

Trump administration freezes over \$300 million in UCLA research funds in attack on science and dissent

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4 August 2025

The Trump administration has moved to freeze \$339 million—more than a quarter of UCLA’s \$1.1 billion in annual federal grants and contracts—in science and medical research funding to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

Justified with cynical claims of fighting “antisemitism,” this politically motivated act represents a sharp escalation in the ruling class’s drive to crush dissent, subordinate the universities to an increasingly authoritarian state and silence opposition to Israeli war crimes and US imperialism.

The defunding order, spearheaded by Attorney General Pam Bondi and the Department of Justice, accuses UCLA of “race discrimination” and fostering a “hostile environment” for Jewish and Israeli students. In language typical of authoritarian regimes, Bondi warned UCLA—and by extension all universities—that allowing criticism of Israel would come at a “heavy price.”

The real issue is not antisemitism, but the mass opposition that has emerged on campuses against the US-backed genocide in Gaza.

This action follows a broader pattern of financial blackmail and political repression by the Trump administration against institutions perceived as insufficiently loyal to Zionism and US imperialist policy.

Until now, most of these measures have targeted elite East Coast campuses such as Harvard, Columbia, and Brown. But the move against UCLA—cutting off dozens of National Science Foundation (NSF), National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Department of Energy (DOE) grants—marks the first large-scale defunding on the West Coast and the most sweeping effort yet to

transform research universities into instruments of far-right state policy.

The *World Socialist Web Site* rejects the lying pretext that this has anything to do with fighting antisemitism. The fraudulent conflation of antisemitism with opposition to Zionism is being wielded as a political weapon against students and faculty who speak out against Israel’s mass slaughter of Palestinians. It is a central ideological tool of the ruling class to criminalize dissent and enforce ideological conformity under conditions of an ongoing genocide and growing political and social crisis.

The consequences of the UCLA defunding are far-reaching. Entire laboratories and research programs have been thrown into chaos. According to Chancellor Julio Frenk, whose administration received the notice last Wednesday, the cuts will affect “life-saving research” critical to public health, “national security” and the economy. But Frenk, far from being a defender of academic freedom, has actively collaborated in building the very framework for this repression.

Since taking office in January, pro-Zionist Frenk has led the charge at UCLA to equate opposition to Israel with racial hatred. Under his leadership, the university launched the “Initiative to Combat Antisemitism,” aimed at “eradicating” antisemitism through expanded surveillance, complaint mechanisms and political reeducation. He declared it his top priority to root out antisemitism from campus, claiming that universities have become hotbeds of hatred—a central lie used by the state to justify its clampdown on protest.

Frenk’s hand-wringing over the grant cancellations is deeply cynical. He helped lay the legal and ideological foundation for the very attacks now being used to

defund his university. His administration agreed last week to a \$6.45 million settlement with Zionist plaintiffs who alleged “discrimination” during the 2024 Gaza solidarity encampments. This deal, like similar settlements at Columbia and Brown, has emboldened the state to escalate its offensive.

The attack on UCLA follows a well established pattern. Columbia University paid \$220 million and agreed to wide-ranging changes to admissions and campus policy. Brown paid \$50 million. Harvard, facing the loss of federal research funds and the ability to host international students, has reportedly offered as much as \$500 million to reach a settlement. Duke and George Mason face similar threats. Investigations are also underway against Cornell, Northwestern and other schools.

The goal is not to eliminate antisemitism, but to forcibly align higher education with the interests of US imperialism and the far right. University administrators are being told to purge their institutions of any opposition to Zionism, militarism and the capitalist status quo. Faculty and students are being told in no uncertain terms: support genocide or lose your funding, your job and your future.

At the same time, these attacks are a key front in the broader effort to destroy the social and democratic rights of the working class. The cutting of \$300 million from UCLA research is not just an academic issue. It directly threatens scientific breakthroughs on which millions depend—whether in cancer treatment, clean energy or public health. This is an assault on the intellectual and material foundations of modern society in the interests of militarism, reaction and corporate profit.

It must be stressed that these policies are not unique to Trump. The Biden administration laid the political groundwork by adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, which equates criticism of Israel with antisemitism. Biden’s Department of Education launched dozens of Title VI investigations into universities over campus protests. He publicly denounced student encampments and oversaw their brutal suppression. Trump is simply taking the bipartisan assault on free speech and democratic rights to its logical conclusion.

The Democratic and Republican parties are united in

their campaign to suppress the mass opposition to the Gaza genocide that has erupted across US campuses. They are alarmed by the political radicalization of youth, who increasingly recognize the Palestinian struggle as part of a global fight against capitalism and imperialism.

The *World Socialist Web Site* calls on students, faculty and researchers to reject all efforts to divide or silence them under the false banner of “combating antisemitism,” which is being weaponized to outlaw dissent. The defense of democratic rights on campus must be linked to the broader struggles of the working class against exploitation, inequality and imperialist war.

This fight cannot rely on university officials, Democrats or the trade unions, all of which are tied to the capitalist state and complicit in the repression. What is needed is a new leadership rooted in the working class, guided by a socialist program that treats education, science and culture as social rights, not commodities.

The defunding of UCLA is a warning of authoritarianism on the rise. The capitalist state is preparing for dictatorship, war abroad and violent repression at home. Only the socialist reorganization of society—under the democratic control of the working class—can defend science, truth and freedom and end capitalist war and oppression.



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