

CAL POLY HUMBOLDT
University Senate

**Affirming the Responsibility of Cal Poly Humboldt and All Academic Institutions
to Uphold Democratic Values and Protect Academic Freedom**

24-24/25-EX - April 29, 2025

WHEREAS, the principles of academic freedom, the open exchange of ideas, and the right of the people to assemble peacefully are enshrined in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and are foundational to the mission of Cal Poly Humboldt University; and

WHEREAS, there is an alarming rise of anti-democratic and authoritarian policies in the United States, including attacks on international students and faculty by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents, the detention of individuals such as Mahmoud Khalil¹ (Columbia University-alumnus), Rümeysa Öztürk² (Tufts University- student), and several others³, who are detained for their political activism or involvement in anti-genocide protests threatens the fundamental rights and freedoms of our academic communities and their detention raises significant concerns regarding civil liberties and academic freedom^{4,5}; and

WHEREAS, the university upholds an honorable historical precedent for university leadership speaking out against federal policies that undermine democratic values, as demonstrated by Cal Poly Humboldt's (Humboldt State College) former *President Siemens*, who wrote to *President Nixon* in 1970 opposing the repression of student activism and emphasizing the duty of universities to challenge unjust government actions, thereby setting a precedent for active engagement by university administrations in national political matters that directly impact the academic community⁶; and

WHEREAS, over 570 Presidents of colleges and universities across the United States have publicly condemned the apprehension and detention of international students, affirming that such actions are antithetical to the values of higher education and calling

on the administration to uphold the constitutional rights and human dignity of all students, regardless of immigration status⁷;

WHEREAS, Tufts University has set a precedent for higher education institutions by publicly supporting a detained international student and engaging with federal legal proceedings, demonstrating that university administrations can and should “talk back” to the federal government when the rights, safety, and dignity of their students are at stake⁸; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Cal Poly Humboldt University Senate condemns any actions that violate the constitutional and civil rights of individuals within our academic communities, including the unlawful detention or intimidation of students and faculty based on their nationality, ethnicity, or political beliefs; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the university reaffirms its unwavering commitment to academic freedom, the open exchange of ideas, and the protection of all members of our community from coercion and fear; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the university recognizes the moral and ethical responsibility of educators and academic institutions to actively oppose the rise of fascist ideologies and practices that threaten the foundations of democracy and human rights; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the university continues to encourage faculty, staff, administrators, and students to engage in informed discourse, advocacy, and peaceful actions that promote justice, equality, and the rule of law; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the university commits to providing resources and support for members of the university community who may be affected by policies or actions that undermine their rights or well-being; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the university calls upon other academic institutions to join in solidarity to uphold the values of higher education as a bastion against authoritarianism and to collectively resist efforts that seek to erode democratic institutions and civil liberties; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this resolution be distributed to:

- President of Cal Poly Humboldt,
- Cal Poly Humboldt General Faculty, Staff, Administrators, and Students,
- Chancellor of the California State University system, Mildred Garcia,
- Academic Senate of the CSU,
- Governor of California, Gavin Newsom
- California State Senators, Senator Alex Padilla and Senator Adam Schiff,
- California's District Representative, Congressman Jared Huffman.

RATIONALE:

In response to the “Emergency National Statement to University and College Presidents,” which calls on academic leaders to collectively and legally resist the current administration’s political assault on higher education, emphasizing the need to protect academic freedom, free speech, and due process on campuses nationwide⁹; and in solidarity with our colleagues at Stockton University, who remind us that silence in the face of rising fascism may amount to complicity, we recognize the complex reality many of us face¹⁰. Silence, though troubling, can often feel safer than speaking out. We understand that voicing dissent carries real risks—risks to our safety, our freedom, our limited institutional resources, and the income that supports our families. Yet, even in the face of these material threats to our collective well-being, we believe it is critical to stand up, speak out, and confront the urgent challenges of this moment.

Notes:

- [1] "Immigration agents arrest Palestinian activist who helped lead Columbia University protests," Associated Press, March 9, 2025. (apnews.com)
- [2] "Turkish student detained by ICE moved to Vermont before judge's order, government says," Associated Press, April 2, 2025. (apnews.com)
- [3] "Trump administration advances immigration crackdown on foreign student protesters," National Public Radio, March 28, 2025. (npr.org)
- [4] "The US government is effectively kidnapping people for opposing genocide," The Guardian, March 28, 2025. (theguardian.com)
- [5] "ICE Detaining, Deporting International Students, Faculty at Top Universities," Campus Safety Magazine, March 28, 2025. (campussafetymagazine.com)
- [6] "Letter to President Nixon From HSC President, Cornelius Siemens," Strike for Peace Collection, 1970. (strikeforpeace.edu)
- [7] "Alliance of Over 570 College and University Leaders Condemns the Apprehension and Detention of International Students and Calls on the Administration to Respect Constitutional Rights," Presidents Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, March 31, 2025. (presidentsalliance.org)
- [8] "University Declaration for Rümeyza Öztürk," Tufts University, April 2, 2025. (tufts.edu)
- [9] "Defend Our Campuses by Contesting—Not Capitulating to—Authoritarianism and Repression," 2025 Emergency National Statement to University and College Presidents, March 24, 2025. (newenglandscholarsspeak.org)
- [10] "Silence is Collaboration: Academics Must Speak Out Against Fascism," Stockton University Faculty Letter, April 2, 2025. (lithub.com)