

AGB Leads National Call to Reaffirm and Uphold Independence of Higher Education

The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) is spearheading a national initiative to uphold the independence of higher education.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- In response to growing challenges compromising the autonomy of America's colleges and universities, the [Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges \(AGB\)](#) is leading a national effort to reaffirm and uphold the independence of [higher education](#) governance and fortify the principles that have long underpinned academic excellence and democratic vitality.



The independence of governing boards, central to [institutional autonomy](#), is under growing threat from political pressures, including funding tied to ideological compliance and attempts to control core institutional decisions regarding admissions, hiring, and mission execution. These intrusions jeopardize institutional quality, integrity, and the ability to serve students and communities effectively.

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Ross Mugler, AGB board chair and acting president and CEO

The U.S. Supreme Court's 1819 decision in *Dartmouth College v. Woodward* established enduring protections for institutional autonomy, shielding colleges and universities from shifting ideological and political influences. This foundation enables institutions to remain focused on their core mission: preparing students for success and producing knowledge for societal benefit. Building on this legacy, AGB is leading a national coalition to reaffirm and strengthen the essential principles of governance

independence and institutional autonomy in higher education.

“This initiative is not about partisanship, it's about principle,” said Ross Mugler, AGB board chair and acting president and CEO. “Institutional autonomy is essential to academic freedom, civic leadership, and innovation and is upheld by independent board governance. AGB is proud to lead this effort to reaffirm our shared responsibility to safeguard governance from politicization.”

This initiative calls on higher education leadership to reassert a commitment to governance independence and institutional autonomy at a time when external attempts to control board decisions—ranging from admissions and hiring to mission alignment—are on the rise.

American higher education leaders, advocates, and stakeholders must stand together to:

- Defend the autonomy of college and university governing boards as a cornerstone of constitutional freedoms.
- Reject political interference that undermines academic excellence and fiduciary stewardship.
- Reaffirm the principles of institutional independence and charter sanctity articulated in *Dartmouth College v. Woodward* as vital protections for our nation's future.

The initiative reflects AGB's mission to advance higher education as a public good by preparing governing boards to fulfill their fiduciary duties and model exemplary trusteeship. By upholding institutional independence and academic freedom, governing boards will sustain the conditions that have made U.S. higher education a global leader.

By signing a letter in support of the initiative, institutional leaders affirm their responsibility to resist undue influences and their commitment to preserving the values essential to higher education.

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