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Consent

Manage options



Columbia was the first victim of the Trump administration's wrath. Harvard was not far behind.

Three weeks after President Donald Trump's administration cut \$400 million in federal funding to Columbia on March 7, 2025, it placed \$8.7 billion in federal grants and \$256 million in contracts for Harvard

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Though she [redacted] hadn't given much thought to how a second term could threaten the numerous grants that funded her research. Frye, a professor at the School of Social Work and co-director of Columbia's Social Intervention Group, does research that focuses on HIV prevention—more specifically, on prevention among gay, bisexual, and “same-gender-loving” men who have sex with men of color.

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annual grants, which she expected to receive on March 1, 2023, didn't arrive. Concern set in. She grew worried that the entire prepositional phrase of the study's title explaining who the study was for—same-gender-loving men—had been flagged.

Preemptively altering the language to release their funding was a distinctly uncomfortable decision to make. The phrase "same-gender-loving" was integral to the leadership team, helmed by Black gay men—which

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of award came. Their work continued.

But post-deal, her team's dynamics shifted. "Every team meeting started with people crying," Frye said. They were, in a word, distraught.

Seven months after the deal was signed, people are still crying. "When I say there are tears in almost every meeting, I mean it," Frye said.

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The notice of award came. Their work continued.



students are weeping, faculty are weeping, and angry.

If nothing else, she had hoped principle would make Columbia reluctant to acquiesce to demands. When the list of 13 demands were ultimately agreed upon, spirits dimmed: “There is a feeling of tremendous abandonment, right?”

“I sort of—I guess, naïvely—thought that a place like Columbia would pride she s



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The group sought to make clear that they wanted “to preserve academic freedom just as much as any humanities or social science professor wants to preserve academic freedom,” Malinsky said. “And we care about our students just as much as any humanities or social science professor cares about their students.”

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complaints lodged against Columbia would be formally investigated or that the funding cuts would otherwise go through a traditional legal process. He was shocked to see Columbia bypass that.

Despite Malinsky's and Frye's efforts—cosigned by thousands of students, alumni and faculty—Columbia signed the deal. University administration vowed it was the only possible solution.

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Harvard's fr... most of her fellow alumni were asleep. “It was definitely a gut punch,” she said. “It was like, ‘you have got to be kidding me.’”

The shock wore off quickly, though. The Trump administration was “trying to litigate Harvard to death,” she said.

As she spoke to other alumni, a question started to circulate: “Oh my god, what are we going to do?”

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Initial Crimson Courage, for which Kim now serves as the co-chair of  
 communications, is a group of 15,000 to 20,000 Harvard alumni  
 dedicated to defending academic freedom and higher education from  
 Trump's attacks. Its numbers far trump the various efforts of Columbia  
 alumni to organize: Columbia Alumni for Academic Freedom, the  
 largest signature movement from Columbia alumni, listed 5,000  
 signatories on an April 2025 statement denouncing federal oversight.

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 education," he said.

But, when the moment arrived, he said, he "had an obligation to stand  
 up." Initial Crimson Courage calls focused on making sure Harvard  
 didn't cave to Trump. Then, Harvard President Alan Garber resisted a  
 list of demands the federal government set. The group "immediately  
 pivoted," Rapoport said, to being supportive of Harvard because its

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Since the March cancellation of funding, many Harvard alumni have grown prouder of their alma mater.

At the Harvard commencement ceremony in May, Garber received numerous standing ovations during his address—especially after making a point to welcome international students. At the same time,

Harvard's alumni have shown their support for their alma mater over the years.

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For Kim, whose niece is an undergraduate at Columbia, she recognizes that trusting and liking college administrations is not a given at all schools facing Trump's threats. She hopes that Harvard can be a beacon for other schools that, unlike Columbia, have yet to settle. “It's

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also the fact that we realize there's an existential threat," she said.

Harvard can do better, of course, she said. But, ultimately, "They've done a pretty remarkable job. I'm impressed," she said. "There are things that I think Harvard could do better. But you know what? What university doesn't?"

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For Johnson, co-president of Harvard's Queer Students Association, those changes were devastating. During his first two and a half years at Harvard, support for diverse groups was run primarily through and by Harvard staff. Now, the brunt is on student organizers like himself.

When he was a first-year, "We had events that we could attend that were entirely planned by the university, entirely planned by our office, or entirely planned by our staff," he told *The Eye*. "But now, all queer



...incredibly busy schedules, incredibly busy lives and other commitments and responsibilities.” The onus is on him to apply for grants, plan events, and distribute funding and resources to students in need.



At the fall 2026 student activities fair, he said, students approached the Queer Students Association table confused. “They thought it was against the rules to have a queer organization anymore,” he said.

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Rapport s [redacted] cold feet. “If you can bring the higher education system under the thumb of the government,” he said, “that’s a very important part in being able to impose authoritarianism.”

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Frye and Malinsky have watched Harvard’s extended fight from an institution that is no longer fighting. It brings up upsetting questions



administration that signing the July 25 deal was the only path forward for Columbia.



Harvard's ongoing litigation proves that it's "demonstrably false that there was no other way for Columbia to behave at that moment, because other universities and other institutions took other paths," Malinsky said. "And Columbia had those options available to it as well."

"The Frye

Time

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March 2025

**March 3, 2025**  
The Federal Task Force to Combat Antisemitism announces it is considering halting working orders amounting to \$51.4 million in contracts with Columbia.

**March 7, 2025**  
Following through on a previous threat made by House Republicans, the Trump administration cuts \$400 million in federal funding to Columbia.

Interim University President Katrina

**March 10, 2025**  
Columbia and Harvard are two of 60



not make clear if the University would make a legal attempt at restoring funding.

antisemitism and threatening discipline if not adequately addressed.

**March 14, 2025**

In a follow-up letter, the Trump administration lists nine requirements Columbia must meet to restore federal funding.

**March 19, 2025**

A day before the deadline, Armstrong addresses the demands in a

Abolishing the University Judicial Board, banning masks, and granting Public

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**March 21, 2025**  
Armstrong de  
Journal's re  
pledges her personal support of the changes. "Any suggestion that these measures are illusory, or lack my personal support, is unequivocally false," Armstrong wrote in a statement to the University. "These changes are real, and they are right for Columbia."

**March 28, 2025**

In an unexpected change of leadership, Armstrong steps down as interim president and is replaced by Claire Shipman, CC '86, SIPA '94, who was serving as co-chair of the board of trustees.



the decision, calling it an "important step" in negotiations. in contracts for Harvard are put under review.

April 2025

**April 1, 2025**

According to a leaked transcript, the federal government deposes Armstrong over antisemitism on

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Dozens of fac  
against  
oversight of Columbia,  
calling the acceptance  
of demands a violation  
of the First  
Amendment and  
academic freedom.

**April 21, 2025**

Faculty receive texts from the Equal Employment Opportunity

**April 18, 2025**

Shipman announces that the University is reviewing the University Senate. Student leaders decry the threatened overhaul.

**April 21, 2025**

Harvard sues the Trump administration over frozen funding.



**April 16, 2025**

Trump suggests the IRS should remove Harvard's tax exempt status on Truth Social. Per CNN, which cites sources "familiar with the matter," the IRS begins efforts to revoke Harvard's tax-exempt status.

Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem cancels an additional \$2.7 million in DHS

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been victim to nine types of discrimination. A week earlier, Columbia told its faculty it'd release their personal contact information to the federal government.

Shipman joins 200 university leaders in a statement condemning government interference in higher education. Notably, she was not an original signatory.

Program unless Harvard releases a report by April 30 on all crimes committed by international students.

May 2025



**May 6, 2025**

Columbia announces that nearly 180 researchers funded by

**May 7, 2025**

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cut.

**May 19, 2025**

Trump cuts another \$60 million in grants to Harvard, bringing the college's total of frozen or terminated grants to about \$3 billion.

**May 22, 2025**

Noem orders the DHS to revoke Harvard's Student and Exchange Visitor Program Portal certificate, barring Harvard from admitting international students. Noem says all current international students,

**May 23, 2025**

The Office for Civil Rights finds Columbia in violation of Title VI, citing "deliberate indifference" toward

**May 23, 2025**

Harvard sues the Trump administration over its stripped Student and Exchange Visitor Program



combating antisemitism.

total college enrollment, must transfer or lose legal status.

June 2025

**June 4, 2025**

The Department of Education announces that Columbia has failed to meet accreditation

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says a deal between Columbia and the government has not been finalized yet.

**July 22, 2025**

University Rules Administrator Gregory Wawro announces that more than 70 students who took part in the May 7 Butler protest

**July 23, 2025**

Four months after the initial funding cuts,



... had their degrees  
revoked. Later  
investigation by  
Spectator reveals that  
Wawro recommended  
to the University  
Judicial Board that  
more students be  
expelled than  
ultimately were.

... over the course of  
three years to settle its  
civil rights  
investigations and  
restore terminated  
federal grants. In  
addition, the University  
vows to release  
admissions data of  
rejected and admitted  
students to the  
government and  
provide data  
concerning all  
disciplinary actions  
resulting in expulsions

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Secretary Linda McMahon. "They've been very bad. Don't negotiate."

**September 2025**

**September 3, 2025**

A federal judge rules that funding can not be withheld from Harvard and rules that the





September 29, 2025

Harvard Corporation senior fellow Penny Pritzker tells the Harvard Crimson she has "no idea" how ongoing negotiations between the White House and Harvard will play out, but casts doubt on Harvard paying \$500 million.

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Source: Spectator reporting  
Graphic by Wilson Zhen

*University News Editor Spencer Davis contributed reporting.*

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