

Universities Have a 2025 Rendezvous With Reality

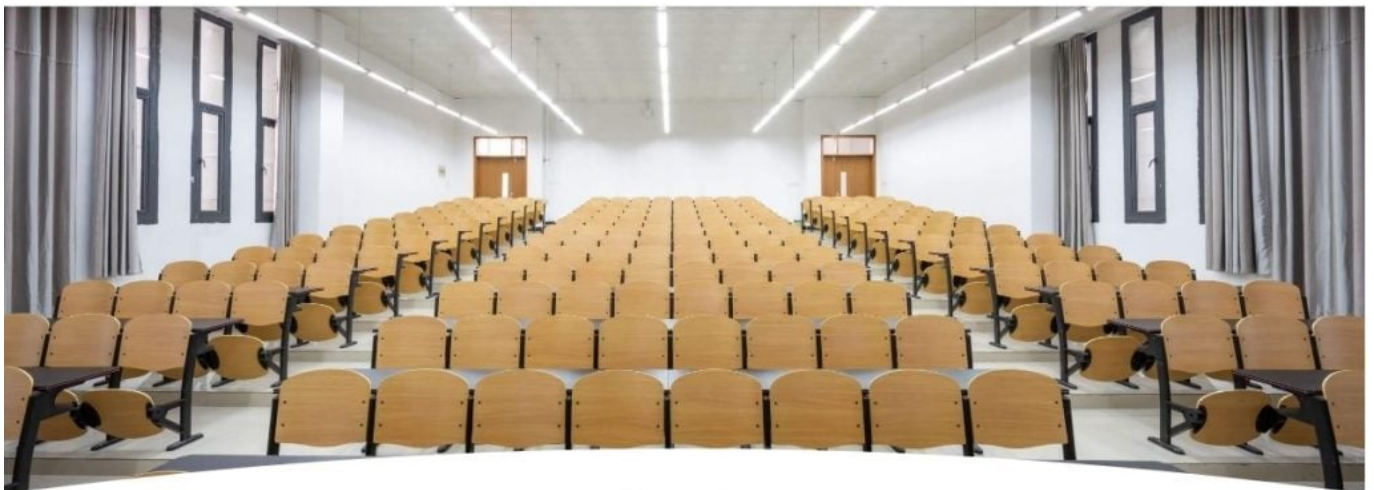
By Victor Davis Hanson

Universities have suffered a cataclysmic decline in public approval and support.

A Gallup poll taken this year found that only 36 percent of Americans polled either expressed “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in higher education—once the agreed-on touchstone to upward mobility.

Gifting to most universities has been down for two consecutive years.

There is zero intellectual diversity on most university campuses.



Speakers with conservative viewpoints are often either disinvited or shouted down—and worse.

The federally guaranteed student loan program is in shambles. Some \$1.7 trillion in outstanding loans were taken out by half of all college students.

Nearly a fifth are now not being paid back.

Marriage, child-rearing, and home ownership are all delayed by some 40 million indebted graduates, who can take decades to pay loans back.

The Biden administration demagogued the issue by illegally granting rolling student loan amnesties to win votes just before both the midterm and general elections. That proposed debt relief would be covered by taxpayers, over half of whom never went to college.

The expansion of student loan debt roughly correlates with universities raising their annual costs higher than the rate of inflation—largely due to administrative bloat. Although the Supreme Court recently struck down the practice of using race and gender to adjudicate applications and hiring, universities are already seeking ways to circumvent the ruling.

Asian- and white-Americans for decades have been systematically, overtly, and supposedly with justification, discriminated against by ignoring or not requiring test scores and downplaying grade point averages.

Stanford University may be representative of these crises. In the 2020 election, 94% of Stanford faculty voted for the Biden-Harris ticket. Four years later, some 96% of all Stanford-affiliated donations went to Democrats during the 2024 election season.

Former Stanford law professors Joseph Bankman and Barbara Fried—parents of mega-Democratic donor and now imprisoned Sam Bankman-Fried, and recipients of millions in gifts from their felonious son—were reportedly heavily involved in either bundling large left-wing campaign donations or offering legal advice to their son's bankrupt and Ponzi-like business.

In 2023, a federal judge was shouted down at Stanford Law School, his lecture aborted and then hijacked—by a Stanford DEI administrator!

Former Trump health advisor and Hoover Institution scholar

Scott Atlas in 2020 was censured by the Stanford faculty.

Yet subsequent events supported Atlas's prescient warning that a complete lockdown of the country and the shutdown of K-12 schools would not only not retard the COVID epidemic but would cause far greater economic, social, cultural, and health damage than the virus itself.

Two recent attempts to lift that censure failed—in part because some faculty claimed that to do so would empower the Trump reelection bid!

In contrast, Stanford Professor Jeff Hancock, who founded the "Stanford Social Media Lab," boasts he researches "how people use deception with technology." Yet when liberal Minnesota officials wanted such "experts" to support their new law banning "deep fake" technology at election time, they called in the expert deception-detector Hancock.

However, the references Hancock provided to prove his support for the law allegedly never existed.

In fact, the lawyers who challenged his online expertise argued his sources apparently were invented by artificial intelligence software like ChatGPT.

Who will police the deception police?

Last academic year, anti-Israel Stanford students with impunity violated university rules and camped out for months in the free speech area, shouting and disrupting passersby.

A small group of students occupied and trashed the president's office and another vandalized historic campus architecture.

After October 7, a Stanford lecturer was suspended for singling out and targeting Jewish students in his classroom.

A Stanford faculty committee on anti-Semitism recently concluded, "The most existential problem at Stanford is the emergence of a general atmosphere in which Jewish and Israeli members of the Stanford community are denied dignity and respect based on their Jewish identities, denied treatment and protection afforded to other minority groups, and afforded equal respect and inclusion only if they denounce Israel in

various ways and forms.”

Can out-of-control universities reform?

The incoming Trump administration has floated a variety of tough-love remedies.

They include predicating hundreds of billions of dollars in federal grants on campuses’ adherence to the Bill of Rights, taxing the income on universities’ multibillion-dollar endowments, and removing the federal government from the student loan business.

Recently, there have been a few hopeful signs that campuses are aware of the need to change.

At Stanford, a new president was hired, widely respected for his singular commitment to disinterested education and freedom of expression.

The SAT entrance exam is returning to many campuses and is still appreciated as crucial to most universities’ applications.

A number of partisan elite college presidents have resigned in disgrace.

So, hope springs eternal, even if it may be too little, too late.

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