



## Florida Bill Would Destroy Higher Education as We Know It

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With the introduction of HB 999, the Florida legislature—at Governor DeSantis’s urging—has doubled down on its attacks on academic freedom with a bill that would effectively silence faculty and students across the ideological spectrum and purge whole fields of study from public universities. This bill substitutes the ideological beliefs of those in power for the freedom that is necessary for colleges and universities to serve the common good and function as intellectual centers where young people succeed and where the ideas that drive our country’s economy and democracy are ignited.

Florida’s HB 999 would destroy academic freedom, tenure, shared governance, and university independence in the state’s public higher education system. The bill would place control of core curricula and institutional mission statements entirely in the hands of political appointees. It would limit or ban students’ ability to pursue certain majors or areas of study. Simply put, it would make Florida’s colleges and universities into an arm of the DeSantis political operation.

Historically, autocratic regimes have set their sights on cultural centers, the arts, and colleges and universities, because they see these places as threats to their power and control. The events unfolding in Florida are state-sponsored efforts to stifle ideas, silence debate, and limit the autonomy of educational institutions whose faculty, staff, students, or administrators may disagree with the party in power. Faculty, advocates of academic freedom and anyone interested in preserving our democracy must fight these draconian measures with everything we have—in Florida and in every other state where they appear.

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