

## **IUB-AAUP Executive Committee Statement on the Chicago Principles Adoption and ICHE American Values Requirement**

*12/1/2025*

We, the Indiana University-Bloomington chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP-IUB), representing hundreds of faculty, write this statement to express strong concern over two developments regarding academic freedom, free speech, and governmental over-reach.

First, we call on Chancellor David Reingold and President Pamela Whitten to provide solid evidence that they intend to act in accordance with the [Chicago Principles](#), which they recently endorsed publicly. The *Chicago Principles* explicitly state: “Because the University is committed to free and open inquiry in all matters, it guarantees all members of the University community the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge, and learn. Except insofar as limitations on that freedom are necessary to the functioning of the University, the University of Chicago fully respects and supports the freedom of all members of the University community to discuss any problem that presents itself.”

However, this administration has consistently failed to act in accordance with principles of free speech and institutional neutrality—[suspending faculty of color](#) and [cancelling major national exhibitions](#) over political disagreements; [posting snipers on the IMU and arresting students and faculty](#) engaged in peaceful protest; [developing and enforcing unconstitutional regulation of free speech and assembly](#); and [erasing all traces of diversity, equity and inclusion](#) from Indiana University for no other reason than bending the knee to the Trump Administration’s anti-DEI witch hunt. Most recently, IU’s administrators have attempted to [censor the student newspaper](#); [sanctioned Prof. Ben Robinson](#) for making political comments and criticizing the administration in his teaching; and [removed Prof. Jessica Adams](#) from teaching a class on diversity and social justice because she attempted to teach about white supremacy. These actions have created tremendous negative press at the local, national and international level, and caused the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) to label IU as the [worst public institution](#) in the nation with respect to free speech.

At the November 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Bloomington Faculty Council, Chancellor Reingold said of the *Chicago Principles*: “I truly feel this has the makings of an incredibly positive moment, but it may require us to level some doubt, mistrust, frustration, anger, and in some cases perhaps

learned helplessness.” Such feelings are ubiquitous on our campus, a direct result of actions by the Whitten Administration. They lead many faculty, staff and students to question whether this embrace of the *Chicago Principles* is a good-faith attempt to improve IU’s tarnished reputation, or simply another attempt by this administration to avoid, obfuscate and evade responsibility for actions that violate institutional neutrality and academic freedom.

Second, on November 13<sup>th</sup> the Indiana Commission of Higher Education (ICHE) dramatically changed the procedures universities must undertake in applying for new degrees. Due to the program mergers required by HEA 1001, IU is in the process of applying for a flurry of degrees. In addition to evaluating the strengths and capacity to build knowledge in the areas of faculty expertise, ICHE’s new procedures will require all new university degrees to be evaluated on whether the proposed program cultivates “civic responsibility and commitment to the core values of American society.” The ambiguity of “core values of American society” is not merely a drafting oversight—it creates a mechanism for ideological gatekeeping.

The requirement invites partisan interpretation and political interference in academic program development. Indeed, the restriction of free inquiry itself contradicts fundamental American principles of intellectual freedom and open debate. Asking a program to be evaluated not only on the strengths of how it contributes to building knowledge in the area of expertise of its faculty (such as math, astronomy, or foreign languages, for instance), but on the commitment to an undefined, highly politicized, and possibly completely unrelated matter is a restriction against academic freedom. It is political overreach by a body appointed by the Governor, in clear contradiction of the core principle of “intellectual diversity” that SEA 202 demands of universities.

In response, we call for the following:

1. As a sign of good faith, we call upon the Indiana University Administration to demonstrate its support of the *Chicago Principles* by reversing recent actions that have violated academic freedom and institutional neutrality. These include: rescinding the sanction of Prof. Robinson; rescind the sanctions against Prof. Adams; ceasing its demands for the erasure of the terms *diversity*, *equity*, and *inclusion* from unit websites; and working closely with faculty and state legislators to craft legislation in the coming session that could moderate the most harmful university provisions of HEA 1001.
2. The *Chicago Principles* end with a call for protecting academic freedom when it is threatened: “the University has a solemn responsibility not only to promote a lively and fearless freedom of debate and deliberation, but also to protect that freedom when others attempt to restrict it.” The new requirement to declare “commitment to core values of American society,” an undefined concept, is a threat to our academic freedom and the integrity of our mission as a public institution of higher learning in the US. It has

a chilling effect on free speech and, if enforced, would be violating the First Amendment. Indicators of program quality, such as faculty expertise, program resources, and matriculation rates are time-tested methods for determining program quality and have yielded scores of IU undergraduate and graduate programs among the most highly ranked in the nation. Adding ideological purity tests to program approval will weaken the power of universities to graduate students ready for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and has no place in the vetting process that ICHE oversees. We call upon the IU Administration to defend our academic freedom and integrity by challenging the legality and academic value of these recent ICHE changes.

The adoption of the Chicago Principles presents a significant opportunity for Indiana University to rebuild trust with its faculty and reaffirm its commitment to the core mission of higher education. However, principles without follow-through are hollow promises. We stand ready to work collaboratively with the administration to defend our institution's academic integrity against external threats, including the new ICHE requirements, and to restore the culture of free inquiry that has long distinguished IU. We must act together to protect not only our own academic freedom, but the intellectual vitality of this university for all the students, scholars, and workers who we are in community with—including those who come after us.

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