

CALL FOR PAPERS



Volume 16: Philanthropy and Academic Freedom

The AAUP's *Journal of Academic Freedom* invites submissions for the 2025 volume of scholarly articles that address the impact of large private donations on academic freedom and the educational mission of colleges and universities. Fiscal constraints resulting from decades of disinvestment in public higher education form the backdrop of an increasing dependence on philanthropy. Administrators deploy the refrain that “the donors won’t like it” in relation to a widening array of cultural or academic programs. Resources, we hear, are the reasons we do X and not Y and Z. Educational priorities with programmatic or ethical rationales—channeled appropriately through structures of shared governance—are too often blocked by administrators whose priorities are aligned with donor or trustee demands. Some donors have taken advantage of fiscal precarity in higher education to influence programs, appoint specific faculty and staff, and even determine research outcomes.

The entanglement of large private financial donations in higher education has always posed questions about the risk of intrusion of special interests into the academic and civic mission of colleges and universities. Some donors have troubling ties to fossil fuel pollution, human rights violations, and war crimes. While private donations provide necessary funding for infrastructure, research, and scholarships, they may also perpetuate inequitable access to education when institutions prioritize programs or facilities that appeal to wealthy donors, leaving less visible needs unmet. Too often absent from debates about philanthropy in higher education is the tension between the tax-deductibility of large donations and the public interest. How can institutions limit excessive monitoring of gift expenditures, and even unrelated campus activities, by donors? What is the role of the faculty in decision-making related to these donations?

Although we will consider any eligible submission relevant to the journal’s core focus on academic freedom, we will give priority to those that address any of the following topics:

- Impacts of private donors on academic freedom in determining priorities and policies for universities, colleges, and departments
- State and federal oversight of public universities and public and private funding
- Antitax measures that have limited public financing of public education, undermined fiscal soundness, and increased dependence on philanthropy
- How high-impact research, student protests, or manufactured controversies affect public sentiments about higher education
- Political, economic, and cultural analyses of the impact of private financing on colleges and universities
- The influence of philanthropy on athletic operations, advertising, and academics
- Student campaigns to compel institutions (and their foundations) to disclose and divest from investments tied to human rights or environmental violations
- Efforts by faculty governance bodies to compel disclosure of conflicts of interest between donations and the educational or ethical mission of the institution
- Faculty and student divestment and boycott campaigns that aim to align investment, procurement, and contract policies with institutional missions
- Tax policies, tax rebates, and discussions about the status of philanthropic gifts and funds contributed to public institutions
- Land-grant universities, as legacies of settler colonialism, and the status of “public” lands, buildings, and monuments related to higher education
- Administrators, boards of trustees, and their relations with donors
- Climate denialism and fossil fuel interests
- Higher education as a site of struggle between private and public interests

Submissions of 2,000–5,000 words (including any notes and references) are due by March 5, 2025. The complete call for papers and submission guidelines and instructions, our editorial policy, and links to past volumes of the journal are available at <https://www.aaup.org/CFP>.