Relational Advising

The Special Salary Issue: Are you fairly paid??!

For-profits (IN), College affordability (OUT), on Capitol Hill

How this union saved a job, and academic freedom, too...

The proposed federal budget: Not good, America.
The Trump/DeVos budget for public education would cut $490 million from the Federal Work-Study Program, plus the elimination of Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants. It would also cut $3.9 billion from the Pell Grant reserve fund. NEA has strongly condemned its priorities. Urge your Congressional representatives to reject the Trump/DeVos budget at http://edadvocacy.nea.org/highered.

**Public Service Loan Forgiveness:** The Trump/DeVos budget also calls for the elimination of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program (PSLF), a 10-year-old program that promises to forgive some federal student loans after borrowers have paid on them for 10 years. To qualify, borrowers must be public service workers, like teachers, firefighters, public health nurses, etc. In July, NEA joined dozens of organizations in sending a letter to Congress, opposing the elimination of PSLF, saying: “Loan forgiveness not only makes public service affordable, it demonstrates that America values the skills and commitments of the people who provide essential public services. Without PSLF, community life all across America would suffer.”

**HBCUs:** “We know now the President’s promises to HBCU leaders were false. We know now that his smiles were deceitful. We have seen the proof in this budget, which would undermine our mission and hurt our students,” wrote Elizabeth Dav-enport, Florida A&M University professor and United Faculty of Florida president, to her NEA HBCU colleagues this summer. In fact, Trump’s budget would cut funding to HBCUs by 15 percent, and the proposed cuts to work-study and grant programs would hurt HBCU students who need that help. Hundreds of NEA-affiliated HBCU faculty have urged their Senators and Representatives to reject it.

**For-Profit Colleges:** This summer, DOE announced it would rollback regulations aimed at protecting students from predatory for-profit colleges. These regulations, known as gainful employment rules, would prevent federal funds from going to for-profit colleges that graduate students with few job skills and huge student debt. In July, NEA urged DOE to keep the regulations in place: “To delay and revise simply prolongs the period situation where students and taxpayers are at risk, and irresponsible institutions continue to collect government money without any reasonable accountability…”
Feeling rich? Probably not, but average salaries for full-time faculty are improving. The most recent data, presented in the annual special salary issue of the *NEA Higher Education Advocate*, show full-time constant dollar faculty salaries closing in on 2008 pre-recession levels. But an in-depth look reflects a more nuanced picture. Yes, full-time faculty salaries have almost recovered to 2008 levels. But different ranks are faring better others. Professors are seeing improvements; instructors are not. And, while the role of graduate assistants has grown, their wages have not so much. Also, the gender gap? Color us red: It’s still there. The following pages include more details, but you’ll have to go online to see the special salary issue in all its glory, including average salaries from every public institution in the U.S.: [nea.org/advocate](http://nea.org/advocate).

1 Longitudinal salary analyses are conducted in constant dollars to adjust for inflation.
In 2015–2016, the average annual salary for all faculty at public institutions was $78,874. For those at private institutions, it was $90,206. Across all ranks and institutions, the highest paid faculty were full professors at private four-year institutions, with an average salary of $128,034. Their counterparts at public four-year institutions followed at $116,177.

At public and private institutions, last year faculty saw 3 percent and 2 percent increases respectively. Among the various ranks and institutions, lecturers at community colleges saw the largest increase in average salaries between 2014–2015 and 2015–2016 (12 percent, after 9 percent the previous year). This was followed by an 11 percent increase among “no rank” faculty at public four-year institutions, a group that had suffered a 2 percent decline the previous year.

**State Funding and Faculty Salaries**

State funding for higher education often drives faculty salaries. Hence, the recent increase in salaries is mirrored by a continued, albeit modest, increase in state higher education appropriations. Across the U.S., state funding increased an average of 2.7 percent from fiscal year (FY) 2016 to FY2017, compared with 4.1 percent from FY2015 to FY2016. Between FY2016 and FY2017, ten states showed a decline in higher education funding.

Wyoming, which experienced the largest dip in state funding, nearly a 9 percent decline, actually had a large increase the previous year, 11 percent. The largest increases were in Hawaii and Virginia, 11 percent and 10 percent, respectively. Both also showed increases the previous year. State higher education funding represented 10 percent of all state funding in FY2016.

For more information about salary trends, including specifics about the gender gap, graduate assistant pay, and more, check out the entire *Special Salary Issue* at nea.org/advocate.


BETWEEN 2016 AND 2017, OVERALL STATE FUNDING INCREASED AN AVERAGE OF 2.7% WITH TEN STATE SHOWING AN DECLINE.

MAP 2. PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS BY STATE: 2016 TO 2017.

*Percent changes are not reported for Illinois, because FY17 funding for Illinois has not yet been finalized. The FY17 budget passed by the Illinois legislature allocated monies to higher education through December 2016 only. These stopgap funds may or may not be augmented by future legislative actions.
The 2015-16 institutional faculty salary report provides salary and compensation information for the 1,570 public institutions in NEA’s faculty salary universe. The data are organized by state, institutional type, and control. The data are provided by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System’s Preliminary Salary Data for 2015-16.

The detailed data reported are for faculty on 9/10 month contracts only. Changes in average faculty salaries are reported only for institutions responding to the NCES Salary Surveys in both 2014-15 and 2015-16. All dollar amounts are reported in thousands of dollars.

### ALABAMA

#### AA

- **Alabama Southern Community College**: - - - 51.9 51.9 1.1
- **Bevill State Community College**: - - - - -
- **Bishop State Community College**: - - - 54.9 54.9 1.9
- **Central Alabama Community College**: - - - 51.1 51.1 -2.4
- **Chattahoochee Valley Community College**: - - - 53.2 53.2 0.5
- **Enterprise State Community College**: - - - 56.7 56.7 -0.1
- **Gadsden State Community College**: - - - 54.4 54.4 -2.2
- **George C Wallace State Community College-Dothan**: - - - 51.0 51.0 3.4
- **George C Wallace State Community College-Hanceville**: - - - 53.6 53.6 -1.0
- **H Council Trenholm State Community College**: - - - 47.1 47.1 1.9
- **J F Drake State Community College and Technical College**: - - - 49.5 49.5 -1.6
- **J F Ingram State Technical College**: - - - 51.6 51.6 -3.1
- **James H Faulkner State Community College**: - - - 54.0 54.0 -2.0
- **Jefferson Davis Community College**: - - - 51.4 51.4 3.5
- **Jefferson State Community College**: - - - 55.3 55.3 1.9
- **John C Calhoun State Community College**: - - - 55.4 55.4 0.8
- **Lawson State Community College-Birmingham Campus**: - - - 52.1 52.1 -1.0

#### BA

- **Athens State University**: 85.9 76.4 60.9 - 71.3 2.7
- **University of Montevallo**: 79.3 69.2 58.9 47.2 67.5 0.8
- **University of North Alabama**: 80.0 69.3 60.7 50.2 66.5 -0.4
- **University of West Alabama**: 67.8 64.6 51.0 36.0 53.7 -3.1

#### DOCTORAL

- **Alabama A & M University**: 84.2 67.4 56.5 43.4 63.1 1.9
- **Alabama State University**: 101.4 79.7 69.7 49.2 74.7 13.1
- **Auburn University**: 115.0 81.5 71.1 47.7 88.1 2.7
- **Auburn University at Montgomery**: 86.9 66.5 57.5 47.1 68.4 4.1
- **Jacksonville State University**: 76.8 62.5 55.7 47.5 61.0 -0.1
- **The University of Alabama**: 140.1 91.2 69.8 52.5 87.9 0.5
- **Troy University**: 86.1 70.0 62.0 50.5 63.1 1.7
- **University of Alabama at Birmingham**: 133.8 87.5 73.6 63.6 93.9 3.0
- **University of Alabama in Huntsville**: 122.0 90.2 75.4 51.4 85.2 2.0

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Relational Advising

As academic advisors, we aspire to promote self-esteem, encourage intellectual growth and inspire curiosity. But we often find ourselves crunched for time and overwhelmed with wearisome tasks like scheduling classes and signing forms. How can we rethink our roles?

BY JENNIFER SNYDER-DUCH AND HARRIET L. SCHWARTZ, Carlow University

Academic advising is a primary factor in undergraduate retention, student success, and student satisfaction. Many faculty and professional advisors recognize we play more than an administrative role, and that our advising relationships support intellectual growth and academic success. However, most of us also complain of inadequate professional development and reward to support quality advising. Most advisors also report vague or even conflicting expectations at their institutions (NACADA, 2011). Perhaps what is needed is a shift in perspective. By thinking of ourselves as relational advisors, we can become more intentional and effective in our main goals, which are not to schedule classes or keep students “on track,” but to foster learning and growth. So what is a relational advisor?

Traditional Models

For the past four decades, the scholarship and practice of advising have been dominated by the developmental approach. Many point to Crookston’s 1972 essay as introducing the concept and indicating a paradigm shift. Crookston described developmental advising as “concerned not only with a specific personal or vocational decision but also with facilitating the student’s rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills” (p. 5). This was in contrast to prescriptive advising, which focused on disseminating information and keeping records of students’ academic progress.

Most advisors today would agree that pure prescriptive advising, without developmental support, is rare; the developmental approach is what they practice. However, we have found evidence in the literature and our own interactions with colleagues and students that when asked to describe advising, most focus on prescriptive tasks such...
as scheduling and understanding university policies. Further, in the literature, advising scholars and practitioners still strive to conceptualize the developmental approach. Although the scholarship is vast and worthwhile, something is missing in our collective understanding of quality advising. We believe that one glaring problem is the lack of focus on the advisor-advisee relationship. We propose that the relationship is, in fact, the most important factor in effective undergraduate advising, not the tasks, nor the interpersonal style of the advisor, nor even the developmental process.

Academic advising is a relational practice. Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) supports a message that many of us wish our advisees and administrators would take to heart—that the connections students make with us and others in their learning communities will help them to overcome obstacles, clarify direction, and thrive on their academic journey. Created by Jean Baker Miller and her colleagues in the 1980s, RCT proposes that people are at their best and healthiest when they engage in growth-producing relationships. This is contrary to typical human development theories which purport that we are at our most developed when we make it on our own. RCT indicates that this growth is driven by and evidence of The Five Good Things: energy, self-esteem, knowledge, ability to take action, and desire for more connection.

Meet Jennifer Snyder-Duch and Harriet L. Schwartz

Jennifer Snyder-Duch, PhD, is associate professor of communication at Carlow University in Pittsburgh, PA. Her teaching, research, and outreach focus on media criticism, media advocacy, and youth media. Harriet L. Schwartz, PhD, is associate professor of psychology and counseling at Carlow University and Lead Scholar for Education as Relational Practice for the Jean Baker Miller Training Institute. She has authored and co-authored several journal articles in the areas of teaching as relational practice and qualitative research methods. Schwartz and Snyder-Duch have just co-edited a monograph on teaching and emotion for the Jossey-Bass series New Directions for Teaching and Learning.

**Relational Practice**

Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) supports a message that many of us wish our advisees and administrators would take to heart—that the connections students make with us and others in their learning communities will help them to overcome obstacles, clarify direction, and thrive on their academic journey. Created by Jean Baker Miller and her colleagues in the 1980s, RCT proposes that people are at their best and healthiest when they engage in growth-producing relationships. This is contrary to typical human development theories which purport that we are at our most developed when we make it on our own. RCT indicates that this growth is driven by and evidence of The Five Good Things: energy, self-esteem, knowledge, ability to take action, and desire for more connection.

**TALES FROM REAL LIFE > CONNECTING WITH ADVISEES**

A colleague once told me she thought of advising as moving students toward independence. As they progressed through college, she felt she should see them less often because they have learned the ropes. Advising as relational practice has us seeing differently. It does not highlight student autonomy as the primary outcome of advisor-advisee interactions. Meaningful connections with advisors—even brief exchanges—may give upper-class students, with typically increased workloads and more challenging school-life balance, the support they need to move forward. As I have made the transformation to a more relational approach, I now notice the email updates from advisees who are studying abroad, the unsolicited questions about grad school applications or job interviews, and the office pop-ins—“I noticed your door was open...”—as indications of a good advising relationship. RCT supports the idea that the desire for more connection is central to advising—not merely the icing on the cake as some might view it, or additional work/stress as others may suggest. I recognize in myself that I have a positive reaction to these types of connections; they make me feel a little more zest for what I do and reinforce my commitment as an educator.
Scholar-practitioners applying RCT in education have used it to consider pre-college areas such as school counseling and youth mentoring as well as in higher education to improve teaching, career counseling, and understanding of the student experience. The theory and related research provides students and advisors with a message that challenges the championing of the rugged individual and instead celebrates the wisdom of reaching out. RCT also reminds advisors to remain cognizant of cultural context, an awareness that may assist our work with students of color, students in poverty, women, immigrants, and LGBTQ students—all who may experience our institutions, including faculty and staff, differently than majority students.

Being a Relational Advisor

The developmental approach views the student as active in her learning; relies less on the authority of the advisor and more on negotiation and trust; focuses on students’ strengths and interests rather than deficiencies; and emphasizes growth rather than grades and degrees.

Research suggests that this work helps students persevere, engage with critical feedback, and see themselves as active participants in their own learning. But what does this look like in advising practice?

Energy and Self-esteem. In an advising session, your attention might be on the practical goal of class registration, for example, but be careful not to ignore what might happen in the conversation around that task. If you show interest in what students say they are experiencing in and out of the classroom, this is more than small talk or ice-breaking. Research shows students are likely to feel a boost of energy and self-esteem by having their ideas validated and by talking about something that interests them, one-on-one, with a faculty member who is equally engaged.

RCT posits that both people in a growth-producing relationship experience positive elements. This is not acknowledged much in advising literature where the focus is on student development. We find that recognizing the mutuality of advising relationships has a positive effect on our practice. We often get excited when advisees share what they are learning. We feel energized by learning something new and witnessing a student’s interest in learning. In addition, our self-worth is increased when students reach out to initiate engagement, demonstrate an understanding of our disciplines, or take our advice.

For us, conversations with advisees deepen our understanding of student needs. We can learn from their struggles and improve our advising practice, assess the strengths and weaknesses of our curricula, or make suggestions to student support staff. Advising also contributes to our teaching as we are reminded of the big picture—students’ curriculum and co-curricular activities—so we can teach our courses as connected to their full learning experience.

This dynamic is well explained by Douglas Robertson’s (2001) model of teacher/learner-centeredness, which would describe the advisor-advisee relationship as intersubjective with advisors “attending to both their own and their students’ emotional life and the way in which they interact and influence each other” (p. 10).

Advising Episodes. The usual advice on advising implies that effective relationships are long-term and time-intensive. However, as Schwartz and Holloway (2014) found in their study of graduate students’ relationships with faculty, growth-producing advising relationships need not be long-term or very personal. A single interaction has the potential to produce The Five Good Things. An effective invitation to connect, engaged presence, care, and enthusiasm can turn even brief exchanges into meaningful encounters for students.

Self-reflection. “Relational practice is not a series of steps but rather a stance we take as we engage with our students” (Schwartz & Holloway, 2014, p. 14). Being a relational advisor demands we reflect on our practice.
and view the Five Good Things as central to every advising relationship, formal or not, long-term or brief. We (and our institutions) must avoid seeing ourselves primarily as a content authority, or even as a guide to academic success. Rather, we acknowledge our role as collaborator and recognize the significance of our relationship, not just our advice, in advisees’ college experience.

RELATIONAL PRACTICE IS NOT A SERIES OF STEPS BUT RATHER A STANCE WE TAKE AS WE ENGAGE WITH OUR STUDENTS.

Institutional Culture

While our goal here is to encourage advisors to rethink their role and encourage a relational approach, we certainly recognize the need for institutional support. Academic advising is a part of the workload for faculty at many institutions. Some value the time spent with advisees and even see their role as advisor as supporting their university’s mission. Others view it as a burden on top of heavy teaching, service and research obligations. Even the most committed advisors will burn out easily if not supported by a culture that values faculty-student relationships. Evidence points to the positive role of academic advising in retention, and RCT provides a framework to understand this dynamic. This should get the attention of administrators and allow us to advocate for more and better professional development and more faculty time for relational advising in order to see an effect on retention.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES


ADJUNCT FACULTY: NEA contingent faculty leaders Beverly Stewart, of Illinois, and California’s Judy Olson directed the RA’s attention to the needs of adjunct faculty. While Stewart’s New Business Item (NBI) secures the NEA General Counsel’s help for state affiliates assisting contingent faculty in filing for unemployment benefits, and appealing rejections of benefits, Olson’s encourages members to join or donate to the New Faculty Majority (NFM) at newfacultymajority.org. Early this year, thanks to the efforts of NEA, NFM and others, the Department of Labor clarified the rights of adjunct faculty to receive unemployment benefits during the summer, as they have no reasonable assurance of re-employment.

HOMELESSNESS: An NBI by California’s Cecile Bendavid requires NEA to ask colleges and universities to make showers available to homeless students. Up to 14 percent of U.S. community college students are homeless, a recent study found.

STATE FUNDING: Massachusetts’s Joe Nardoni’s NBI requires NEA to collect and distribute information about what each state is doing to combat the underfunding of public higher education. (Since 2001, in Massachusetts, higher-ed funding is down $3,000 per student, while tuition is up $4,000 per student, according to MassBudget.) Similarly, John Messier, of Maine, won the RA’s approval for an NBI that requires NEA to identify states where taxpayers’ money is spent on tuition for students at private colleges or otherwise on private colleges and universities that substantially duplicate the programs and offerings of that state’s public colleges and universities.

IMMIGRATION: The RA made clear that NEA will oppose deportations, and that school staff should decline to cooperate with immigration enforcement efforts.

LIBRARY FUNDING: NEA will mount a media campaign aimed at promoting school libraries. Through amendment by Massachusetts’ Ellen Pratt, this NBI included community college libraries, too.

TEACHER EDUCATION: Many NBIs aimed to improve teacher education and diversify the teaching force. One requires NEA to find resources and toolboxes for colleges to encourage students of color to major in education. Others call on NEA to review demographic data from PRAXIS exams, and promote its student program at HBCUs, HSIs, and other institutions.

PUBLIC OFFICIALS: NEA will publicize its work with state and local affiliates in order to elect pro-public education state lawmakers, per an NBI from Massachusetts’ Len Paolillo.
Illinois state universities FINALLY get a budget

After two years without any state budget, and zero state funds since 2016, public colleges and universities in Illinois finally can point to a state budget with some money for higher education. In June, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) faculty union president Kim Archer testified to legislators about how the lack of a budget has led health insurance providers to stop reimbursing faculty. Other faculty and students described job furloughs, program closures, drained savings, and a sense of hopelessness. SIUC has been “hemorrhaging faculty,” Archer said. At Eastern Illinois University, more than 400 positions have been cut. It’s unclear how many students may have dropped off because of the loss of state aid. In July, state lawmakers narrowly overrode Gov. Bruce Rauner’s budget veto to pass a state budget, finally. But still, it’s not all good news. The new budget provides funding at 10 percent less than state higher ed received in 2015. It does add $36 million more to the state’s student aid program, known as MAP.

Adjunct faculty testify in favor of Mass. legislation

Dozens of educators and students packed a June hearing of the Mass. legislature’s Higher Education Committee to testify on a bill that would require colleges and universities to pay adjunct faculty fair wages. Specifically, contingent faculty who carry at least a 50 percent teaching load would be paid on a pro-rata basis, equal to full-time faculty, and also would have access to healthcare and retirement benefits. The bill, called the “Act to Invest in Higher Education Faculty,” also would require at least 75 percent of the courses at public colleges and universities be taught by full-time tenure or tenure-track faculty. Adjuncts would be given priority in full-time job openings. “Adjunct faculty members at our public colleges and universities deliver high-quality education under difficult and demanding conditions. Many are poorly paid and have no access to insurance and retirement benefits,” said MTA President Barbara Madeloni. “This bill aims to improve conditions at public colleges and universities for full-time and part-time faculty alike.”

ND faculty protest state cuts, changes to tenure

Another year of cuts to higher education in North Dakota could have “long-lasting, perhaps irreversible” effects, warns a group of distinguished North Dakota State University faculty. In 2016, the N.D. state university system cut about 500 full-time jobs. This year, further budget cuts likely will mean larger classes, program cuts, and layoffs. This spring, the state board of higher ed made it easier to terminate tenured faculty by approving a policy change that cuts down on the timeline to dismiss tenured faculty. In cases of “financial exigency,” the notification period has been cut from one year to 90 days. The change likely will make it more difficult to recruit new faculty, notes Kathryn Gordon, UND Faculty Senate president and North Dakota United member. Also, it has the potential to be very disruptive to students, she told the Bismarck Tribune. This spring, because of budget cuts, the University of North Dakota announced the elimination of its women’s hockey team, which sent eight players to the last Olympic games.

#FREECLAUDIA: CAL STATE LA STUDENT DETAINED FOR TWO WEEKS BY ICE

On June 9, as Cal State Los Angeles student Claudia Rueda sat inside a federal immigration detention center in San Diego, dozens of California Faculty Association members marched alongside students outside, demanding Rueda’s release from federal detention.

Rueda, who came to the U.S. from Mexico at age 4, was arrested by immigration officers on May 18, as she moved her family’s car early one morning to comply with street parking restrictions. She recently had been leading protests against the detention of her mother, an immigrant who was swept up in a police raid and subsequently let go.

Hundreds of educators from across the U.S. called for her release. Many pointed out that her arrest looked a lot like retaliation for her activism on immigration issues. Rueda has been active in the local Immigrant Youth Coalition.

“This clearly the government is trying to silence people fighting for immigrant rights, and Claudia was targeted,” said Beth Baker, a CFA member from Cal State LA.

Although Rueda is eligible for DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), which would provide some protection from deportation, she couldn’t afford the application, her attorney told the Los Angeles Times. Her mother’s job at a local bakery barely covers her tuition. “To see her education interrupted in this way is just tragic,” Cal State LA professor Alejandra Marchevsky, who taught Rueda last semester, told the Times.

While they marched, faculty and students may have been heard inside. Rueda was freed that day. But she still faces deportation.
CASE STUDY

How this union saved its member’s job—and academic freedom, too.

A Cal State Fullerton lecturer will return to his job this fall after the California Faculty Association (CFA) laid bare the false accusations made against him by a right-wing student group. His return to the classroom marks a victory for faculty’s rights to academic freedom and free speech, CFA leaders said.

“Make no mistake, CFA will stridently defend our faculty who are under attack by forces who have contempt for the university and for free inquiry,” CFA President Jennifer Eagan told Cal State University trustees last week. “Our successful defense of Dr. Canin speaks to CFA’s commitment to protecting all members of the campus community from the new wave of attacks on academic freedom and free speech…”

Erin Canin, a 20-year instructor of anthropology at Fullerton, had been accused of hitting a student and interfering with the free speech of students during a Campus Republicans counter protest. But Canin denied it, and event videos did not show the alleged assault. Still, he was vilified on right-wing blogs, which called for his firing.

“When the incident happened, nobody really stopped, especially the students, to ask themselves whether what they said happened actually happened,” Canin told Inside Higher Ed. “The College Republicans put it online, and soon Breitbart had it and The Washington Times and other right-wing media, without a shred of evidence.”

Fullerton fired Canin after a short investigation, which CFA quickly challenged. The case was assigned an independent arbitrator, who ruled last week that the evidence showed Canin “did not engage in anything resembling a fight and did not have any conscious intent to cause any harm to the students in question.”

The Front Lines of Free Speech

That the “alternative fact,” as Canin calls it, was so quickly accepted and disseminated is not so surprising. Faculty members have become lightning rods for attacks by critics who seek to silence debate, research, and academic freedom on campuses.

“My colleagues and I are trying to focus on teaching, research, and our students. Yet many of us are finding ourselves under attack and subject to hateful discourse,” Canin told CSU trustees.

Last month, Princeton University’s Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor reported receiving death threats after she delivered an address critical of President Trump, while Trinity College shut down for a day after getting threats against a professor whose Facebook posts about racism had been shared by conservative sites.

Meanwhile, groups like Professor Watchlist and Campus Watch have been created to monitor faculty for any perceived “liberal” speech.

Colleges are not always supportive of faculty who fall into the political divide. At Essex County College in New Jersey, administrators suspended Lisa Durdan, an adjunct professor of communications, after she appeared on TV to defend Black Lives Matters protesters.

Typically, adjunct professors—like Durdan and Canin—have fewer rights and far less job security than their tenured peers. However, adjunct professors in the Cal State system, have won job protections through CFA.

CFA leaders said they aren’t just interested in protecting their members’ jobs. They’re in this fight to defend academic freedom, and the pursuit of truth on their campuses.

“We live in a troubling new world where the truth is called fake, dissent is being criminalized, and the right is targeting colleges, universities, and university professors,” Eagan told trustees. “Wake up and realize that there are forces mobilizing not just against the faculty, but against truth, learning, and the university.”

Support Academic Freedom!

CFA leaders have created a petition to CSU trustees, asking them to support academic freedom on their campuses.

Free Speech

Union advocacy will be required

JASON WALTA

This was the year the campus speech wars boiled over. At Berkeley, violent protests roiled campus when a speaking invitation was extended to the cartoonishly offensive Milo Yiannopoulos. At Princeton, online mobs deluged African American Studies Professor Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor with hateful messages and death threats after she criticized President Trump in a commencement address. The list of similar occurrences could go on and on, and even includes a shooting at the University of Washington during a clash between protesters.

Beneath the chaos and rancor, there are familiar patterns. Almost like clockwork, groups of liberals protest firebrand right-wing speakers—either by disrupting the event or pressuring administrators to cancel it. As the New York Times reports, the provocation of these protests is not only predictable, but appears to be part of a strategy. Although the speakers are nominally invited by campus groups, the Young America’s Foundation—a “national conservative group that is well funded, highly organized and on a mission”—has made a name for itself by paying fees to controversial speakers and training student leaders to organize the events.

A similar pattern is at work behind the seeming spontaneous online mobs that threaten scholars and pressure administrators to discipline those who speak to hot-button political issues. Reactionary outfits like Campus Watch and Professor Watchlist devote themselves to monitoring scholars’ speech in order to inflame outrage and incite harassment against expressions of views they disdain.

On some campuses, these efforts have eroded administrative commitment to academic freedom, and faculty are the ones to suffer. At Essex County (N.J.) College, for example, administrators fired Lisa Durden, a communications adjunct and pop culture pundit, after she went on TV to defend Black Lives Matter protesters.

Worse yet, conservative legislators have joined the fray. Not content with gutting funding for higher education or rolling back tenure and collective bargaining, they now seek to micromanage faculty and institutional speech. In Iowa, proposed legislation would require the state’s public universities to consider “political affiliation and balance in the employment of faculty” and forbid the hiring of faculty if it would “cause the percentage of the faculty belonging to one political party to exceed 10 percent the percentage of the faculty belonging to the other political party.” Another bill, authored by the libertarian Goldwater Institute and introduced in a handful of states, would require public universities to remain neutral on “public policy controversies of the day”—effectively silencing schools on such issues as the value of affirmative action or the necessity of strong tenure protections.

The only way out of these dilemmas is a robust and vocal commitment to academic freedom. When it comes to student efforts to disrupt or disinvite speakers, take a page from the lawyers. As Yale Law Dean Heather Gerken explains, the “reason why law students haven’t resorted to the extreme tactics we’ve seen on college campuses [is] their training.” She notes that law school “conditions you to know the difference between righteousness and self-righteousness,” which is “why lawyers know how to go to war without turning the other side into an enemy.”

When it comes to administrators—particularly when a horde of anonymous Twitter trolls gets sicced on one of their faculty—disciplined organizing and union advocacy will be required to ensure they adhere to their responsibility to defend academic freedom and institutional autonomy. This includes insisting that schools resist calls to dismiss faculty and condemn targeted harassment and intimidation of faculty, and also that schools have policies and resources to assist faculty who are targeted and threatened.

Jason Walta is an attorney in the NEA Office of General Counsel and an adjunct faculty member at American University’s Washington College of Law.

CASE STUDY

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Beneath the chaos and rancor, there are familiar patterns. Almost like clockwork, groups of liberals protest firebrand right-wing speakers—either by disrupting the event or pressuring administrators to cancel it. As the New York Times reports, the provocation of these protests is not only predictable, but appears to be part of a strategy. Although the speakers are nominally invited by campus groups, the Young America’s Foundation—a “national conservative group that is well funded, highly organized and on a mission”—has made a name for itself by paying fees to controversial speakers and training student leaders to organize the events.

A similar pattern is at work behind the seeming spontaneous online mobs that threaten scholars and pressure administrators to discipline those who speak to hot-button political issues. Reactionary outfits like Campus Watch and Professor Watchlist devote themselves to monitoring scholars’ speech in order to inflame outrage and incite harassment against expressions of views they disdain.

On some campuses, these efforts have eroded administrative commitment to academic freedom, and faculty are the ones to suffer. At Essex County (N.J.) College, for example, administrators fired Lisa Durden, a communications adjunct and pop culture pundit, after she went on TV to defend Black Lives Matter protesters.

Worse yet, conservative legislators have joined the fray. Not content with gutting funding for higher education or rolling back tenure and collective bargaining, they now seek to micromanage faculty and institutional speech. In Iowa, proposed legislation would require the state’s public universities to consider “political affiliation and balance in the employment of faculty” and forbid the hiring of faculty if it would “cause the percentage of the faculty belonging to one political party to exceed 10 percent the percentage of the faculty belonging to the other political party.” Another bill, authored by the libertarian Goldwater Institute and introduced in a handful of states, would require public universities to remain neutral on “public policy controversies of the day”—effectively silencing schools on such issues as the value of affirmative action or the necessity of strong tenure protections.

The only way out of these dilemmas is a robust and vocal commitment to academic freedom. When it comes to student efforts to disrupt or disinvite speakers, take a page from the lawyers. As Yale Law Dean Heather Gerken explains, the “reason why law students haven’t resorted to the extreme tactics we’ve seen on college campuses [is] their training.” She notes that law school “conditions you to know the difference between righteousness and self-righteousness,” which is “why lawyers know how to go to war without turning the other side into an enemy.”

When it comes to administrators—particularly when a horde of anonymous Twitter trolls gets sicced on one of their faculty—disciplined organizing and union advocacy will be required to ensure they adhere to their responsibility to defend academic freedom and institutional autonomy. This includes insisting that schools resist calls to dismiss faculty and condemn targeted harassment and intimidation of faculty, and also that schools have policies and resources to assist faculty who are targeted and threatened.
Perhaps you’ve caught a whisper of the proposed increases in defense spending or cuts to Medicaid. Maybe you’ve heard of the $2 trillion error, or the reliance on a fantastical 3 percent economic growth model. It’s also possible you’ve been so blinded by a swirling circus of presidential tweets and Congressional investigations that you haven’t had a chance to review Trump’s proposed 2018 budget.

While Trump’s proposal is only the opening salvo in a long process controlled by Congress, it frames the debate and signals the president’s priorities. What does the President think of education in America? In his budget message, he highlights education as ripe for reform. However, his approach amounts to a federal withdrawal that places education decisions in “the State and local levels, while advancing opportunities for parents and students to choose, from all available options.” It also cuts by 13.5 percent the federal outlays for education.

You will find few specifics regarding education. (A notable exception is the increased funding for abstinence education.) Most references to education are couched within the framework of immigrants and refugees. Indeed, the report repeatedly cites undereducated immigrants as fiscal burdens. (It does not address this matter by bringing immigrants on a pathway to success, starting with access to college learning.)

Higher education, like immigration, is framed as a cost item that needs reducing. Most notably, Trump calls for eliminating the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, which allows teachers, police officers, public defenders, etc. to have their federal student loans erased after 10 years of employment and loan payments.

The budget also seeks to sunset Perkins loans, an important source of funding for those in career and technical studies.

Additionally, Trump proposes reducing federal work study programs and eliminating Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS), a program that helps low-income students pay for child care so that they can attend class. These particular proposals do little to make college more accessible.

Finally, an extension of Pell Grants has been proposed. While making these funds accessible year-round could help students finish degrees faster, the proposal does not provide the necessary increase in Pell funding.

Take a look yourself, and recall the words of Trump’s budget director, Mick Mulvaney, who said: “We’re not going to measure our success by how much money we spend, but by how many people we actually help.” Finding families or communities that would be helped by this budget is hard. But perhaps these aren’t the groups that concern Trump. How do you think this budget helps advance education in America?

Trump’s 2018 Budget: Sad!

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