



[Our Commitment to Columbia's Future - YouTube](#)

Dear members of the Columbia community,

As summer unfolds in earnest, I'd like to offer a brief update about our status with the federal government and share what's on my mind as we reengage more deeply in those discussions. It's no exaggeration to say that everyone in our community has been affected by the government's actions and the corresponding public scrutiny. But the challenges for our research mission, and our entire institution, are becoming increasingly acute.

Columbia's top scientists are facing the decimation of decades of research. Graduate students, postdocs, mid-career researchers, and established, celebrated scientists, have all had their breakthroughs lauded by the world one minute and defunded the next. We're in danger of reaching a tipping point in terms of preserving our research excellence and the work we do for humanity.

At the same time, the landscape for higher education is shifting around us in many other ways—a broad scaling back of government funding, a more sweeping application of the endowment tax, proposed changes to federal student financial aid and loan programs, and restrictions on international students, long an integral part of our community.

I am working on these issues daily, along with the top leaders at Columbia, and we are joining with other universities, through multiple channels, to advocate, powerfully and strategically, for the value of our mission. We are working with our research task force, which is meeting multiple times a week, to explore philanthropy, industry collaborations, and other alternative funding structures.

In my view, it is essential to restore our research partnership with the government, if possible. I will always advocate for conversation, as long as it is productive.

Our red lines remain the same and are defined by who we are and what we stand for. We must maintain our autonomy and independent governance. We decide who teaches at our institution, what they teach, and which students we admit. Any agreement we might reach must align with those values. The government has the ability to regulate us, and we are committed to following the law.

I'd like to say, however, that following the law and attempting to resolve a complaint is not capitulation. That narrative is incorrect. As a former journalist, I would encourage anyone covering Columbia to look closer and do better.

It is simply a fact that antisemitic incidents surged on our campus after October 7th, and that is

unacceptable. I've seen too many students, faculty members, and staff in absolute anguish. We engaged in conversations with the government about their concerns—which were and continue to be our concerns and our community's concerns. We've committed to change, we've made progress, but we have more to do.

Free expression and academic freedom are also core values. No department at Columbia has been put into receivership. And all of our community members—should be able to speak out on issues about which they are passionate. But it is incumbent on all of us, on our entire academic community, to make sure our students are exposed to a wide range of ideas—to challenge conformity of thought and orthodoxy of any sort—and to encourage a healthy respect for each other and our rules.

We have a lot to balance. Safeguarding the critical work of our research mission and what it provides to the world, is a moral responsibility. As is safeguarding our integrity.

I know we can meet this challenge, guided by our values, our resilience, and a uniquely Columbia problem-solving spirit, which is on display across the institution right now. I am grateful so many are standing up to help. I will be relying on all of you.

Sincerely,

Claire Shipman

Acting President, Columbia University in the City of New York