americans who refuse to have their

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children indoctrinated or to submit to race-based workplace harassment.

As a new tactic against this grassroots opposition, CRT's defenders now deny that the curricula and training programs in question form part of CRT, insisting that the "diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)" programs of trainers such as Ibram X. Kendi and Robin DiAngelo are distinct from the academic work of professors such as Derrick Bell, Kimberle Crenshaw, and other CRT architects.

While there are many different CRT variations, there are bedrock features that are common to all its theorists and practitioners such as the cult of race and gender victimology, and this diversity cult is systematically destroying the social fabric of our multi-racial society, the equality of opportunity that makes that possible, and America's unifying cultural cohesion. It is worth first exploring, however, why social-justice education is an oxymoron.

This new academic state religion of DEI combines the ideology of intersectionality with strands of radical feminism, anti-imperialism, and gay and transgender activism as noted in the Howard Gold "Opinion: At America's most 'woke' colleges, extreme liberal politics fails students and free speech" Market Watch article published in January 2020:

But it's really about turning the existing power relationships on their head, so that, say, black lesbians or trans women are now at the top of the inverted pyramid and "cis" white males are at the bottom. "Toxic masculinity" and "white privilege" are the roots of all evil. The last shall be first, and the first last.

It's true that men have dominated the world and women lag behind; gay people have been persecuted, trans people continue to be targets of violence, and African-Americans and other people of color are still victims of systemic racism and discrimination in jobs, housing, and policing. But self-righteous undergraduates, backed by professors and administrators, are turning this new campus orthodoxy into a toxic stew. "Four legs good, two legs bad," the sheep brayed in *Animal Farm*. Once again, life imitates Orwell.

### **Where Did Wokeness Come From?**

Per the Theodore Kupfer "Where Did Wokeness Come From?" *City Journal* August 2022 article:

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Wokeness, most observers would agree, can be defined as the progressive worldview that views all racial and sexual disparities as proof of discrimination, and rejects liberal procedural traditions in favor of a totalizing politics that seeks to dismantle those disparities and silence dissenters.

But nobody seems to agree on where it came from.

Is wokeness an intellectual, religious, psychological, economic, legal, or institutional phenomenon? Its emergence over the last decade or so has been attributed to everything from academic intellectual trends, declining religiosity, victimhood psychology, corporate self-interest, white-collar class interests, the civil rights laws of the 1960s, and the copycat tendencies of large organizations. These all seem to have some explanatory power, but none seems on its own to account for the phenomenon fully. Let's consider each in turn.

### **Ideas have consequences**

The idealist account sees wokeness as the offspring of long-gestating intellectual trends. The specifics might vary, but the broad story tends to be the same: influential thinkers developed a critique of reason, objectivity, and neutrality that conquered the ivory tower before infecting everyone from Democratic Party politicians to the editors of *Teen Vogue*.

Whether it was Immanuel Kant, Theodor Adorno, or Jacques Derrida, some philosopher started the process by arguing that humans had insufficient grounds to believe things they once took for granted, since those beliefs were filtered—and distorted—by limited individual faculties, cultural biases, or “systems of power and hierarchies, which decide what can be known and how.”

That critical posture toward established truths challenged the foundations of Enlightenment civilization and encouraged a vision of the world as divided among “oppressed classes” and an “oppressor class.”

In an American context, the critique took various forms, with radical feminists arguing that the legal system was “a medium for making male dominance both invisible and legitimate” and critical race theorists maintaining that racism represents “the usual way [American] society does business, the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country.”

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These kinds of arguments eventually entered public debate as default explanations for inequalities in American society; American institutions came to be seen solely as vectors of subjugation.

Idealist accounts leave something important unexplained, however: How did these ideas spread?

In a review of James Lindsay and Helen Pluckrose's *Cynical Theories*, a representative idealist account, critic Park MacDougald notes that the book never explains how people came to be persuaded by fundamentally unpersuasive arguments.

"At times, Pluckrose and Lindsay write as if these theories are free-floating ideas developing according to their own internal logic. At times, they are analogized to a virus jumping the 'species gap' from academia to activism. And at times, there's no clear agent at all, as when they write that Evergreen State 'got overtaken by the ideas of critical race theory,'" MacDougald writes.

"But how does a college get overtaken by ideas? And why one set of ideas instead of another?"

The idealist account, on its own, seems unable to answer these questions.

### **Psychological accounts**

Two explanations argue that wokeness has gained traction in response to specific changes in Americans' psychology.

One posits that wokeness resembles a religion, filling a spiritual vacuum in American life. Author John McWhorter argues that "third-wave antiracism . . . has actually become a religion," complete with a clergy in the form of writers such as Ibram X. Kendi and Ta-Nehisi Coates, a creed holding that "racism is baked into the structure of society," and a creation myth involving the African slave trade.

Another sees it as a byproduct of the infantilization of young Americans by well-meaning but overprotective parents. In the best-selling *The Coddling of the American Mind*, Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt blame "safetyism"—which puts a premium on protection of feelings and punishes severely actions or words that inflict emotional harm—as a proximate cause of political strife on college campuses.



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Lukianoff and Haidt weren't offering a catch-all theory of wokeness, but their story—that an overprotective mode of parenting that took hold in the late twentieth century produced a generation of hypersensitive kids, who then entered a bureaucratized college system willing to meet their demands for “safe spaces”—is a reasonable stand-in for those who view wokeness as a form of political activism common to millennials and zoomers.

### **Still, neither theory seems dispositive**

First, pathologizing particular ideas or beliefs as the product of a specific psychological makeup is a reductive and unfalsifiable move (as with the notion, dating back to Adorno in the 1950s, that the political views of American conservatives are merely symptoms of an “authoritarian” personality type).

Neither the *religious* nor the *victimhood* argument quite succeeds on its own terms: wokeness tends to go awry not by making unverifiable supernatural claims but by making false empirical ones; and psychological changes seem insufficient to explain why woke students came to adopt an identity-based obsession with statistical disparities as opposed to, say, a militant socialist politics. And woke beliefs aren't held only by true believers or college students.

### **Incentives**

Into this breach step two materialist explanations, alleging that woke politics in the corporate environment serves the incentives of economic actors.

First is the “woke capital” thesis, which maintains that executives adopt a woke posture—moving operations out of red states, endorsing the outlandish rhetoric of diversity trainers—to make money.

- Maybe a company's endorsement of the idea that the United States is founded on the plunder of black bodies enables it to attract more talent, as it's hiring from a small pool of young people with top-notch educational credentials, whose worldview tends to be similarly woke.
- Maybe a company's declaration of a solemn commitment to social responsibility allows it to exploit a growth field, as in the creation of ESG funds by financial firms.

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- Or maybe executives are preempting a potential anti-capitalist upsurge from the political Left.

Ross Douthat argued in the *New York Times* that “corporate activism on social issues” serves to “justify the ways of C.E.O.s to cultural power brokers, so that those same power brokers will leave them alone . . . in realms that matter more to the corporate bottom line.”

Former biotech CEO Vivek Ramaswamy develops the argument in *Woke, Inc.*, offering a potted history in which corporations nervous about growing redistributionist sentiment on the left following the 2008 financial crisis struck a bargain with identity-obsessed activists, taking up their cherished claims in exchange for being left alone.

### **This, too, seems insufficient**

As Josh Barro notes, corporate employees aren’t motivated by profit alone: they might introduce politics to the workplace because of their own political views. Indeed, many high-profile instances of corporations groveling to activists and stifling internal dissent from the company line were driven from below, not above.

The ouster of Mozilla CEO Brendan Eich for his opposition to gay marriage, Google firing James Damore for his memo on innate gender differences, the *New York Times* buckling to a staff revolt over a Republican politician’s op-ed, *Bon Appetit* disbanding its video department over staff allegations of unequal pay, and the CEO of Disney attacking a Florida law on sex education in elementary schools only after a staff revolt: in all these cases, the pressure seemed to come from within the organization.

Another materialist account, the “woke labor” thesis, promises to explain such cases. In short, a glut of well-educated but insecure white-collar workers use their control over corporate resources to push a political agenda that they not only agree with but also depend upon for job security.

In *City Journal*, Malcom Kyeyune writes that America’s culture wars can be understood by examining the class interests of mid-level managers who don’t own capital but retain control over how it is deployed. What seem like earnest arguments for a company allegedly dogged by a toxic culture to submit to an audit or scale up its diversity-training initiatives actually constitute calls for a “massive expansion of managerial intermediation in previously independent social and economic processes.”

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These managers simply want to create more work for themselves (and other members of their guild). Cancellations of dissenters therefore function as labor market discipline, forcing the unwoke to exit the sector.

But how can economic incentives explain the great many cancellations that have little to do with material gain, as in hobbyist communities like knitting? These cases suggest an ideological dimension to wokeness that the materialist explanations cannot capture.

Explicit instances of coordination between corporations and activists also tend to be lacking. And, after all, woke boilerplate tends to identify capitalism as one of many interlocking systems of oppression that keep minorities down.

### **Institutional accounts**

The legalist account ties wokeness to various American civil rights laws whose vagueness, and selective enforcement, cowed organizations into compliance with an ever-expanding array of prohibitions on free speech and political disagreement in order to avoid the prospect of litigation.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 marks the beginning of this history. Its bans on discrimination according to race and gender were soon expanded by the Supreme Court to include anything that had a disparate impact on protected groups. Meantime, affirmative-action programs expanded across government and higher education, on the assumption that disparities among groups wouldn't exist absent discrimination—a central claim today.

What we think of as “political correctness” is really “a name for the cultural effect of the basic enforcement powers of civil rights law,” argues Christopher Caldwell, which enabled “government censorship . . . through a civil court system that had seen its scope and punitive capacities enhanced by civil rights law” and threatened litigation that terrified employers into “privatizing the suppression of disagreement.”

In *Inventing Equal Opportunity*, Harvard sociologist Frank Dobbin writes that the “continuing ambiguity of compliance standards led management writers to advocate permanent antidiscrimination offices to track legal shifts.” This legal enforcement mechanism explains a great deal of corporate behavior, as political scientist Richard Hanania observes: from human-resources departments that police uncouth opinions at the office to corporations suddenly declaring their support for trendy causes when the prospect of government intervention is raised.

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A rigorous thesis with much explanatory power, the legalist account nevertheless seems to leave a few things unexplained.

First, one might expect people and organizations hounded by an intrusive government apparatus to get with the program only begrudgingly, doing the bare minimum to remain in compliance. But woke organizations zealously go above and beyond what's compulsory, saying and doing things that even the vague and expanding civil rights regime doesn't require.

Second, the legal structures alleged to be the culprit for organizational wokeness have been around for decades—yet the intensity of the culture war has ramped up considerably only in the last few years.

### **To the rescue comes a sociological modification of the legalist account**

The concept of institutional isomorphism explains the maddening tendency of organizations to update their operations for the newest woke dictates, whether it's a sudden expansion of the LGBTQ+ acronym or the need to release increasingly shrill statements about racism being endemic to American life.

The sociologist Gabriel Rossman describes in *City Journal* how “organizations go beyond their core competencies to imitate market leaders and to meet the demands of their trading partners, the regulatory state, and key employees.” Institutions go woke not just because they're coerced to do so but also because peer institutions are doing it.

Meantime, as Charles Fain Lehman explains, late-twentieth-century efforts to remain in compliance with civil rights laws soon gave way to a “business case” that diversity would itself bring benefits to the corporate bottom line. “The transition from compliance to diversity marks the moment at which race-conscious corporate policy became unmoored from rational purpose and mutated into a myth,” Lehman writes, noting that the evidence underlying the business case was never strong. And once such race-conscious policies became a myth, they were free to accumulate new tenets as myths do.

### **Each explanation for wokeness's rise has gaps that invite corrections or modifications**

Left with a set of theories that don't seem to work on their own but complement each other well, one could embrace a synthesis: a perfect-storm view, in which all these different phenomena happen at once.

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Thus, a certain brand of overprotective parent raised a generation of kids susceptible, in an era of declining religiosity, to morally urgent ideologies. The theory-suffused academy was happy to supply such an ideology, which these kids took up with gusto upon arriving on campus, despite its evident shortcomings.

When they graduated and started entering the white-collar work force, litigation-averse corporations—already seasoned in adjusting their behavior to comply with civil rights laws—happily indulged the political demands of this socially engaged class of workers. And, thanks to the immense cultural power of well-educated Americans and the economic power of large companies, that ideology became increasingly visible, and eventually all but inescapable.

This multifactor explanation may strike some as overthought and extravagant, but a complex account, involving many different proximate causes, somehow fits such a nebulous, yet expansive, phenomenon as wokeness. Skeptics of wokeness tend to point to the difficulty of defining it and explaining its causes, but such imprecision would be expected if it was really a number of different but interrelated and overlapping phenomena, each with its own set of causes.

What is wokeness, or being woke? The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes it as an alertness “to racial or social discrimination and injustice,” and it’s a term progressives and liberals aspire to be—while conservatives view it as akin to a joke, and sometimes, a social evil, like cancel culture. A sapient definition could be: “At its heart, wokeness is divisive, exclusionary, and hateful. It basically gives mean people a shield to be mean and cruel, armored in false virtue,” as stated by X/Twitter CEO, Elon Musk.

### 10 – Tomorrow's Woke Free Colleges Made Possible by Today's Woke Busters



*Credit: Daniel A. Varela/Miami Herald via AP - Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signing of HB7, "individual freedom," also dubbed the "stop woke" bill on April 22, 2022..*

Enough is enough! Our colleges and universities should redeem the promise of the new academic year by reaffirming their commitments to freedom of expression. But for most it doesn't happen and the telos of truth has been replaced by social justice.

Long after alumni leave campus, they remain some of higher education's most powerful constituents. So why do we continue to faithfully donate to our favorite colleges year after year when they suppress freedom of speech, restrict academic expression, and prohibit viewpoint diversity? Or worse, perpetuate cancel culture, woke ideologies, and divisive DEI policies? Is that what you're funding?

Just how oppressive is the university environment when it comes to free expression with our woke educational institutions? More than 80% of students said they self-censor at least some of the time on campus, according to a recent survey by RealClearEducation, College Pulse, and FIRE, which covered more than 37,000 students enrolled at 159 colleges.

### Why Campuses Need a Free Speech Alumni Ambassador (FSAA) Program

Censorship in the academic community is commonplace. Students and faculty are increasingly being investigated and punished for controversial, dissenting or simply discomfoting speech. It's time for colleges and universities to take a deep breath, remember who they are and reaffirm their fundamental commitment to both free speech and freedom of expression.

#### How Do We Define Freedom of Expression?

Freedom of expression is the ability to decide for one's self what one wants to say, what one wants to believe and be able to communicate that with others. That's a very broad definition.

There are lots of ways in which we see limitations on freedom of expression that sometimes might be appropriate. But it's important to think about it broadly, to think about it as taking a lot of different forms, and to think about it specifically within the context of human beings' own ability to define for themselves what truth is.

People started saying "freedom of expression" several decades ago in part because when people would say "freedom of speech," that was mostly about actual talking and about expression of opinions. People started moving towards the term "freedom of expression" because it became very clear that acknowledging the expressive element of what you wear, what signs you carry, what arm bands you wear was a way of making the point that a lot of what we think the founders would've thought of as freedom of speech is much broader than just spoken words.

The **Free Speech Alumni Ambassador (FSAA) Program** helps create faculty and administrative positions, throughout America's predominantly liberally staffed college campuses, that can serve as much needed conservative club advisors—because conservative students are facing many obstacles when they attempt to start and charter a right-leaning student organization on campus due to faculty members fearful of losing their jobs or tenure for becoming these organization's advisors.

As campuses grow more hostile to free expression, it seems more apparent that it may be up to alumni to tip the scales in favor of individual rights. Long after alumni leave campus, they remain some of higher education's

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most powerful constituents. Now, with help from the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) and the newly launched Alumni Free Speech Alliance (AFSA), they are beginning to rise up on behalf of free speech.

The FIRE is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to defending and sustaining the individual rights of students and faculty members at America's colleges and universities. These rights include freedom of speech, freedom of association, due process, legal equality, religious liberty, and sanctity of conscience — the essential qualities of liberty.

The AFSA, composed of five independent alumni groups from top institutions, seeks to “encourage the creation of alumni free speech groups for other colleges and universities,” provide the “tools to help new alumni groups organize,” and support “free speech and academic freedom.” These groups will pool resources and mentor emerging alumni groups at other schools as they seek to establish themselves.

A key component to ensuring this happens is by developing and funding a FSAA Program at all educational institutions.

### **Alumni Are the Key**

The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) has been working with AFSA and many of the member groups over the past few months and is proud to partner with them to give alumni a real, independent voice for free speech on their campuses.

Per the “Alumni Take Up the Fight for Free Speech—and You Can Help!” Connor Murnane FIRE October 21, 2021 report: American universities routinely rely on their graduates for everything from word-of-mouth endorsements to checks that support the endowment. And yet even with confidence in higher education falling, year after year, alumni have been more than willing to give back.

A Council for Advancement and Support of Education report published in 2020 found that alumni contributed more than \$11 billion to their alma maters in 2019. Alumni generosity not only helps keep colleges afloat, but also influences universities' placement in the *U.S. News and World Report's* annual college rankings — an important metric for university administrators and incoming students. Alumni have the opportunity to



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leverage this influence to ensure their schools uphold their obligations to the highest principles of free speech and academic freedom.

The fight to stem the tide of illiberalism on campus must be fought at every level. As the AFSA notes, “opponents of free speech and academic freedom are well-organized.” More than that — they’re institutionalized. It is time for the alumni proponents of free speech to organize as well and begin demanding these few, simple solutions that will build a culture of free expression on campus:

1. Demand your institution live up to its First Amendment obligations or commitments to free expression. Insist your institution’s administration review campus policies and reform policies that restrict speech in ways that satisfy various campus missions while also respecting the individual rights of students and faculty.
2. Advocate for the adoption of the Chicago Statement on Freedom of Expression. When students see the leaders of their schools publicly pledge to protect free expression, they feel more secure to speak their minds. That also sets an important expectation for prospective students: Come to campus ready to participate in a free exchange of ideas. For more info on the Chicago Statement on Freedom of Expression please read further.
3. Insist your alma mater instills values of free expression from day one. It is clear that colleges cannot expect students to arrive on campus with knowledge about the importance of free speech and academic freedom, and this is leading to a profound mismatch between some students’ expectations and the reality of a liberal education. FIRE’s Freshmen Orientation Program consists of a series of modules that provide colleges with the materials necessary to teach the importance of free speech and academic freedom, which they may freely use and adapt to their own needs.
4. Insist your alma mater collect serious data on campus censorship and openness toward free expression. Every institution of higher education should remain vigilant about potential threats to free speech and gather information about its campus climate instead of simply claiming, “Other schools are like that, but not mine!” A transparent survey of a large proportion of the campus community can provide vital information that would allow administrators to

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make informed decisions. If done annually, it could be used to judge yearly progress toward a free and open campus climate.

5. Stop writing blank checks. Alumni must begin focusing their financial investments in their alma maters toward liberty-oriented initiatives that will benefit the state of free speech on campus. Donations can have a much greater impact on the campus climate if they are earmarked toward scholarships, speaker series, independent academic programs, student groups, or other, non-general fund programs that encourage open dialogue and debate.
6. And finally, create a full time Free Speech Alumni Ambassador (FSAA) Program or Alumni Free Speech Alliance (AFSA) group. Both can advocate, facilitate, and manage a campuses commitment to freedom of speech and expression as well as ensure conservative campus organizations can be chartered on campus knowing they can partner with an advisor who will meet the college's minimum requirements for becoming an approved organization on campus.

Without dedicated FSAA personnel on campus and an AFSA group to champion a university's commitment to freedom of speech and expression, the counter prevailing forces will return the status quo orthodoxy and business as usual to the detriment of the marketplace of ideas, viewpoint diversity, intellectual humility, and the pursuit of free speech and freedom of expression.

### **Mission and Vision Statements**

Create an alumni driven AFSA group and alumni association approved FSAA Program throughout America's college campuses to ensure that all educational institutions live up to their obligation of free speech and freedom of expression—for all.

Fulfill a university's commitment to freedom of speech and expression so that all campus organizations, regardless of their ideology, can partner with a campus advisor, and flourish and prosper—safe in their first amendment rights—united in their pursuit of the telos of truth.

### **Starting a Free Speech Alumni Ambassador (FSAA) Program on Campus**

Because conservative students are facing many obstacles when they attempt to start and charter a right-leaning student organization on campus due to faculty members fearful of losing their jobs or tenure for becoming these organization's advisors—the Free Speech Alumni Ambassador (FSAA) Program was started to help create faculty positions at America's predominantly liberally staffed college campuses, that can serve as much needed conservative club advisors.

The population served by the Free Speech Alumni Ambassador (FSAA) Program are students, faculty, alumni, and trustees and the program intends to solicit funding, if available, to staff an independent Free Speech Alumni Ambassador to help ensure that free speech, viewpoint diversity, intellectual humility, and critical thinking (sapience) are protected on campus.

Per Corey Lee Wilson, CEO of the S.A.P.I.E.N.T. Being, the FSAA Program is currently in the process of requesting from American colleges and universities that the FSAA Program be announced, and recorded in the meeting minutes, at their next student government meeting for consideration and implementation on their campus.

For a brief introduction to the FSAA Program, please check out the Executive Summary below.

#### **Free Speech Alumni Ambassador (FSAA) Program**

Higher education is approaching an existential crisis. It is in danger of rejecting its most fundamental value, the search for truth, and replacing it with political dogma and opportunistic careerism. Other problems abound, but none so serious as this one.

In a well-run higher education system based on the honest pursuit of truth, the marketplace of ideas would permit critics to attack, refute, and even satirize such ideas.

The worst theories would be prevented from gaining even a tiny foothold; the rest would be condemned to some musty little corner while more reasoned ideas displaced them. But that is not the case; the free market of ideas is broken, replaced by a one-sided, dogmatic consensus.

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In much of the humanities and social sciences, political dogma has already replaced objective inquiry. In some schools of education, for example, science is considered dependent upon the background of the individual instead of having universal principles for all, with indigenous myths considered equal to rigorous research methods.

### **How Can This Be Happening In Plain Sight, Without Spurring A Massive Campaign For Reform?**

It's been evident for some time now throughout America's public and private educational institutions, that academia no longer promotes a culture that inspires courageous collaborations, free speech, and free expression, allows people to peacefully exchange ideas and meaningfully engage with people who have differing views. Nor does it place telos (truth), logic, and critical thinking over ideological and social justice initiatives.

Two conditions are needed to effect large-scale reforms in academia to address these problems:

- A hierarchical, top- down system of governance that can enact sweeping changes.
- And for that system to be controlled or heavily influenced by those outside the system.

These are two of three objectives of the Free Speech Alumni Ambassador (FSAA) Program.

### **Bolstering the Board: Trustees and Alumni Are Academia's Best Hope for Reform**

In congruence with the Free Speech & Peace Research Grant's goal of embracing differences, the FSAA Program's alumni ambassadors and their trustee constituents can lead the way towards new ideas and innovations that improve campus governance in regards to protecting freedom of speech and expression, reevaluating existing ideological orthodoxy, as well as enlightening academia, administrators, and students to alternate points of view throughout the marketplace of ideas.

Strong board governance provides immediate remedies for all these illiberal and irrational conditions. Most university boards, especially the public ones, were created by charters or statutes that placed the board

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fully in charge, and, remarkably, the boards legally retain much of their power. And yet, because of a variety of pressures and distortion, most boards have relinquished their rightful positions atop college and university governance.

Nonetheless, it may be that much of higher education is beyond reform. Having the will to reform is imperative; without that, nothing will drive change. Most elite private schools appear to have reached the point of no return. They are insulated from change by large endowments, tradition, and terminal groupthink; the politicization has metastasized, and only some unforeseen act of creative destruction will cause a reversal.

In such a scenario, the first place to look at the root of the problem is governance policies and practices. An examination of such practices reveals a system of “shared governance” that is guaranteed to prevent bold leadership at the top. Furthermore, shared governance and other academic cultural practices that give authority to mid-level individual employees and other bureaucrats prevent almost any attempt to right the ship of institutional state.

### **Reform Cannot Be Expected To Happen In A Broad-Based, Organic Fashion From Within**

The incentives are such that those who see the need for reform put their careers in peril for speaking out. The psychological phenomenon known as “groupthink” is creating a dangerous uniformity in many departments and disciplines.

The reason is that the governance of academia has become almost terminally sclerotic and self-interested; academic leaders simply cannot, or will not, respond to these destructive trends. The results are appalling—but it doesn’t have to be this way.

To help return governing to the board, the FSAA Program is intended to operate on two levels. One is to make the case for stronger board control. Such a hierarchical system, rather than the distributed shared governance system that exists now, is necessary to effect large-scale reform.

The FSAA Program also works on a more immediate, pragmatic level, providing proven solutions like adopting the Chicago Principles that can be implemented bilaterally to begin the process of reforming governance that effects freedom of speech and expression. In most situations, boards still

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have extensive legal authority, they merely need to exercise their existing authority, to put the brakes on many of academia's free speech suppression.

### **Educating Students About the Value of Free Expression, Open Inquiry, And Civil Discourse**

Furthermore, as a third objective of the FSAA Program, there needs to be sustainable and ongoing undergraduate programming that models civil discourse, open inquiry, and educates students about the value of free expression. Indeed, in many departments on many campuses—the spirit of free and open inquiry is under attack.

Irrational theories, such as the belief that race and gender are mere social constructs, are proliferating. Political correctness and corporate and government money are distorting scientific exploration.

Many departments are dominated by adherents of fundamentally flawed philosophies, such as post-modernism or today's progressivism. Disturbed or hostile individuals are routinely hired, while conservative scholars “need not apply” to many departments.

On occasion, even political liberals who express moderate views in public are hounded out of their jobs.

All of this needs to stop before it is too late to enact much needed changes.

### **Additional Information and FSAA Program Handbook**

For a deeper dive into our FSAA Program, the S.A.P.I.E.N.T. Being has published a 60-page handbook that can be accessed online at <https://www.sapientbeing.org/programs>. For immediate questions and requests for additional information, please contact Corey Lee Wilson by phone at (951) 638-5562 or email him at [sapientbeing@att.net](mailto:sapientbeing@att.net) and he'll get right back to you.

Regarding the Society Advancing Personal Intelligence & Enlightenment Now Together (S.A.P.I.E.N.T.) Being; it was founded in 2019 as an educational 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization and non-political think tank, EIN 83-3685019, has a GuideStar Silver Rating, an active Board of Directors, and a website at [www.sapientbeing.org](http://www.sapientbeing.org).

### College of the Future

The University of Austin (UATX) is happening—and it will help rescue American higher education as announced in the Jacob Howland “College of the Future” *City Journal* Winter 2023 article:

By almost any measure, colleges and universities are failing students—and the country. They provide an increasingly inferior product at an increasingly exorbitant cost. It’s a joke that many universities have more administrators than undergraduates. It’s a huge problem that only a third of all college students expect that they will be prepared to enter the workforce when they graduate, and that employers nevertheless believe that recent graduates vastly overrate their competencies. It’s a scandal that fewer than 60 percent of students who enroll in a four-year college graduate after six years, and that many of these—not to mention those who do obtain a degree—leave with crippling debt. But the failure of our universities imperils more than the economy. It has damaged our essential institutions and has begun to erode the foundations of civilization itself.

Education joins what would otherwise be separated, enlarging the realm and enriching the comprehension of human experience. It works in multiple dimensions, linking past and future, time and eternity, and the individual with society and the world. The person mired in ignorance is disconnected from what is before and after, above and below, and from his neighbor on either side, like a point frozen at Cartesian coordinates (0,0,0). This is the situation of the prisoners in Plato’s Cave, who, in their media-saturated ignorance, are chained by the neck so that they can see nothing of themselves or their neighbors and nothing above or behind them—nothing but shadows that flash before their eyes.

The backbone of civilization links the discernible past with the uncharted future. But the civilizational spine that gives form and spiritual firmness to a nascent age does not grow spontaneously. It is generated and regenerated by education, which preserves and transmits the hard-won inheritance of tradition and culture. In receiving this multifaceted inheritance, we come to appreciate the necessary conditions of peaceful order and human flourishing. And in encountering the best—and honestly acknowledging and wrestling with the worst—that has been thought and said and done, we learn to look up and around: to search out timeless truth and transcendent being and to attend to our neighbors. Thus enlarged, we may at last become capable, as John Henry Newman wrote in *The Idea of a*

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*University*, of forming an “instinctive just estimate of things as they pass before us.”

The word “education” comes from the Latin *educare*, “to lead out” or “to bring up.” Many American colleges and universities, however, approach education in ways that effectively keep students down. They teach them that our aspirations for truth, beauty, and goodness have been mere projections of the lowest instincts: instruments of domination and servitude, power, and systemic injustice—as though there were nothing beyond the rigged game of the Cave, where a few puppeteers keep multitudes of oppressed peoples in the dark. That teaching would be unobjectionable, were the voices opposing such reductivism as audible on campus as those advancing it. But they are not.

**What is strange is that many professors accept the puppeteers’ terms, even as they rail against them.**

They act as if their job were to reverse the expansion of mind and heart that education is meant to accomplish—to turn poetry into jargon, music into discord, and wine into water. For everything appears small and flat and gray in the dim light of cultural repudiation. Heroic greatness of soul is reduced to toxic masculinity. Beauty is understood to be a construction of whiteness, and mathematics, the glory of pure intellect, an instrument of cultural subjugation. Intellectual humility and interpretive charity, tried-and-true gateways to surpassing wonders, are in many universities as dispensable as ancient languages are for classics majors at Princeton, or Chaucer and Shakespeare for English majors at Yale.

This is not all. In Plato’s Cave image, the would-be educator receives no hearing. He confronts a chorus of hostility and derision and is accused of corrupting souls. Similarly, speakers, professors, and students who challenge political and intellectual orthodoxy in our universities—generally advancing views, incidentally, that most Americans find uncontroversial—are regularly disinvited, slandered, and sometimes fired simply because of the opinions they hold, the questions they ask, or the arguments they make. Little wonder that more than 80 percent of college students report self-censoring.

In brief, a crisis of illiberalism engulfs American higher education. Wherever the free exchange of ideas is discouraged, wherever intellectual pluralism is suppressed, the pursuit of truth is crippled and thought deformed. But it’s not just students who are shortchanged. Life in general



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becomes more solitary, impoverished, and brutish. These are symptoms of incipient societal osteoporosis, which, in the worst case, culminates in fractures of the civilizational backbone.

This is what happened during the French Revolution, when the National Assembly reset the calendar to the Year One, and in Cambodia, where the Khmer Rouge, not to be outdone in cultural repudiation, began at Year Zero. At such times, thought and imagination shrivel, like a plant cut off at the root. Neighbor turns against neighbor, and individuals, overcome by anxiety and depression, turn against themselves. And while ideological tyranny and societal collapse may seem like remote possibilities in the United States, too much of our common life looks like what historian Niall Ferguson calls Totalitarianism Lite.

To be clear, the picture I've just sketched reflects my own views. My colleagues at UATX, commonly known as the University of Austin, would doubtless describe things differently, though I wouldn't be surprised if most agreed with much of what I've said. In any case, we are united in our belief that higher education needs radical reform and that the best way forward is to start a new university.

Let me say something about who we are, what new ideas we plan to implement, and why I think we can have a major impact on higher education.

Our guiding principles are few but firm. We have faith in the process of liberal education—in the capacity of individuals to discover truth and attain freedom through the unfettered examination and open discussion of fundamental human questions. We are committed to high standards of academic rigor. We believe that students can learn, and professors can teach, only if they are free to ask questions and share opinions without fear. We are committed to freedom of inquiry, freedom of conscience, and civil discourse, without which truth is eclipsed and education decays into indoctrination.

Free and open debate, however, is not a sufficient condition of teaching and learning. We are guided by a robust conception of human flourishing. We believe that a rigorous education reveals the basic stuff of our being and equips us to pursue what we love and do well. We seek to cultivate excellence as the condition of meaningful freedom: the power to do good, honor truth, and nurture beauty.

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We want our students to understand the foundations and blessings of civilization and political life, to grasp the importance of law, virtue, order, beauty, meaningful work and leisure, and the sacred. We want them to appreciate the unique vibrancy of the American form of government and way of life. We want them to become conversant in the various languages of understanding and to learn to advance ideas and arguments logically and lucidly in speech and writing. We especially want them to develop prudence, which requires seeing things whole, making connections, and sorting signal from noise across multiple domains of experience.

**We believe that politics should be a subject of study in a university, not its operating system.**

We reject partisan politics and the ideological invasion of the classroom and the laboratory. As an institution, we will not publicly endorse or promote political positions.

Students need a dedicated space in which to grow and ripen. They need to be disentangled from the urgencies of the here and now. We therefore embrace the idea of the university as a tower—not of ivory but of glass. From within the tower, it must be possible to observe and reflect on society; and from without, to see what goes on inside it. Radical transparency, not a value of most universities, is essential to everything we do.

UATX aspires to revitalize American higher education as a steward of tradition and an engine of innovation. This combination, which recalls the Roman god Janus, who looks backward and forward simultaneously, makes for a creative tension. Tradition without innovation tends toward sterility; soil is fertile only to the extent that it is enriched by the decayed residue of new growths. Innovation without tradition is blind; it tends to repeat the mistakes of the past while falling short of its successes.

A UATX degree will not, at first, have the cachet of an Ivy League school. But “we don’t sell credential, we develop potential,” as our founding president, Pano Kanelos, recently remarked. And we propose to offer a genuinely liberal and liberating education at half the cost of elite colleges and universities. How?

First, we will have a low administrative footprint and guard against administrative bloat. We will outsource as many tasks as possible to private entities and individuals. Higher-level on-campus administrative positions,

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like head librarian or registrar, will, as far as possible, be filled by Ph.D.s competent to teach in our academic programs. We will forgo the usual Club-Med student amenities. We won't have expensive intercollegiate athletics. We are researching ways to introduce economic efficiencies into administration, such as giving academic units direct control over and responsibility for their budgets.

**“In a university, all contested questions deserve a hearing. If students read Hayek, they should read Marx.”**

We will channel the money we save on administration and nonacademic amenities toward instruction. These cost-saving measures will strengthen our academic programs and help us attract good students. Financially unstable universities inevitably erode academically. They chase income wherever they can find it, regardless of academic quality, and replace seasoned professors with poorly paid and overworked adjuncts.

We care about academic freedom and have taken steps to preserve it. To begin with, we will not offer tenure. Tenure is supposed to protect academic freedom, but today it has paradoxically led to narrowing the confines of acceptable opinion and has encouraged political conformity. In the humanities and social sciences, as several surveys have shown, self-identified liberals outnumber conservatives 12 to one and are far less open to opposing political viewpoints than the general public. What is more, universities increasingly require Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion oaths for tenure-track jobs and tenure in all academic fields, including those in STEM. For these reasons, conservatives are unlikely to be hired and even less likely to receive tenure.

We find this undesirable not because we are an institution of the Right. We are not. We are trans-political. It is because, in a university, all sides of every contested question deserve a hearing. If students read Friedrich Hayek, they should read Karl Marx—and vice versa. We propose to advance intellectual pluralism and avoid ideological sclerosis by offering graduated-term contracts with specifiable deliverables. To reward those willing to risk working without the protection of tenure, we will have low course loads and pay extremely competitive salaries. And if issues of academic freedom do arise, we plan to submit them to an Academic Freedom Review Board external to the university, with whose judgment we are pledged to abide.

**What about our curriculum?**

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We begin with Intellectual Foundations (IF), a core liberal arts program required of all undergraduates in their first two years. IF seminars, complemented by common lectures that draw connections across different courses, will emphasize writing and discussion. Courses include “Chaos and Civilization”; “Knowing, Doing, Making, Wisdom”; “Writing and the English Language”; “Quantitative Reasoning I and II”; “The Beginning of Politics”; “Christianity and Islam, Europe and the East”; “Intellectual Foundations of Economics”; “Modernity and the West”; “Work, Leisure, and the Good Life”; “The Uses and Abuses of Technology”; “The American Experiment I and II”; “The Sublime and the Beautiful”; “Ideological Experiments of the Twentieth Century”; and “Mortality and Meaning, God and Suffering.” Readings range from Homer, Euclid, Genesis, the Gospel of John, Ibn Tufayl, and Confucius to Descartes, Tocqueville, Orwell, Frederick Douglass, and Flannery O’Connor.

By the time students enter their junior year, they will have several intellectual Velcro hooks with which they can grab on to any new subject. That will be crucial as they enter one of our Centers of Inquiry—Arts and Letters; Politics, Economics and History; Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics; Education and Public Service—and begin to concentrate on another distinctive element of our curriculum, the Polaris Projects. These projects involve doing, making, building, or discovering something of general benefit. Like the North Star, they are meant to orient a student’s education and give it an overall trajectory. Polaris Projects can be creative, scholarly, technical, artistic, philanthropic, entrepreneurial—the list is not exhaustive. But all will involve connecting with people and employing resources outside the university.

Our students may not always bring these projects to fruition. But the process of seeing a human need, drafting plans, formulating and reformulating goals and means, researching and experimenting, and trying and failing will prepare them to be thoughtful innovators and builders. It will teach them how to work cooperatively; how to research precedents and identify best practices; how to form and leverage connections; and how to plan, execute, assess, and publicly present their own work. It will prepare them for life.

**I believe that UATX will help rescue American higher education for two reasons.**

First, we will succeed. The demand for authentic education far exceeds the supply. We proved that with our Forbidden Courses program this past

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June, which attracted exceptionally capable and broad-minded students to study subjects like religion, feminism, capitalism, and ideology with cultural and intellectual leaders like Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Niall Ferguson, and Deirdre McCloskey. Our students wrote widely circulated and laudatory articles about their experience. Forbidden Courses alumni spontaneously formed a Student Advisory Board for UATX and held elections for officers.

Our outstanding team of trustees and advisors includes leaders in politics, business, culture, the arts, and the academy. We have received more than 5,000 job inquiries from professors and thousands of inquiries from students. And fund-raising is going extremely well. In the first ten months after the public announcement of UATX, we gained more than 1,500 individual donors, more than 60 of whom made gifts of six, seven, or eight figures, and we're on track to hit our capital campaign target a year early. This is really happening.

Second, success breeds imitation. UATX will still be in the process of acquiring accreditation when our initial class of undergraduate students graduates (this is, in fact, how the process works). These first students will be risk-takers who want an education more than a credential. These are the kinds of people who become innovators and builders. They will make their mark in many fields, including the rapidly changing arena of education—and when they do, the world will take notice.

Infectious excitement is a natural consequence of intellectual invigoration. "You've given us a sense of hope," one Forbidden Courses alum wrote, "and that hope and incredible vision has spread all the way to Dublin, Ireland, where I applied from." Another called UATX "one of the most exciting developments in American education and intellectual life," while a third wrote that "UATX has renewed my faith in the future of academia." I have no doubt that our example will encourage a new generation of educational entrepreneurs to found colleges and universities worthy of such hope and faith: places where teaching and learning will again flourish.

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## Appendix

**Abolish DEI Bureaucracies and Restore Colorblind Equality in Public Universities – Manhattan Institute:** <https://manhattan.institute/article/abolish-dei-bureaucracies-and-restore-colorblind-equality-in-public-universities>

**Alumni Free Speech Alliance (AFSA) members:**

- Bucknell: [Open Discourse Coalition](#)
- Cornell: [Cornell Free Speech Alliance](#)
- Davidson: [Davidsonians for Freedom of Thought & Discourse](#)
- Harvard: [Harvard Alumni for Free Speech](#)
- Lafayette: [Alumni/Alumnae Coalition for Lafayette](#)
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology: [MIT Free Speech Alliance](#)
- Princeton: [Princetonians for Free Speech](#)
- University of North Carolina: [UNC Free Speech Alliance](#)
- University of Virginia: [The Jefferson Council](#)
- Virginia Military Institute: [The Spirit of VMI](#)
- Washington & Lee: [The Generals Redoubt](#)
- Wofford: [Alumni for the Wofford Way](#)
- Yale: [Fight for Yale's Future](#)

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## Author Bio



*Corey Lee Wilson*

Corey Lee Wilson was raised an atheist by his liberal *Playboy* Bunny mother, has three Anglo-Hispanic siblings, a bi-racial daughter, a brother who died of AIDS, baptized a Protestant by his conservative grandparents, attended temple with his Jewish foster parents, baptized again as a Catholic for his first Filipina wife, attends Buddhist ceremonies with his second Thai wife, became an agnostic on his own free will for most of his life, and is a lifetime independent voter.

Corey felt the sting of intellectual humility by repeating the 4th grade and attended eighteen different schools (17 in California and one in the Bahamas) before putting himself through college (without parents) at Mt. San Antonio College and Cal Poly Pomona University (while on triple secret probation).

Named Who's Who of American College Students in 1984, he received a BS in Economics (summa cum laude) and won his fraternity's most prestigious undergraduate honor, the Phi Kappa Tau Fraternity's Shideler Award, both in 1985. In 2020, he became a member of the Heterodox Academy, in 2021 a member of the National Association of Scholars and 1776 Unites, and in 2023 became a member of Moms for Liberty.

As a satirist and fraternity man, Corey started Fratire Publishing in 2012 and transformed the fiction "fratire" genre to a respectable and viewpoint diverse non-

## Woke Free Campus Guide

fiction genre promoting practical knowledge and wisdom to help everyday people navigate safely through the many hazards of life. In 2019, he founded the S.A.P.I.E.N.T. Being to help promote freedom of speech, viewpoint diversity, intellectual humility and most importantly advance sapience in America's students and campuses.

Some readers might be prone to ask why would someone raised as a wild-hippy-gypsy child of the Sixties take the conservative path and champion conservative causes?

Quick answer: In this day and age it's the reasonable, logical, and sapient thing to do. By comparison, there is nothing "sapient" about the Progressivism movement and the woke madness that follows it throughout our educational systems.

Furthermore, to quote Ronald Reagan, "There's a flickering spark in us all which, if struck at just the right age, can light the rest of our lives." His spark was ignited in college when he experienced first-hand in the early Eighties the growing illiberalism at his college newspaper and its persistent bias against conservatives, Christians, and President Reagan.

Hopefully, this *Woke Free Campus Guide* will do the same to spark your inspiration to help undue the societal destruction of DEI and the leftist woke madness that follows on your campus. Better yet, use this sapient guidebook to champion and craft your own anti-wokeness platform and winning strategy for campus student government elections.

Guidebook Format Options:

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# Woke Free Campus Guide for Students, Faculty & Alumni

The SAPIENT Being LLC is an educational non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization and think tank promoting these three programs:

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### VISION STATEMENT

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As extensively documented, our universities have been swept up into a new cultural movement, the so-called “social justice” movement, a key component of wokeness.

“Social justice” ideology is based on the Marxist vision that the world is divided into oppressor classes and oppressed classes as noted in the Minding the Campus article “What Happened to Our Universities?” by Philip Carl Salzman, in October 2018 and is from their Free Speech in Peril collection.

Unlike classical Marxism that divides the world into a bourgeois oppressor class and a proletarian oppressed class—that is capitalists oppressing workers—neo-Marxist “social justice” theory divides the world into gender, racial, sexual, and religious classes: male oppressors and female victims; white oppressors and people of color victims; heterosexual oppressors and gay, lesbian, transsexual, etc. etc. victims; Christian and Jewish oppressors and Muslim victims.

“Social justice” ideology leads to the rejection of oppressive institutions such as capitalism and Western Civilization. Universalistic criteria such as merit, achievement, and excellence are rejected today in universities and beyond because they allegedly disadvantage members of victim categories.

Preferential measures on behalf of victims have been adopted as the overriding and primary purpose of universities today. Course topics, course substance, course references, recruitment of students, provision of special facilities and events for “victim” categories, hiring of academic and administrative staff, all are aimed to benefit members of “victim” categories and to exclude and marginalize members of “oppressor” categories.

Sociology, anthropology, political science, English, history, women’s and gender studies, black studies, social work, education, and law have all jettisoned their traditional fields of study to become “social justice” subjects, vilifying men, whites, heterosexuals, the West, capitalism, and advocating for women, people of color, gays etc., and Muslims.

How did all of this happen? What brought about this almost universal change in institutions of “higher learning”? Find out in this provocative campus guidebook *Woke Free Campus Guide for Students, Faculty & Alumni: Establishing a “Woke Free” Environment on Campus by Abolishing DEI Bureaucracies and Restoring Equality (NOT Equity) in America’s Universities.*

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