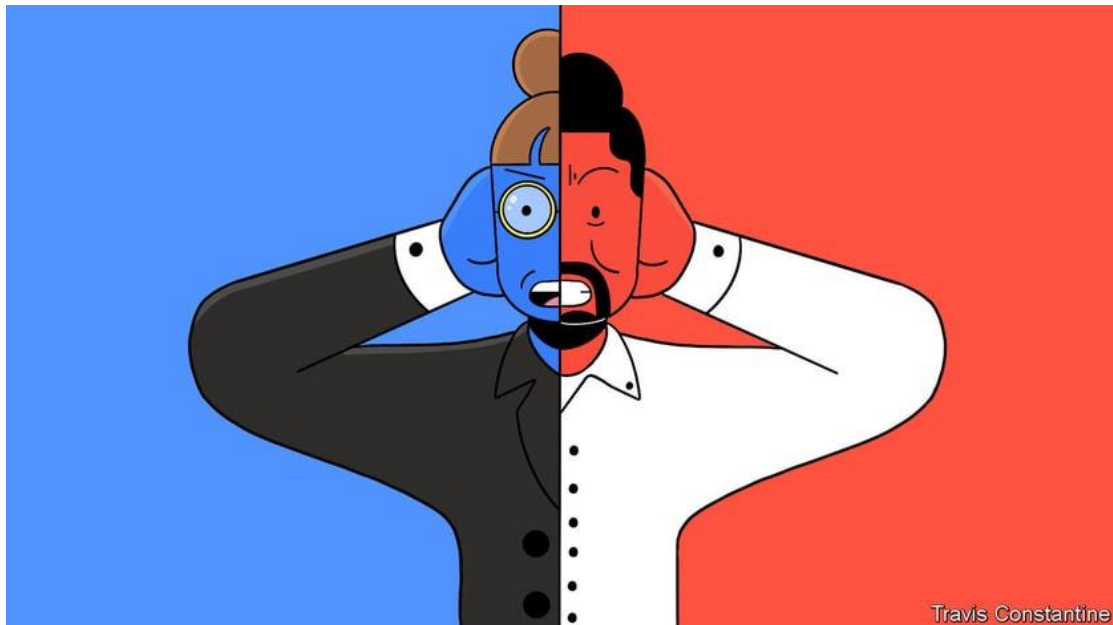


Leaders | Wanted: severe contests

How to promote academic freedom in America

Colleges that promote ideological conformity do students a disservice



When seeking a job to teach in the University of California system, academic excellence is not enough. Applicants must also submit a diversity, equity and inclusion (dei) statement, explaining how they will advance those goals. That sounds fair enough, except that a promise to treat everyone equally would constitute a fail. Meanwhile in Florida, Governor Ron DeSantis and the state legislature are trying to ban the teaching of critical-race theory, an approach to studying racism with which they disagree. While this has been going on, a row has broken

out (also in Florida) over a new pre-college course in African-American studies. These three developments have one thing in common: they are attempts to win arguments by controlling the institutions where those arguments take place.

Threats to academic freedom in America can come from many directions. Students sometimes object to being exposed to ideas they deem troubling. Some even try to get faculty members fired for allowing such ideas to be voiced. Donors occasionally threaten to withdraw funding, which has a chilling effect on what can be taught. Speakers can be banned. Academics may self-censor, or succumb to groupthink. Occasionally American society demands restrictions on academic freedom, as when professors in the 1950s were asked to take loyalty tests to prove they were not communist sympathisers.

All these threats still exist. Plenty of people have rightly worried about academic freedom in America in the past. And yet one of the things that is distinctive about this moment is that the warring parties have determined that the best way to win the argument, and the most thorough way to stifle debate, is to remake institutions according to their preferences.

DEI statements may seem innocuous enough, and their intentions may seem laudable. Yet if they are used as a filter for hiring, they will filter out anyone who fails to toe the campus-progressive line, and anyone who objects on principle to ideological litmus tests.

In Florida, Mr DeSantis seems to be hoping that left-wing professors in state colleges will go to work somewhere else, creating openings for more conservative professors. The Stop woke Act, now law in Florida, bars teaching about systemic racism unless this is done “in an objective manner”—a qualifier which is rather subjective. Academics who cross the line will be threatened with dismissal.

As for that course on African-American history, a draft version was denounced from the right as dangerous woke nonsense and then, when it was revised, denounced from the left as a whitewashed version of black history. The notion that students might look at contradictory ideas and judge their merits was too terrifying to contemplate.

Partisans on both sides seem indecently eager to create separate

institutions for liberals and conservatives, where the liberals would never have to hear wrongthink (a category that would include some of Martin Luther King's ideas, were they proposed by a less revered speaker), and the conservatives would never have to encounter the works of Derrick Bell (who has as good a claim as anyone to have developed critical-race theory).

No doubt this would make both ideological tribes happier. But it would be a disaster for the country. Democracy depends on citizens who can find compromises. Liberalism depends on taking an opponent's argument seriously and learning from it. America needs institutions that can have these debates, rather than monocultural incubators of mutually exclusive ideologies. dei statements could even be repurposed to this end: rather than asking applicants what they have done to further racial diversity and equity, institutions of higher learning might start asking how they plan to further real diversity of thought. ■

领导人 | 想要的：严重的竞赛

如何促进美国的学术自由

提倡意识形态一致性的大学是对学生的伤害

在加州大学系统中寻求教职时，仅有学术上的卓越表现是不够的。申请人还必须提交一份多样性、公平和包容（dei）声明，解释他们将如何推进这些目标。这听起来很公平，除了承诺平等对待每个人将构成失败。与此同时，在佛罗里达州，州长罗恩-德桑蒂斯和州立法机构正试图禁止批判性种族理论的教学，这是一种他们不同意的研究种族主义的方法。在这一过程中，（同样在佛罗里达州）就一门新的非裔美国人研究的大学预科课程爆发了争论。这三个事态发展有一个共同点：它们都试图通过控制发生争论的机构来赢得争论。

在美国，对学术自由的威胁可以来自很多方面。学生们有时反对接触他们认为令人不安的思想。有些人甚至试图让教员因允许表达这些想法而被解雇。捐赠者有时会威胁要撤回资金，这对可以教授的内容产生了寒蝉效应。演讲者可能被禁止。学术界可能会自我审查，或屈服于群体思维。美国社会偶尔也会要求限制学术自由，例如在 20 世纪 50 年代，教授们被要求参加忠诚度测试，以证明他们不是共产主义的同情者。

所有这些威胁仍然存在。过去有很多人正确地担心过美国的学术自由。然而，此刻与众不同的一点是，交战各方已经确定，赢得争论的最佳方式，以及扼杀辩论的最彻底方式，就是按照他们的偏好重塑机构。

DEI 声明可能看起来足够无害，其意图可能看起来值得称赞。然而，如果它们被用作招聘的过滤器，它们将过滤掉任何不服从校园进步路线的人，以及任何在原则上反对意识形态试金石的人。

在佛罗里达州，德桑蒂斯先生似乎希望州立大学的左翼教授能去其他地方工作，为更多的保守派教授创造机会。佛罗里达州现在的法律《制止暴力法案》禁止教授系统性的种族主义，除非是 "以客观的方式"--这是一个相当主观的限定词。越过这条线的学者将受到解雇的威胁。

至于那门关于非裔美国人历史的课程，其草案被右派谴责为危险的清醒的废话，然后，当它被修改时，又被左派谴责为洗白的黑人历史。学生们可能会看到相互矛盾的观点并判断它们的优劣，这种想法太可怕了，令人不敢想象。

双方的支持者似乎都渴望为自由派和保守派建立单独的机构，在那里，自由派永远不会听到错误的思想（这类思想包括马丁-路德-金的一些想法，如果它们是由一个不太受尊敬的演讲者提出的），而保守派永远不会遇到德里克-贝尔的作品（他和其他人一样有资格发展批判性种族理论）。

毫无疑问，这将使两个意识形态部落都更高兴。但对国家来说，这将是一场灾难。民主取决于能够找到妥协的公民。自由主义有赖于认真对待对手的论点并从中学习。美国需要能够进行这些辩论的机构，而不是相互排斥的意识形态的单一文化

孵化器。dei 声明甚至可以被重新用于这一目的：高等教育机构可以开始询问他们打算如何促进种族多样性和公平，而不是问申请人做了什么。■

