'Academic Freedom Isn't Negotiable’: Stand Up for Science Counters Education Department with Own Vision for Higher Ed

New educational compact defends academic freedom; reaffirms purpose and benefit of knowledge and higher education in the U.S.



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WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, September 10, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- In response to the Department of Education’s attempts to install the Trump administration’s agenda at U.S. universities via its 2025 compact and a follow up letter from Education Secretary, Stand Up for Science today announced the release of its own educational compact titled, “America's Compact For Higher Education.”

“Academic freedom, like the pursuit of independent science, is a part of the very fabric of our society — and it isn’t negotiable. This Administration is framing its attempts to get universities on board with its policies under the guise of education ‘reform,’ but many academics and scientists see this as an attempt to control universities’ hiring, curriculum, and research priorities,” said Dr. Colette Delawalla, Founder and CEO of Stand Up for Science.

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> *Dr. Colette Delawalla, Founder and CEO of Stand Up for Science*

America's Compact responds to the letter’s requests, outlining eleven principles that assert the purpose and value of knowledge and higher education and affirm the importance of academic freedom in higher education.

Early signers of the Compact include:
- The American Association of Colleges & Universities,
- The American Association of University Professors,

- The Alliance for Higher Education,
- American Federation of Teachers,
- Democracy Forward,
- Public Citizen,
- Nobel Laureates including Carolyn Bertozzi, Victor Ambros, Jack Szostak, Ardem Patapoutian, and Randy Schekman, and
- Professor Timothy Snyder.

"'America's Compact' starts from first principles, establishing the reasons why education requires academic freedom and self governance, as well as the need for institutions to serve the public good," said Cole Donovan, Director of Policy and Advocacy with Stand Up for Science.

Stand Up for Science posted the Compact on its website, and invites staff, faculty, students, parents, community members, alumni, and anyone else affiliated with a college or university to sign the Compact and share it with their university leaders. The Compact is open to the public to show their support for higher education by signing and sending to a school they care about or are connected to.

The Department of Education first announced its "Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education" in October 2025, which singled out nine universities and asked them to commit to a series of institutional changes. The compact received criticism from universities and higher education organizations as an attempt to compromise academic freedom and institutional independence in exchange for preferential funding. The compact was rejected by all nine universities targeted. On August 3, Education Secretary Linda McMahon sent a letter to university leaders, calling on them to describe their "commitments to rigorous teaching, pathbreaking research, and national service," and asks them to address a series of questions regarding their planned reforms by the end of the calendar year.

Delawalla and Donovan are available for comment and media appearances.

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Stand Up for Science is a grassroots, Washington, D.C. based, non-profit organization mobilizing the fight for science and democracy. Stand Up for Science was formed in February 2025 in response to actions affecting federal science agencies and funding of the American scientific ecosystem. On March 7th, Stand Up for Science mobilized over 50,000 people at 170+ events across the world on its first National Day of Action. Federal scientists across multiple agencies (NIH, EPA, NASA, FEMA) have chosen Stand Up for Science as the platform to publish their open letters of concern. Stand Up for Science is a 501(c)(4) non-profit organization [EIN: 33-4154429] and donations are not tax-deductible.

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