

Higher Education's Confused, Agnostic Values and Practices Continue to Stoke Antisemitism and Violence

By Warren C Nagler and Philip H Cullom

In recent years, Universities have gone *off mission*.

A particularly troubling example of this departure from mission has been [the rise and persistence of antisemitism on North American university campuses](#). Institutions that were founded upon the pursuit of truth, intellectual inquiry, and open debate, have too often responded to anti-Jewish hostility with ambiguity, indifference, delay, or public relations statements. [Formal investigations highlighted the inability of university administrators to maintain both free expression and student safety](#).

Following the October 7, 2023 terrorist attacks by Hamas against Israel, [many universities experienced a dramatic increase in reports of antisemitic incidents](#). Jewish students at many institutions reported harassment, intimidation, exclusion from student activities, vandalism, and in some cases calls for violence against Israelis and Jews. While universities have published statements protecting free expression, many have struggled to distinguish between legitimate political debate and rhetoric that demonizes Jewish students or denies safe, equal participation in campus life.

Harvard University, the oldest institution of higher education in America and the university whose [Veritas motto symbolizes the Pursuit of Truth & Higher Knowledge](#), became a focal point of national concern. The controversy surrounding the public response of student organizations to the October 7 attacks, subsequent campus demonstrations, and [the widely publicized congressional testimony of three university presidents raised serious questions](#) about whether university leadership was prepared to defend the rights of its student body and its mission.

Yet Harvard persists to protect its ways. This author recently complained in a letter to Harvard President Dr. Alan Garber MD PhD regarding [his recent public statement that if a student chants "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free"](#) in an anti-Jewish or anti-Israel demonstration, which is a violent, irresponsible statement advocating the elimination or expulsion of all 7m million Jews presently residing in Israel, that such behavior constitutes Free Speech.

In a recent conference call with supporters of Harvard Hillel (hillel.harvard.edu), the CEO of a powerful 25,000-member alumni group, **The 1636 Forum**, stated that Harvard has not attempted to track nor report actual progress, basic performance measures. Other universities have defined performance measures and set up publicly accessible dashboards.

At [The Harvard Business School, a rogue Muslim International Economics Professor wrote and planned to teach a published case study Divestment from Israel \(March 2026\). It was detected](#)

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[and the class where it was to be taught was cancelled](#). However, the truth about the lack of institutional control at Harvard was revealed.

In the arrogance of its \$50 billion plus Endowment Harvard, Harvard President Alan Garber responded to my letter accompanying the reduction in my annual donation from the \$10,000 level to \$1.00 (I donated to Harvard Hillel, instead) "I'm grateful for your candor and understand that your values guide your philanthropy." His attitude is nonchalant and dismissive. Many agree with my stance, accurately *Marking the Value of Harvard to the Market* – \$1.00 or less.

Recently, [UCLA attempted to settle a lawsuit with the Department of Justice over a group of antisemitic UCLA students who committed seriously violent acts against Jewish students](#) and created Jewish exclusion zones — all while the school did nothing to stop it. The US Justice Department lawsuit against the University of California claimed, "[Antisemitic hatred against UCLA's Jewish and Israeli students reached a point where students were physically assaulted, injured, excluded from campus, and deprived of educational opportunities because of their perceived Jewish or Israeli heritage](#),"; accusing UCLA of allowing for [vile antisemitic attacks](#) on Jewish students on the campus following the Hamas attacks on October 7.

The University of Toronto, McGill University and other Canadian institutions have faced similar controversies. [120 universities have endorsed the University of Chicago's Principles which state that Chicago'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...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."](#)

The ADL, in an attempt to pander to more liberal Jews, underplayed the current situation. In their most recent survey, [Campus Antisemitism Report Card](#), the ADL said that half of Assessed Institutions Earn Higher Grades as Clearer Standards and Enforcement Take Hold; but new student survey data contradicts this revealing persistent anti-Jewish attitudes and ongoing exposure to antisemitic behavior.

Shira Goodman, ADL Vice President of Advocacy and head of the Ronald Birnbaum Center to Combat Antisemitism in Education, said "[The campuses showing the greatest improvement are those that treat antisemitism as an ongoing responsibility, not a one-time response. Even as institutional grades improve, the persistence of anti-Jewish attitudes and the limited reach of antisemitism education identified in the survey show that universities cannot take their foot off the gas. Policy progress must translate into lived experience for Jewish students, staff and faculty.](#)"

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The ineffectiveness of Jewish organizations to do much more than raise money and put on events, results in persistent and worsening antisemitism. In fact, since [the ADL started publishing its Global 100 Index of Antisemitism, the percentage of those in the world that harbor antisemitic attitudes nearly doubled from 25% in 2014 to 46% in 2025, a span of only 11 years.](#) Unfortunately, Jewish organizations are failing.

These developments expose a deeper problem within higher education. Universities increasingly speak the language of inclusion while often applying those principles selectively. Diversity has come to mean demographic diversity not diversity of thought. Faculty and administrators frequently promote ideologies that divide individuals into categories like oppressor and oppressed, reducing complex historical realities into polarizing narratives. [At Harvard, the Office of EDI issued an alarming statement "Staff Commitment to Dismantling White Supremacy" in 2020.](#)

The rise of antisemitism on campus reflects a failure to uphold the foundational virtues upon which the pursuit of knowledge depends. In the word of Hanna Holborn Gray, University of Chicago President (1978 to 1993), ["Education should not be intended to make people comfortable; it is meant to make them think."](#)

The persistence of antisemitism on campus stands in direct conflict with the four virtues that frame the mission of higher education: Humility, Dignity, Character, and Ability.

Humility requires acknowledging the limits of one's knowledge and remaining open to evidence that challenges existing beliefs. The history of the Jewish people, the Holocaust, Zionism, the creation of the State of Israel, and the broader Arab-Israeli conflict are among the most complex subjects in modern history. Yet many students encounter these issues through slogans, social media narratives, and ideological activism. Humility demands the willingness to study competing perspectives, examine evidence critically, and recognize that complex questions rarely yield simplistic answers. Humankind must respect higher ideals, and the will of God.

Dignity requires recognizing the inherent worth of every individual regardless of religion, ethnicity, nationality, or political belief. Universities cannot claim to be inclusive institutions while permitting Jewish students to be harassed, intimidated, excluded, or held collectively responsible for the actions of a foreign government.

Character demands moral consistency. Personal and Intellectual integrity require the courage to confront prejudice regardless of its source or political convenience. Character is demonstrated not through statements and task forces, but through actions that defend principles, regardless of popularity or political differences.

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Ability refers not only to basic skills but also to critical thinking, thoughtful reasoning, and achievement of one's potential. Faculty and students must support the identification, development and celebration of individuals' skills.

The original goal of Higher Education was [to discover the Truth originally ordained by God](#). It is something to be pursued through inquiry, evidence, reason, and intellectual courage. Universities fail when ideology supersedes scholarship, activism supplants education, and intimidation replaces dialogue.

If American higher education is to reclaim public trust, it must recommit itself to the pursuit of the infinite knowledge created and placed by God throughout the Universe. All universities must examine and adopt the University of Chicago Principles. The pursuit of infinite knowledge cannot coexist with tolerance of antisemitism, intellectual intimidation, or the suppression of open debate. Diversity or differences cannot be weaponized.

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The two authors, Philip Hart Cullom MBA '88 and Warren C Nagler MBA '88, are both members of the HBS MBA 1988 class who came from and pursued very different paths after Harvard. Warren was an entrepreneur before coming to Harvard and has pursued a very diverse business career as a senior executive in Finance & Operations, serving in multiple CFO positions in Consumer Products, Technology & Financial Services, COO in both Consumer Products & Financial Services, and a Management Consultant to Fortune 500 firms. Phil was a career Naval Officer & Nuclear Engineer, rising to Deputy Chief of Naval Operations while leading Task Forces on Energy & Innovation as a Vice Admiral in the Navy. Phil recently completed his term as a Member of the Harvard University Board of Overseers and delivered the keynote address at the Harvard ROTC Commissioning Ceremony 2024.

The tragedy of October 7th and the challenges of 2024 on the Harvard campus brought them together again to discuss ways to bring the very diverse groups of Harvard Affiliates together in a positive way. The authors advocate healthy Socratic learning and discussion environments that choose plurality over separatism, highlight each university's leadership in the advancement of knowledge & research, and help us all work together to achieve a superior humankind condition.

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