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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

October 2, 2025

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**SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE STRATEGIC
COMPETITION BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES
AND THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY**

Suresh Garimella
President
University of Arizona
1200 East University Boulevard
Old Main, Room 200
Tucson, Arizona 85721

President Garimella:

The University of Arizona is one of America's most respected public research institutions. Its land-grant mission, advances in space, bioscience, and optics, and service to Arizona's urban, rural, and tribal students make it indispensable. Under your leadership, that tradition continues.

Now, the Trump Administration threatens that independence.

In September 2025, the White House circulated a "Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education." Nine universities—including Arizona, MIT, Vanderbilt, Dartmouth, USC, Penn, Brown, Virginia, and Texas at Austin—were targeted first. The White House made clear that schools signing would gain preferential access to federal grants, White House events, and policy channels.¹

The compact represents an unprecedented intrusion into higher education, replacing academic freedom and institutional judgment with ideological dictates and rigid mandates. These are not reforms but instruments of political control. By dictating who universities admit and hire, what they teach, and even how they conduct research, Trump aims to strip higher education of its independence and bend it into an arm of his political power.

But the mechanism is coercion. Compliant universities are rewarded. Noncompliant ones are punished—not by law, but by exclusion from funding and influence. Those that sign and later renege risk repaying both federal and private funds.

We've seen this abroad. The playbook for aspiring authoritarians' efforts to dismantle academia is straightforward: dismiss dissenting faculty, restructure academic fields to ensure ideological

¹ Madhani, Aamer, and Collin Binkley. "Trump asks colleges to commit to his agenda for favorable funding access." AP News, 2 Oct. 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/756407729a3b16c7bb51564d5056084c>.

conformity, intimidate scholars into self-censorship, and so on.² The pattern is clear: compel, conform, erase independence.

Trump applies that same playbook. Independent universities elevate critical thinking, generate ideas beyond government control, and train future leaders. By forcing compliance, he removes accountability and reshapes higher education under authoritarian constraint. *The New York Times* editorial board noted in March 2025 that weakening universities is central to the authoritarian playbook because “budding autocrats recognize that empirical truth can present a threat to their authority.”³

The University of Arizona was not chosen by accident. Its stature makes it the perfect test. If it signs, the precedent is set: even top public universities can be bent to political will. If it refuses, it proves that American higher education cannot be bullied into submission.

The stakes are the University’s independence, the academic freedom of its faculty and students, and the democratic role of higher education itself. Signing would bind the University of Arizona to Trump’s authoritarian project. Rejecting it would protect your students, your faculty, your mission, and your long-term reputation.

I urge you: reject this Faustian bargain. Protect the University of Arizona’s independence. Protect academic freedom. And protect the principle that universities serve truth, not political power.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Greg Stanton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Greg" and last name "Stanton" clearly distinguishable.

Greg Stanton
Member of Congress

² Matveev, Ilya and Evgeny Roschin. “Insights from Russia on Academic Freedom During War.”
<https://www.aaup.org/academe/issues/winter-2025/insights-russia-academic-freedom-during-wa>

³ Editorial Board. “The Authoritarian Endgame on Higher Education.” *The New York Times*. 15 March 2025.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/15/opinion/trump-research-cuts.html>