

# Federal Court Blocks Trump Effort to Pressure UC System into Political Compliance

[HOME](#) /

## FEDERAL COURT BLOCKS TRUMP EFFORT TO PRESSURE UC SYSTEM INTO POLITICAL COMPLIANCE

In a major ruling issued on November 14, 2025, a federal court in the Northern District of California granted a [preliminary injunction](#) against the Trump administration's campaign to coerce the University of California into ideological conformity—a move that the court recognized as a grave threat to academic freedom and free speech. The plaintiffs, led by the AAUP alongside a broad coalition of faculty, staff, students, and labor unions, challenged the Trump administration's cancellation of nearly \$600 million in federal research grants to UCLA and its demand that UCLA adopt the administration's positions on DEI, gender identity, and campus protests. In agreement with the plaintiffs, the court held that the defendants



From [the opening of its decision](#), the court recognized the Trump administration's strategy against the UC as part of a larger playbook of undermining free speech and academic freedom across higher education broadly:

The Administration and its executive agencies are engaged in a concerted campaign to purge “woke,” “left,” and “socialist” viewpoints from our country's leading universities. Agency officials, as well as the President and Vice President, have repeatedly and publicly announced a playbook of initiating civil rights investigations of preeminent universities to justify cutting off federal funding, with the goal of bringing universities to their knees and forcing them to change their ideological tune.

This campaign culminated in the administration cutting off almost \$600 million in grants to UCLA. The administration then demanded that the UC system submit to federal monitoring of hiring, curriculum, and admissions, in addition to significant restrictions on campus protests and DEI efforts, in return for restoration of the grants. Judge Lin emphasized the impact of these funding cuts on public health:

UC medical centers provide care to millions of Californians annually, including 10.8 million outpatient visits, 1.32 million inpatient days, and 474,000 emergency room visits, at a net

community benefit of \$2 billion.

Federal funding is undisputedly crucial to the viability of these endeavors: Across all programs, the UC receives around \$17 billion in federal funding annually. UC researchers rely on over \$5 billion in federal research grants across thousands of distinct awards, accounting for more than half of all UC research awards in fiscal year 2024.

In their complaint, the plaintiffs raised several constitutional and administrative law arguments that the court found persuasive. First, they argued that the administration engaged in unlawful coercion and retaliation in violation of the First Amendment, chilling speech and expression throughout the UC system. Judge Lin agreed:

Plaintiffs' harm is already very real. With every day that passes, UCLA continues to be denied the chance to win new grants, ratchetting up Defendants' pressure campaign. And numerous UC faculty and staff have submitted declarations describing how **Defendants' actions have already chilled speech throughout the UC system.** They describe how they have **stopped teaching or researching topics they are afraid are too "left" or "woke," in order to avoid triggering further funding cancellations by Defendants.**

As in the Harvard decision, the court rejected the administration's argument that it singled out UCLA in order to address antisemitism:

The record shows that Defendants engaged in a concerted policy to use allegations of antisemitism to justify funding cancellations, when their intent is to coerce universities into purging disfavored "left" and "woke" viewpoints from their campuses and replace them with views that the Administration favors.

Next, the court agreed with the plaintiffs' argument that the administration exceeded constitutional limits under Tenth Amendment, part of which governs the contours of federal authority over state spending, by threatening to cancel vast amounts of state university funding for reasons unrelated to the terms of the original federal grants. The court noted that many new demands—such as banning foreign students engaged in "anti-Western" disruptions or requiring cooperation agreements with local police—were new and unenforceable.

Having found that the administration's coercive playbook violated the Constitution and federal law, the court ordered "preliminary injunctive relief to address plaintiffs' irreparable harm and to restore the status quo." The injunction prohibits the Trump administration from refusing to grant, freezing, withholding, or otherwise conditioning federal funds based on the University of California's compliance with the administration's ideological agenda. It also specifically stopped the administration from blocking funds based on bogus allegations of antidiscrimination or antisemitism on any campus.

This decision delivers a serious blow to the Trump administration's plan to exert ideological control over US campuses. While the injunction does not yet resolve the entire case, it blocks the most coercive elements of the Administration's playbook as the case proceeds on the merits.

# Join the AAUP

Help protect quality higher education and shape the future of our profession.

**JOIN NOW**

---

American Association of University Professors  
555 New Jersey Ave NW, Suite 600  
Washington, DC 20001

Phone: 202-737-5900  
Email: [aaup@aaup.org](mailto:aaup@aaup.org)

**AAUP FOUNDATION**

## Sign Up for Updates

**Email \***

**GET AAUP NEWS**

Not in US?

**Quick Navigation**

American Association of University Professors © 2025 Privacy Policy & Terms of Use