

AUTO was founded to ensure that no university stands alone in the face of ideological or political pressure. Through shared action, public solidarity, and legal coordination, AUTO protects the foundations of higher education.



Charter of the American University Treaty Organization (AUTO)

Unity in Defense of Truth

PREAMBLE

The Member Institutions of the American University Treaty Organization (AUTO), united by a shared commitment to academic liberty, open inquiry, and the defense of scholarly independence, hereby establish this Charter in recognition of the growing need for collective vigilance and mutual support in the face of politically motivated threats to higher education.

Guided by the principles that knowledge is a public good and that universities must remain autonomous bastions of truth, we affirm that an attack upon one is an attack upon all.

Article I — Purpose

AUTO is constituted for the purpose of providing collective defense and coordinated response among member research universities in the United States when any individual member faces an external, politically motivated attack that seeks to undermine its autonomy, scholarly mission, or faculty.

Article II — Definition of Politically Motivated Attack

A politically motivated attack shall include, but not be limited to:

- Legislative or executive action targeting a member institution on ideological grounds;
- Coordinated public campaigns designed to discredit, defund, or delegitimize academic programs or personnel;
- Unlawful restrictions on speech, research, or institutional operation motivated by political partisanship or populist pressure.

Determination of such attacks shall follow procedures outlined in Annex A.

Article III — Collective Response

The parties agree that a politically motivated attack on one Member Institution shall be deemed an attack on all Member Institutions.

Upon confirmation by the AUTO Council, Member Institutions shall undertake proportionate and public actions in defense of the attacked institution, which may include:

- Coordinated legal and policy advocacy

- Public statements of support and solidarity
- Temporary joint faculty appointments or research partnerships
- Public boycotts or academic disengagement from hostile actors
- Pooling of security or crisis-response resources

The specific form of response shall be determined per the protocols of Annex B.

Article IV — Council and Secretariat

1. AUTO shall be governed by a **Council**, composed of one appointed representative from each Member Institution.
 2. The Council shall meet biannually and convene emergency sessions as necessary.
 3. A **Secretariat**, rotating biennially among Member Institutions, shall coordinate communication, record-keeping, and convening of emergency councils.
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Article V — Membership

Eligibility for Membership shall be limited to:

- Non-profit, accredited U.S. research universities
- Demonstrable adherence to academic freedom and institutional independence
- Endorsement of this Charter and ratification by institutional governance

Applications shall follow the form and procedures outlined in Annex C.

Article VI — Amendments

This Charter may be amended upon two-thirds vote of the AUTO Council, provided that proposed amendments are submitted in writing no fewer than 30 days before the scheduled vote.

Article VII — Ratification and Accession

This Charter shall enter into force upon ratification by ten (10) Founding Institutions. Thereafter, accession shall be open to qualifying institutions through the process described in Annex C.

Annex A — Protocol for Determining Politically Motivated Attacks

Article I — Criteria for Evaluation

The AUTO Council shall consider a case to meet the threshold of a politically motivated attack if it meets at least two of the following criteria:

1. **Ideological Targeting:** The institution is publicly targeted for its academic programs, faculty, or research agendas on explicitly political or ideological grounds.
2. **Disproportionate Governmental Action:** Legislative or executive action is undertaken specifically and uniquely against the member institution without just cause or standard precedent.
3. **Coordinated Disinformation:** A demonstrable campaign is launched to damage the institution's public trust through manipulation, distortion, or misrepresentation.
4. **Institutional Vulnerability:** The attack materially endangers the university's funding, accreditation, or academic operations.

Article II — Emergency Hearing

Upon formal petition by a member university, the AUTO Secretariat shall convene a **24-hour emergency review committee**, composed of five randomly selected Council delegates, to issue a preliminary ruling.

A full Council vote shall follow within 72 hours.

Annex B — Member Responsibilities in Defense Measures

Upon recognition of an attack as defined under Article II of the Charter, each Member Institution shall be expected to:

1. **Issue a Public Statement** within 48 hours expressing institutional solidarity and support.
2. **Coordinate Resources** such as legal consultation, public affairs assistance, and media expertise.
3. **Mobilize Faculty Collaboration**, including shared course offerings, research partnerships, or public symposia.
4. **Activate Boycott Protocols** against aggressor actors if approved by a two-thirds Council vote.
5. **Contribute to the Emergency Academic Defense Fund**, maintained by the AUTO Secretariat to provide immediate aid.

Failure to fulfill these responsibilities without due cause may result in censure by the AUTO Council.

Annex C — Membership Application Form

Institution Name: _____

Year Established: _____

President or Chancellor: _____

Accrediting Body: _____

Please attach:

- A formal endorsement of the AUTO Charter, signed by university leadership
- Evidence of commitment to academic freedom and autonomy
- Statement of willingness to uphold Articles I through III of the Charter

Council Decision: ☐ Approved ☐ Denied ☐ Further Review

Date: _____ **Council Chair Signature:** _____