

# The Washington Post

## New Heterodox Academy initiative

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Over at Heterodox Academy, we have been hearing from students who are concerned that their universities exhibit a rigid ideological orthodoxy, with dissenting faculty members almost nonexistent and dissenting students afraid to speak their minds. We agree that this sort of academic climate is profoundly unhealthy: It tends to stifle the sort of uncensored intellectual inquiry that produces groundbreaking scholarship and robust education. Indeed, the Supreme Court itself has cautioned against a “pall of orthodoxy” in education: “The classroom is peculiarly the marketplace of ideas. The Nation’s future depends upon leaders trained through wide exposure to that robust exchange of ideas which discovers truth out of a multitude of tongues, [rather] than through any kind of authoritative selection.” *Keyishian v. Board of Regents*, 385 U. S. 589, 603 (1967) (internal quotations omitted).

Yale University understood this very well, for a time. And the University of Chicago understands it now. But, alas, this basic principle has been forgotten on countless campuses across the country. Heterodox Academy has, therefore, launched a new initiative to empower students to call for a more heterodox education. In collaboration with several students, we have generated three short resolutions that students may use to reaffirm the central importance of free speech and intellectual diversity on campus. Students who want an uncensored and heterodox education may propose these resolutions to their student governments, publicize them in student newspapers and use them to press for official policy changes:

### **[B]e it resolved that [our school] is a Heterodox University**

We make the following specific requests to the faculty and administration:

#### **1) Adopt the Chicago Principles on Freedom of Expression**

A clear way for the university to show commitment to viewpoint diversity is by adopting the University of Chicago’s Principles on Freedom of Expression, which state in part:

The University’s fundamental commitment is to the principle that debate or deliberation may not be suppressed because the ideas put forth are thought by some or even by most members of the University community to be offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrong-headed. It is for the individual members of the University community, not for the University as an institution, to make those

judgments for themselves, and to act on those judgments not by seeking to suppress speech, but by openly and vigorously contesting the ideas that they oppose. Indeed, fostering the ability of members of the University community to engage in such debate and deliberation in an effective and responsible manner is an essential part of the University's educational mission.

We request that the Faculty Senate endorse the "Chicago Principles" as official university policy.

## **2) Implement a non-obstruction policy for protests**

We support the right of all students to protest against speakers and writers with whom they disagree, but we ask that protests be done in a way that does not deprive other students of their rights to speak and hear. When members of our community shout down a speaker, or take other actions intended to make it more difficult for a speaker to speak or for an audience to hear, they are practicing obstruction, censorship, and sometimes intimidation, not free speech. Such practices have no place in any academic community. We request that the university formulate and enforce a non-obstruction policy. As stated in the Chicago Principles: "The University has a solemn responsibility not only to promote a lively and fearless freedom of debate and deliberation, but also to protect that freedom when others attempt to restrict it."

## **3) Improve viewpoint diversity**

We request that the university include viewpoint diversity, and particularly political diversity, in its diversity policies and in its efforts to diversify the faculty and the curriculum. We want to encounter a range of viewpoints in the classroom, just as we will after we graduate.

Adoption of these resolutions will mark a school as a "Heterodox University" – a safe space for intellectual diversity and uncensored speech. Heterodox Academy stands ready to help tailor these resolutions to specific universities and to help support students who wish to promote these principles. For more information, click [here](#).

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