SPECIAL REPORT

of the

RULES COMMITTEE

concerning

THE RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH MUTUAL ACADEMIC DEFENSE COMPACTS IN DEFENSE OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM, FREE EXPRESSION, INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY, AND THE RESEARCH ENTERPRISE

Presented at the
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Background

A group of faculty requested that the Rules Committee or the Research Council submit this resolution for consideration by the Faculty Senate. In the last several weeks, governmental bodies have defunded multiple institutions, including Columbia University, Harvard University, Princeton University, and the University of Pennsylvania while providing neither evidence nor due process. Restoration of funding has been held out in exchange for government overreach into universities in ways that violate academic freedom and institutional self-governance. Executive Orders and Dear Colleague letters seek to censor speech and mandate programming at publicly funded universities. The government has deployed its Homeland Security Department ICE agents to baselessly revoke student visas in order to arrest and detain international students as punishment for exercising their First Amendment rights. So far, these events have happened in relative isolation, with little communication and coordinated response across affected or soon-to-be-affected institutions. This resolution seeks common ground across institutions uniting in a common defense to collectively safeguard their shared values of academic freedom, free expression, democratic governance, civic responsibility, scientific discovery, and the pursuit of knowledge.

Resolution to Establish Mutual Academic Defense Compacts in Defense of Academic Freedom, Free Expression, Institutional Integrity, and the Research Enterprise

Whereas, escalating actions by governmental bodies threaten foundational principles of American higher education, including the autonomy of university governance, the integrity of scientific research, and the protection of the freedoms of inquiry, speech, and association;

Whereas, political actors have targeted individual institutions with legal, financial, and political incursions designed to undermine their public mission, silence dissenting voices, and exert unlawful control over academic inquiry;

Whereas, governmental actors have signaled a willingness to censor curricula, restrict inquiry, target scholars and students, and carry out politically motivated detentions;

Whereas, America's Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) represent a longstanding tradition of academic collaboration, research excellence, and commitment to democratic values and shared governance;

Whereas, these nearly 250 APLU institutions represent more than one million faculty and staff members and 6.6 million undergraduate and graduate students;

Whereas, institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts—public and private, large and small—share a longstanding commitment to academic freedom, democratic governance, civic responsibility, and the pursuit of knowledge for the public good;

Whereas, Massachusetts is home to a diverse and nationally respected higher education ecosystem that serves hundreds of thousands of students and employs tens of thousands of educators, researchers, and staff whose work supports innovation, critical inquiry, social mobility, and community engagement;

Whereas, the preservation of one institution's integrity is the concern of all, and an infringement against one institution shall be considered an infringement against all;

Be it resolved that, the University of Massachusetts Amherst Faculty Senate urges the President of the University of Massachusetts system, the Chancellor of the University, and the Faculty Senate Rules Committee to formally propose and help establish a Public and Land-Grant University Mutual Academic Defense Compact (PLUMADC) among all public and land grant universities that would like to participate;

Be it further resolved that, the Faculty Senate of the University of Massachusetts Amherst urges the President of the University of Massachusetts system, the Chancellor of the University, and the Faculty Senate Rules Committee to formally propose and help establish a Massachusetts Higher Education Mutual Academic Defense Compact (MHEMADC) among public and private colleges and universities across the Commonwealth that would like to participate;

Be it further resolved that, under these compacts, participating institutions shall commit meaningful support—financial, legal, organizational, and/or strategic—to a shared or distributed defense infrastructure designed to respond immediately and collectively to attacks by the governmental actors on any member institution;

Be it further resolved that, these compacts shall facilitate the mobilization of institutional resources—including legal counsel, governance experts, public affairs professionals, faculty governance leaders, research capacity, and media relations—to coordinate a unified and robust response, including but not limited to:

- Legal representation and, where appropriate, countersuit actions;
- Public communication strategies to counter misinformation and defend academic principles;
- Filing of amicus briefs, publication of expert testimony, and other legal interventions;
- Legislative advocacy and coordinated policy engagement at the state and federal levels;
- The development of collaborative strategies and frameworks to diversify funding streams beyond the federal government; and
- Rapid-response research and public-education initiatives;

Be it further resolved that, this resolution be transmitted to the leadership of all Public and Land-Grant Universities across the nation and all institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as well as their shared governance bodies;

Be it finally resolved that, the President of the University of Massachusetts system, Chancellor of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and the Faculty Senate Rules Committee take leading roles in convening summits of faculty and administration leaders to initiate the implementation of these Compacts and affirm the collective commitment to defend academic freedom, free expression, institutional autonomy, and the public mission of higher education in the Commonwealth.

MOTION: 33-25 **That the Faculty Senate adopt the Resolution to Establish Mutual Academic Defense Compacts in Defense of Academic Freedom, Free Expression, Institutional Integrity, and the Research Enterprise, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 25-080**

APPENDIX

Appendix: Statewide Massachusetts Coalition: Why It's Feasible

Shared Values Across Institutions

Massachusetts institutions—public and private—have a strong collective identity tied to academic excellence, freedom of inquiry, and democratic ideals. Most institutions already collaborate through organizations like the **Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts (AICUM)** and the **Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE)**. These can serve as potential convening platforms.

2. Historical Precedents

There are already networks for cross-institutional coordination (e.g., **Five Colleges Consortium**, **Boston Consortium**, and **Massachusetts Green High Performance Computing Center**). These show that institutions can and do cooperate on shared infrastructure, policy, and advocacy when mutual interests are clear.

3. Recent Political Context

No institution is immune. Elite private institutions now recognize that what happens to "others" (often public universities or HBCUs in other states) could happen to them. That fear can become solidarity.