

Las Positas College 2025

Academic Freedom in the Time of AI, Misinformation, and the Current Political Climate

GOALS

1. Increase awareness of specific pressures, risks, and constraints educators are facing.
2. Share strategies, resources, and collective resilience practices.
3. Spur participants to commit to one action (e.g. advocacy, peer support, syllabus redesign, etc.)

ICE BREAKER QUESTIONS

- What's one situation in your teaching (or on-campus job) where you felt constrained or fearful due to politics or backlash?
- What support (if any) did the you have — or what support was missing?
- If you were advising your institution, what policy or structural supports would you advocate for?



ANTI-CRT BANS AND THEIR EFFECT

- “These institutions’ embrace of pervasive and repugnant race-based preferences and other forms of racial discrimination have emanated throughout every facet of academia.” Dear Colleague Letter, 2025
- 18 states have passed anti-DEI or anti-CRT legislation since 2020
 - Essentially an educational gag order
- Faculty have been met with resistance due to white fragility, contentious classroom dynamics, left feeling emotionally taxed and in need of a support system
 - Many question if it is worth teaching
- Faced with academic violence (being demeaned or devalued in academic spaces), have their critical scholarship questioned, which affects their trajectory to promotion and tenure.

EFFECTS OF ANTI-LGBTQ RHETORIC

- Nearly three-quarters of the LGBTQ+ faculty said the current environment has taken a toll on their mental health.
- Anti-DEI laws have negatively impacted the LGBTQ+ faculty's teaching, research, and interactions with students.
- 36% of the LGBTQ faculty surveyed have considered leaving academia
- A decrease in enrollment, less people willing to participate in research, negative teacher evals, having to omit topics due to divisive laws

How do we build equity in community — not only in policy?

- Administrators must be ready to demystify claims and ensure the protection of faculty
 - This can be done at the department, college or legislative level
- Be committed to hiring more faculty dedicated to building critical pedagogical practices
- Be invested in building a community of scholars within programs that share commitments to challenging injustices
- What can you do?



SCHOLAR'S INTERPRETATION

- This experience relates to our ethnic studies class because it allowed me to dive deep into the structure, functions, and nuances of something. With the basic microscope setup, you don't see much. You are able to use the 10x lens to view the slide, but you don't get to the 40x or 100x lenses, which change how you see the slide. Similarly, in ethnic studies, we are able to dive deeper into the subject of race and different types of racism and how they operate, as well as seeing what we have learned in the past under a different light. Just like with the centering and fine focus knobs, we use different tools, such as the critical tenets of CRT and defined terms related to race and racism to analyze, instead of a sample slide, past and current events, laws, and institutions. This helps us see more parts of the truth, just like the advanced microscope setup helps us see more aspects of the sample slide. We can choose to stay with one view, like the basic microscope setup, or we can go above and beyond, like the advanced microscope setup, and be exposed to the often unseen parts of what we're analyzing—the counterstories, and the different forms of cultural capital. Just like with the slide, there is beauty found in doing so.