

A Perfect Storm Threatens Universities

By Victor Davis Hanson

Have you noticed the dilemma that higher education is in? Recently, the Trump administration cut off \$400 million in federal grants and aids to Columbia University for its inability to stop rampant, overt, and [shameless antisemitism](#) on the campus.



It's widespread in higher education and the country's been appalled by it. But for some reason, higher education seems to equate Jewish Americans and, by definition, Israel

with the white oppressor side of their Marxist binary, which is non-white oppressed versus white oppressor.

What I'm getting at is, it's almost as if people who chase Jewish students down, scream at them, yell antisemitic epithets, disrupt their classes have a free pass because they're self-described [diversity, equity, inclusion](#) students.

There's other things that are going on that are even more serious, though. For a long time, the university has decided that it will make no more pretense that it's disinterested. It's partisan, and it's political, and it's left-wing, and it's proud of it.

We can see that in the way that speakers are treated at campus. If you go to a campus as an invited speaker and you speak in any fashion to express doubts about abortion on

demand, transgenderism in general, [Green New Deal](#), unlimited support for the Ukraine war, you may find yourself the object of student disruptions.

We've had one, recently, at Stanford University. We've had the law school disrupted by students who tried to shout down a federal judge. But that's not unique. It's everywhere.

The university also believes that it's not subject to the 1964 and 1965 civil rights statutes. By that I mean, they have instituted racial, gender, and sexual orientation bias in admissions, promotions, hiring.

It's worse even than that. Theme houses—that's the word they use for racially segregated dorms. Safe spaces—that's the word they use for racially set aside zones on campus for particular people of a particular race.

In addition to all of that, there is no protection for anybody, really, to tell you the truth, especially on an elitist campus. If you're accused of a crime, especially sexual assault, sexual harassment, there's no guarantee that you will be accorded protections under the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Amendments.

All of this is starting to change. We're in a perfect storm, as far as [higher education](#). There are fewer students because of declining fertility. Our fertility rate is 1.6 nationwide.

More importantly, people are questioning the value of a higher education degree. With the onset of diversity, equity, and inclusion therapeutic classes, the old reason to go to the university—to be roundly and disinterestedly educated—disappeared.

So, students did not get formal instruction in analytics, in English composition, in spoken and written fluency in English, etc., common historical knowledge, math and science literacy. And employers are starting to know it. They're starting to see

that, if they're going to hire someone from Harvard, Princeton, Yale, or Stanford versus Texas Tech or SMU or Georgia Tech, they're not going to be better prepared. They're probably going to be less well prepared. And they're probably going to go to human resources on the first day of the job.

I'm exaggerating but you can see what I'm saying.

But there are other forces that don't look good for higher education besides fertility and the questioning among the American people of the quality and value of a bachelor's degree from our elite institutions. We're \$1.7 trillion in student debt. And the Trump administration is looking at this. And there are certain recommendations on the horizons, as we speak, the university is not prepared for.

No. 1, the House and the Senate are trying to adjudicate how much they should tax the multimillion-dollar income on many of these multibillion-dollar endowments. It could be 15% to 20%.

We've mentioned cutting off federal funds for two universities that do not protect their Jewish students.

There's also another factor going on and that is National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health grants. The federal government is now saying, "Don't charge us an overhead of 60%, 50%, 40%. You universities don't do that with the Gates Foundation grants or other private sector grants. From now on, you're not gonna charge more than a 15% overhead."

And when you add that radical reduction in surcharges to a possible and likely tax on endowment income, the universities, in many cases, the most prestigious and wealthy, may be looking at \$300, \$400, \$500 million shortfalls in their annual operating budget, besides any punitive action that the federal government exercises because of their unwillingness or inability to protect Jewish students.

Do we see any reaction from college presidents? Is there a

summit? Is there a sense of urgency? Is there some consensus that we don't charge the [federal government](#) more than we do private grant-making institutions? Is there some notion that we should, I don't know, honor the content of our character rather than obsess on the color of our skin?

I don't see anything coming from the universities other than outrage. They have a rendezvous with destiny and it's here before they know it.

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