

LEGEND LABS

Value and Values

Reputation-related trends,
considerations and predictions
in higher education

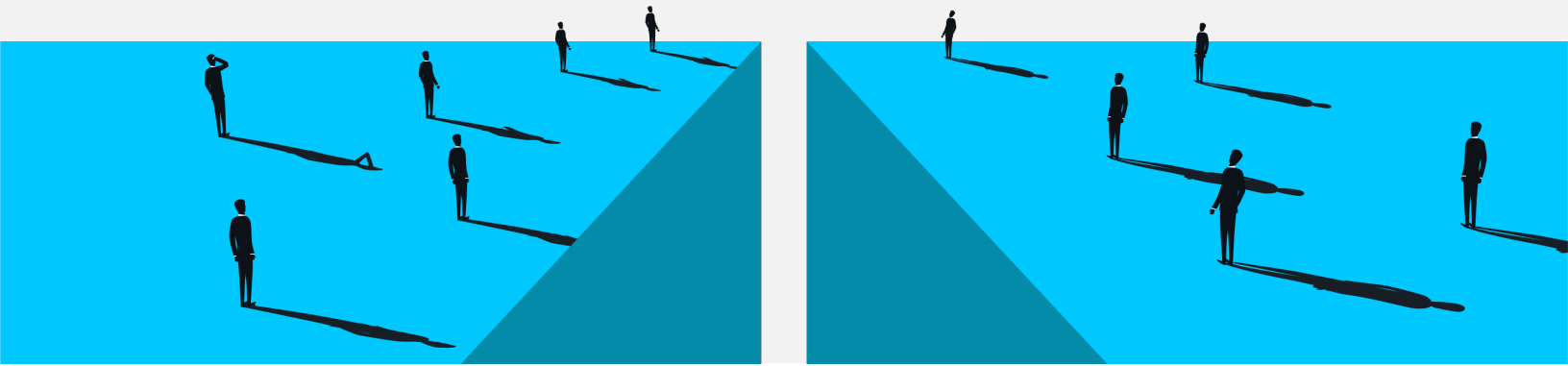
SEPTEMBER 2023

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Introduction



All conversations around higher education gravitate toward questions of *value* and questions of *values*. Do universities reflect American principles? Do they provide taxpayers and students with enough return on investment? From admissions to AI, higher education discussions cluster around these concerns, made all the more pressing by technological change, economic anxiety and political rancor.

VALUE



Rep. Burgess Owens
@RepBurgessOwens



For far too long, colleges have skirted accountability for sky-high tuition prices and low-value degree programs.

Higher education is an investment, and @EdWorkforceCmte wants to ensure our students receive a positive return.



Senator Alex Padilla
@SenAlexPadilla



California's community colleges shape not just the futures of so many families, but the future of our state and nation, too.

I was grateful to meet with some of the community colleges from throughout California to discuss the importance of accessible education in America.

VALUES



Congressman Greg Steube
@RepGregSteube

I'm glad to be a member of the Anti-Woke Caucus!
We must get serious about countering mandatory DEI and affirmative action policies in higher education if we have any hope of preserving pro-American and conservative values.



Senator Tom Carper
@SenatorCarper



Every student should have equal access to higher education. But today's #SCOTUS decision upends that promise, decades of precedent, and will have negative consequences for years to come.

In the 2022-2023 academic year (AY 22-23) higher education inhabited a generally calmer landscape compared to the peak pandemic semesters. However, as the next general election approaches — and as primary season ensues — campuses look set for a rockier AY 23-24. How colleges and universities navigate such a landscape can make or break their reputations. In this piece Legend Labs discusses:

- What drove online conversation in AY 22-23?
- How are concepts of value and values being contested?
- How are these conversations impacted by news media bias?
- What are the takeaways from AY 22-23 and what might we expect in AY 23-24?
- How can colleges and universities successfully navigate the current landscape?

Conversation Drivers (AY 22-23)

To perform this analysis, Legend Labs leveraged Meltwater, a digital and social media listening technology, to analyze online conversations around higher education. As conversation around the industry shifts in response to contemporary events, topics that preoccupied campus leaders in previous semesters — COVID-19, monuments, social justice protests — receded in proportion to other topics that came to prominence in AY 22-23. Legend Labs’ analysis of online conversation has identified five trending topics from the previous academic year.

GLOSSARY

Admissions: All references to university admissions, including affirmative action.

DEI: All references to DEI campus practices.

Free Speech: All references to free speech, academic freedom and the 1st amendment.

Tenure: All references to faculty tenure.

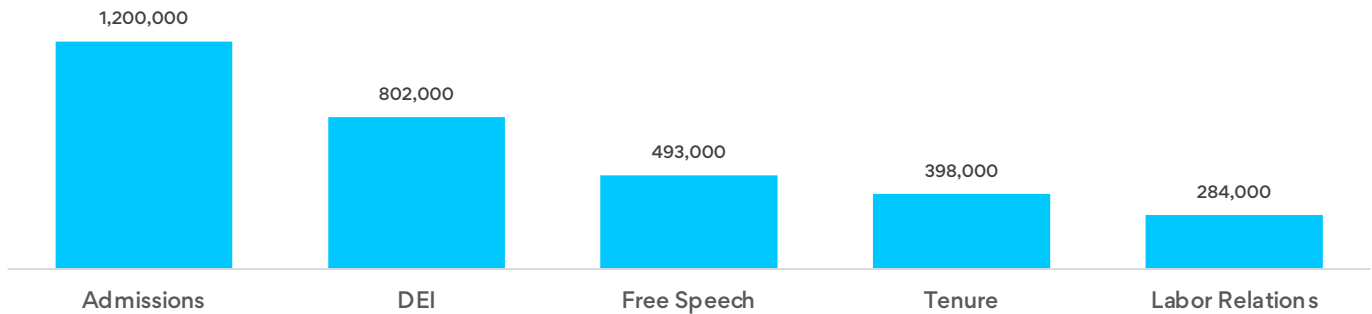
Labor Relations: All references to unionization and organized labor.

NOTE: All mentions of topics above have been collected with contextual higher education-related keywords, phrases and names. References to college athletics have been excluded.

POWERED BY  Meltwater

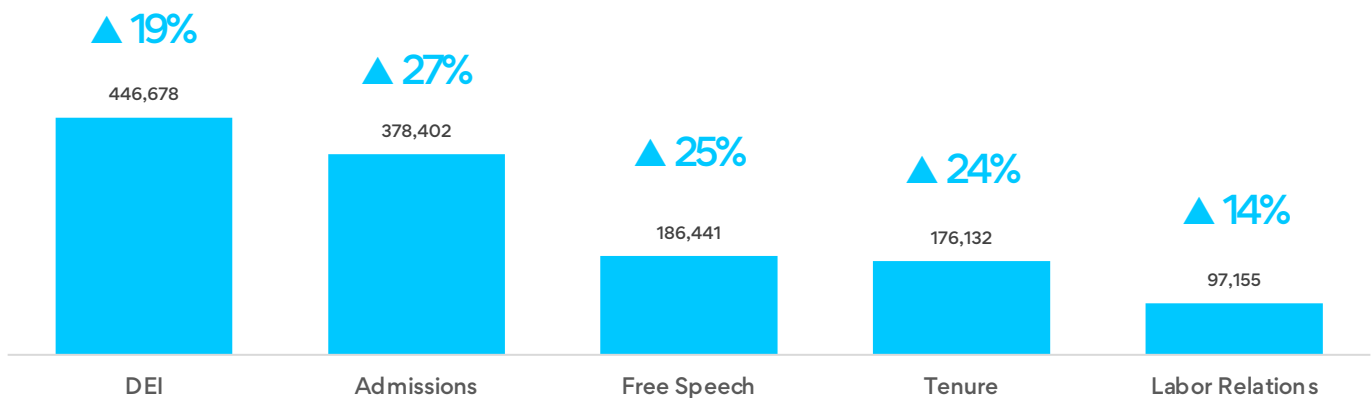
CONVERSATION VOLUME BY TOPIC ALL SOURCES

Mentions of key reputation-related topics in higher education AY 22-23



CONVERSATION VOLUME BY TOPIC NEWS

Mentions of key reputation-related topics in higher education AY 22-23



Disclaimer: Digital listening is an imperfect science as the keywords and phrases related to any given topic can vary widely. Analysis contained herein should be considered directionally accurate given this context. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to reach out. Sources for all content featured can be found [here](#).

Admissions



TOTAL MENTIONS AY 22-23

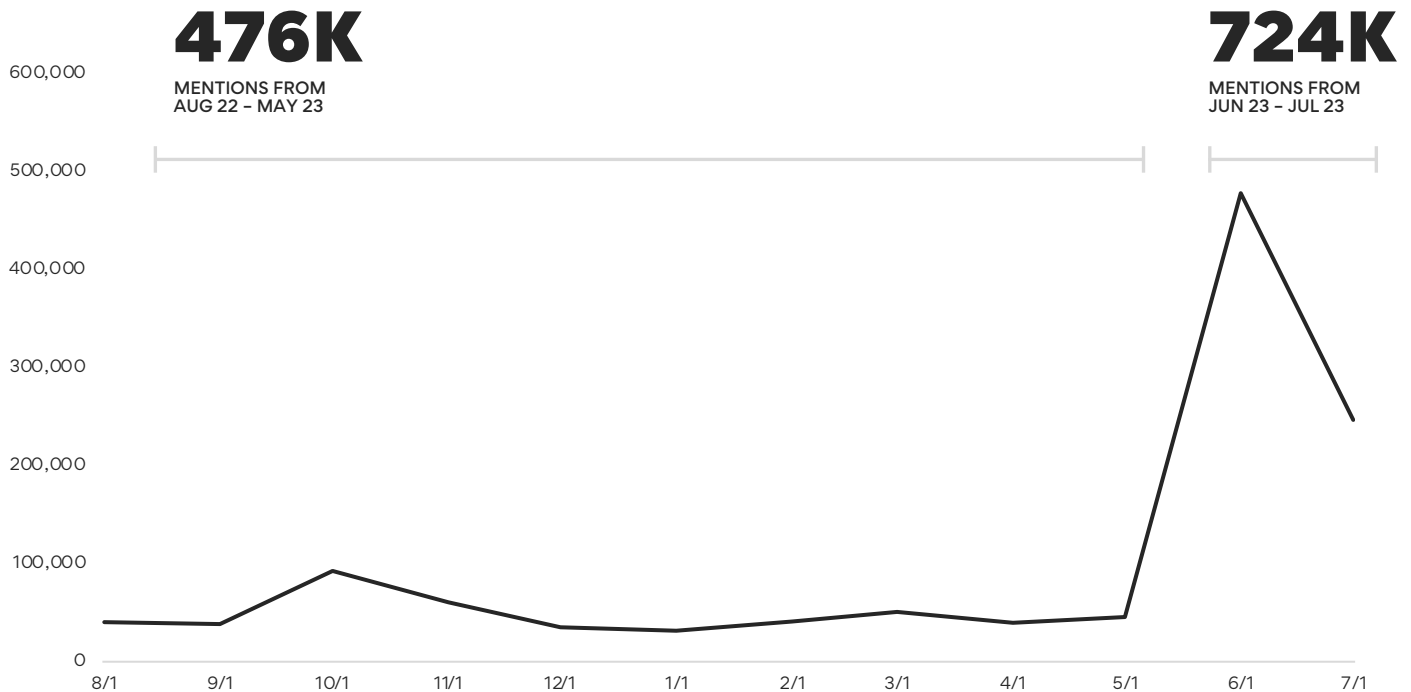
1.2M

TOTAL NEWS MENTIONS AY 22-23

378K ▲ 27% vs previous period

The Supreme Court’s ruling on affirmative action in June transformed the debate around college admissions overnight. After an initial double-digit bump in online discussion during October 2022 (driven by news of the Court’s decision to hear two cases involving Harvard College and the University of North Carolina, respectively) the conversation exploded tenfold across news and social media sites in June and July 2023 after the Supreme Court delivered its verdict.

ADMISSIONS MENTION VOLUME OVER TIME



Initial university responses to the Supreme Court’s ruling generally clustered around two strategic pillars. On the one hand, they affirmed the rule of law by stressing a commitment to complying with the Court’s decision. On the other, colleges unequivocally affirmed the fundamental value of a diverse student body (though without getting too specific).



We will certainly comply with the Court’s decision... deep and transformative teaching, learning, and research depend upon a community comprising people of many backgrounds, perspectives, and lived experiences.



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

Carolina remains firmly committed to bringing together talented students with different perspectives and life experiences... While not the outcome we hoped for, we will carefully review the Supreme Court’s decision and take any steps necessary to comply with the law.

The national conversation swiftly pivoted to university admissions processes. Though happening on a smaller scale, scrutiny of early and legacy admissions led many universities to announce policy changes.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

MENTION VOLUME OVER TIME

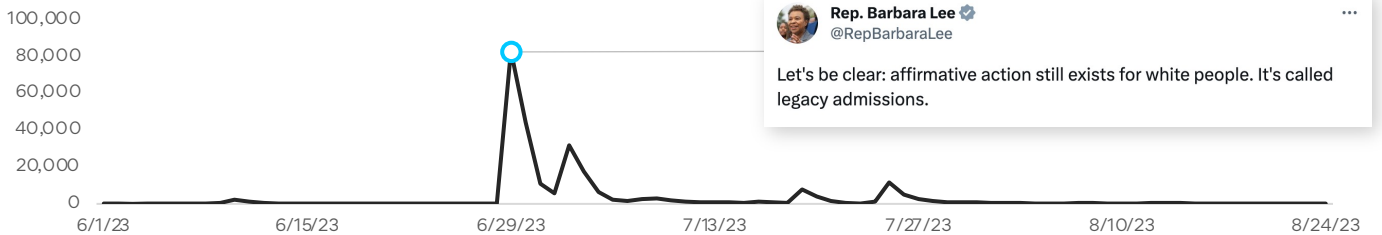


AP The Associated Press @AP

BREAKING: The U.S. Supreme Court rules colleges and universities must stop considering race in admissions, putting an end to affirmative action in higher education. apne.ws/IPmvUPv

LEGACY ADMISSIONS

MENTION VOLUME OVER TIME

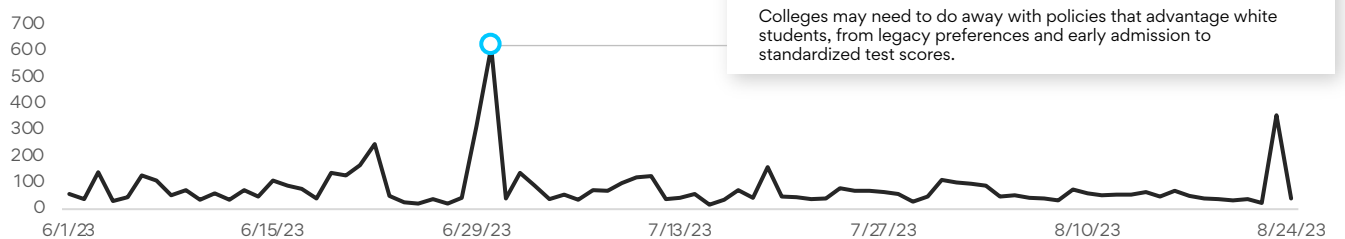


Rep. Barbara Lee @RepBarbaraLee

Let's be clear: affirmative action still exists for white people. It's called legacy admissions.

EARLY ADMISSIONS

MENTION VOLUME OVER TIME



abc NEWS

Colleges may need to do away with policies that advantage white students, from legacy preferences and early admission to standardized test scores.

While there is a political divide in public response to the decision, polling shows that the general public is opposed to considering race in college admissions.



Political liberals, who largely oppose the Court’s decision, had previously stressed the positive impact of affirmative action as a practical response to injustice, rather than its innate legitimacy as a value. By helping to shift the conversation to legacy admissions, they positioned the Court’s ruling as hypocritical (allowing negative but not positive discrimination) while also affirming their commitment to increasing student diversity on campus.



There's no other alternative method that will racially diversify a student body, other than the use of race as one factor of consideration.

- University of Texas professor Stella Flores, whose specialty is higher education and public policy

If SCOTUS was serious about their ludicrous “color-blindness” claims, they would have abolished legacy admissions, aka affirmative action for the privileged.

- NY Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

In contrast, political conservatives, who mostly supported the Court’s decision, portrayed affirmative action as the embodiment of “un-American” identity politics and flagrantly unfair. They also said they would monitor universities to ensure their revised admissions policies did not indirectly provide race-based advantages.



What is happening on college campuses today is that applicants are treated differently because of their race and ethnicity. Some are given a thumbs up. Some are given a thumbs down.

- Edward Blum, founder of Students for Fair Admissions

Schools will only stop when they are forced to stop. It's time for harsher measures. The next GOP Admin should cut off ALL federal funding to any school that collects racial data on applicants. Period.

- Charlie Kirk, Founder and President of Turning Point USA

For universities yet to make changes to legacy admissions policies, scrutiny is likely to persist, especially if news media continue to explore the connection between such policies and fundraising. For example, Lawyers for Civil Rights, a nonprofit based in Boston, filed suit alleging that Harvard’s use of legacy admissions violates Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. In response, the Department of Education launched an investigation.

HARVARD AND LEGACY ADMISSIONS

MENTION VOLUME OVER TIME



1. FORTUNE

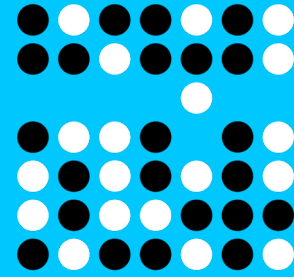
Harvard slapped with lawsuit over legacy admissions: ‘Your family’s last name and the size of your bank account are not a measure of merit’



Education Department opens investigation into Harvard’s legacy admissions

Similar litigation will likely surface in the coming year. Indeed, a case is already pending that would outlaw efforts that are race-neutral on their face but where racial data are used to measure their effectiveness. In addition, anti-affirmative action groups like Students for Fair Admissions will likely feel emboldened to take aim at other policies they deem discriminatory.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion



TOTAL MENTIONS AY 22-23

802K

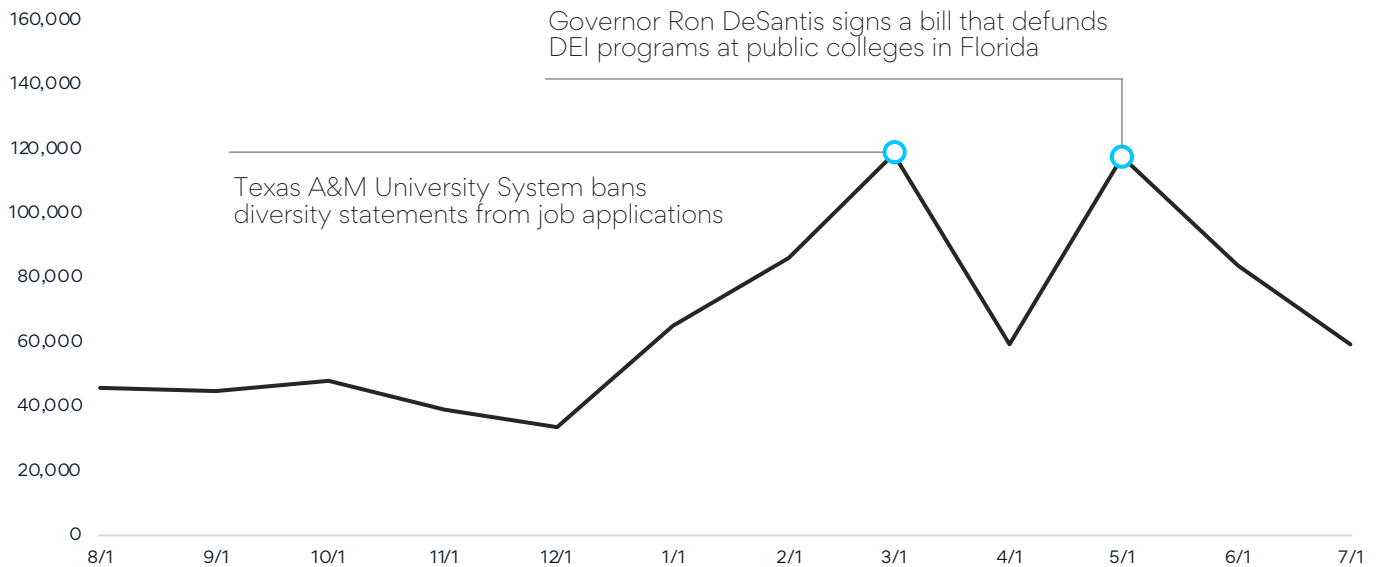
TOTAL NEWS MENTIONS AY 22-23

447K ▲ 19% vs previous period

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) practices faced unprecedented levels of political scrutiny as the Right-leaning backlash against “wokeness” continued to evolve from sprawling cultural critique to focused policy action. Of the five trending topics, DEI was the most media-driven, with over half of total mentions originating on a news site. Right-leaning outlets showed an outsized interest in the topic, often connecting (and sometimes conflating) it with critical race theory.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

MENTION VOLUME OVER TIME

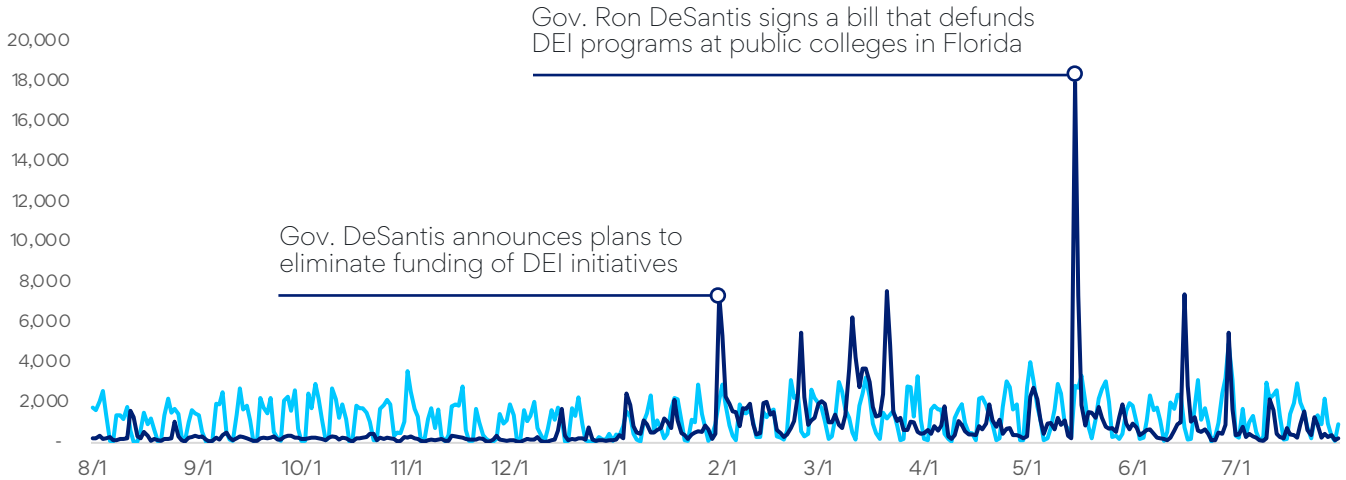


By comparing news mentions with X (formerly Twitter) mentions, we see how news media across the political spectrum drove conversation in the Fall '22 semester in a way that primed social media interest that came later in the year. Across AY 22-23, conversation arced from the abstract to the concrete as political brinkmanship and media speculation gave way to political action and reporting.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

MENTION VOLUME OVER TIME BY CHANNEL

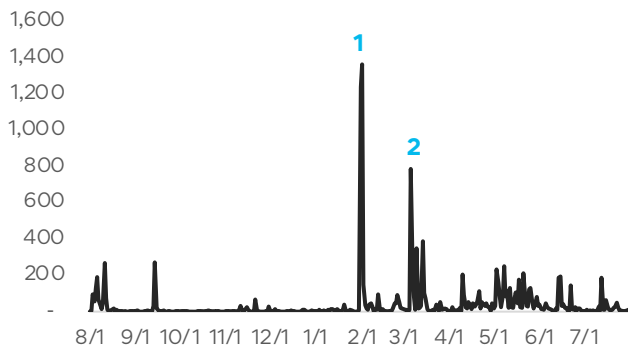
News X (Formerly Twitter)



DEI conversations tended to alloy with other topics, such as tenure and accreditation, creating highly engaged mini-spikes. These smaller blips on the radar merit attention because they can portend shifts in the conversational landscape for a given topic.

DEI AND TENURE

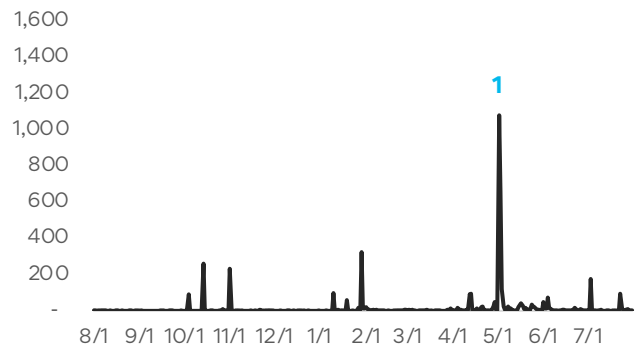
MENTION VOLUME OVER TIME



- 1 Florida Gov. DeSantis proposes changes to teacher tenure review process.
- 2 Florida legislators propose a set of new laws that would erode tenure in colleges and universities.

DEI AND ACCREDITATION

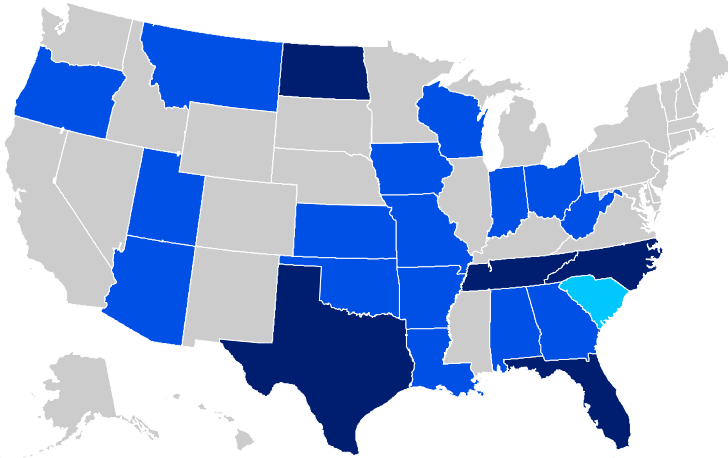
MENTION VOLUME OVER TIME



- 1 Former President Donald Trump says he will radically transform colleges and universities by replacing accreditation boards.

While very much opposed to one another, supporters and detractors of DEI both framed their positions as being in the service of traditional values such as fairness, academic freedom and civil cohesion. Both also accused each other of ulterior motives. Supporters of DEI programs and offices also advocated for them as effective support initiatives for minority students, while portraying conservative efforts to prohibit them as proxy attacks on academic freedom. Meanwhile, DEI detractors sought to affirm their commitment to diversity within a merit-based framework while dismissing institutional practices as expensive trojan horses for activist identity politics that view America as historically and inherently irredeemable.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY BY STATE



40 Bills introduced

07 Bills have been signed into law

29 Bills have been tabled, vetoed, or failed to pass

28 States did not introduce bills



If you look at the way this has actually been implemented across the country, DEI is better viewed as standing for discrimination, exclusion and indoctrination. And that has no place in our public institutions.

- Gov. Ron DeSantis | FL



The exposure to wide-ranging experiences and fresh perspectives encourages understanding and creativity. By restricting what students can learn, the state is actively suppressing students' academic and intellectual freedom.

- Sen. Shevrin Jones | FL



Texas is leading the nation and ensuring our campuses return to focusing on the strength of diversity and promoting a merit-based approach where individuals are judged on their qualifications, skills, and contributions.

- Sen. Brandon Creighton | TX



When you see elected leaders demonizing educators and weaponizing education, it's a five-alarm fire for democracy. When governors attack DEI efforts, they completely mischaracterize them to create a straw-man demon that they now have to do away with.

- Irene Mulvey | American Association of University Professors, President

Labor Relations



TOTAL MENTIONS AY 22-23

284K

TOTAL NEWS MENTIONS AY 22-23

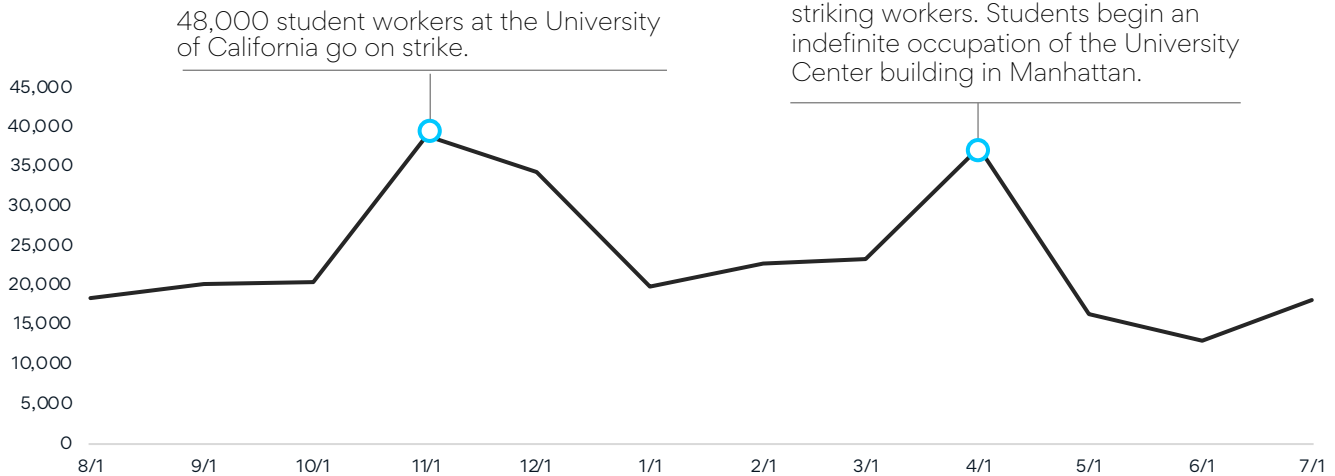
97K

▲ **14%** vs previous period

Labor activism efforts swept across college campuses as staff and graduate student worker efforts showed renewed vigor and sophistication. While faculty were generally supportive and administrators generally sympathetic, labor issues laid open the divide on campuses between those with tenure, those with higher salaries and everyone else.

LABOR RELATIONS

MENTION VOLUME OVER TIME



FAST FACTS

- In 2022, the U.S. saw the highest number of work stoppages at higher education institutions in 15 years. Since March 2022, 19 bargaining units representing students have been recognized by the National Labor Relations Board.
- Since January 2022, the Cornell University Industrial Labor Relations School Labor Action Tracker reports that nearly 40 strikes have occurred across the country in the higher education sector.
- Of the approximately 222,306 workers that engaged in a work stoppage in 2022, at least 137,000 were academic professionals (almost 62 percent), according to Bloomberg.

NOTABLE UNION STRIKES

AY 22-23



As university labor activism has spread across campuses, it has become increasingly connected and sophisticated. By April 2023, strikes were ongoing at Chicago State, Eastern Illinois, Rutgers, and Governors State University. Additionally, recent votes on unionization measures have been overwhelmingly affirmative.

VOTES IN FAVOR OR UNIONIZING BY CAMPUS



Teachers & Researchers United (TRU-UE)

97%

VOTED YES



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

UMN Graduate Labor Union- UE

97%

VOTED YES

Stanford
University

Stanford GWU-UE

94%

VOTED YES

USC University of Southern California

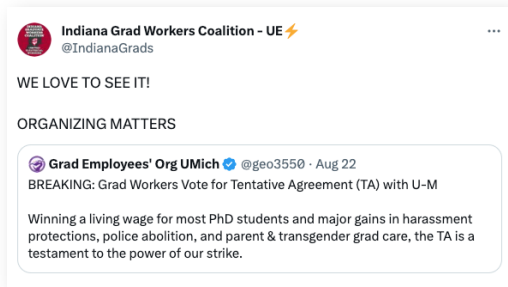
GSWOC-UAW USC

98%

VOTED YES

Conversation around university labor issues peaked before high-profile action in other sectors — including the Teamsters Union (UPS) and the SAG-AFTRA (Hollywood) strikes. However, efforts both on and off campus are increasingly aligned in terms of messaging and organizing principles. We expect labor issues to continue mounting on campuses in AY 23-24, spurred on by the wider context of industrial action, cost of living increases, political division, and economic precarity.

Unions that successfully organized have supported other university student unionization efforts. In addition, large industrial unions like the United Auto Workers are actively involved in unionization efforts on campuses, providing resources and playbooks to help deliver desired outcomes.



The Herald-Times

Indiana University graduate workers help Johns Hopkins, Northwestern unionize this year

The power of all of these campaigns bargaining at the same time means that we can really push the standard in graduate education and, as each union contract is stronger, we know that that lays the groundwork for the next campus.



- IU graduate worker Katie Shy



Number of workers in U.S. higher education represented by United Auto Workers:

80K

A sample of institutions with unions represented by UAW



Columbia



NYU



UCLA



SD State

Advocates for campus unionization efforts and strike activity stressed the inherent injustice of being denied a living wage. They also argued that the staff contributions to research and teaching functions were grossly undervalued and (as underlined by the disruption caused by strike action) indispensable. Administrators — torn between playing hardball and making expensive concessions — pointed to the disruption caused by labor action as evidence of bad faith negotiating. Meanwhile, Right-leaning commentators and outlets poured scorn from the sidelines — but rather than attacking the concept of a living wage, they focused on portraying labor unrest as the failure of liberal policies.



University of Michigan threatens jobs of striking graduate instructors

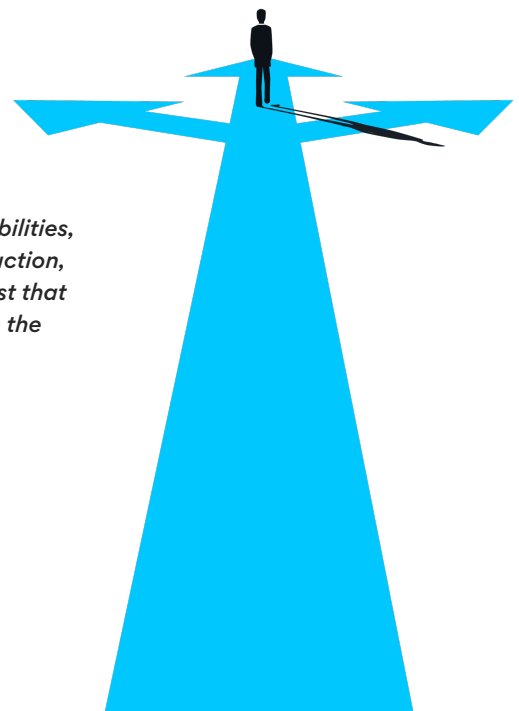


When instructors choose not to fulfill their teaching responsibilities, it disrupts students' education, damages the quality of instruction, and can cause other harm. This is a serious breach of the trust that our students place in us as educators and in their reliance on the institution to deliver on our educational mission.

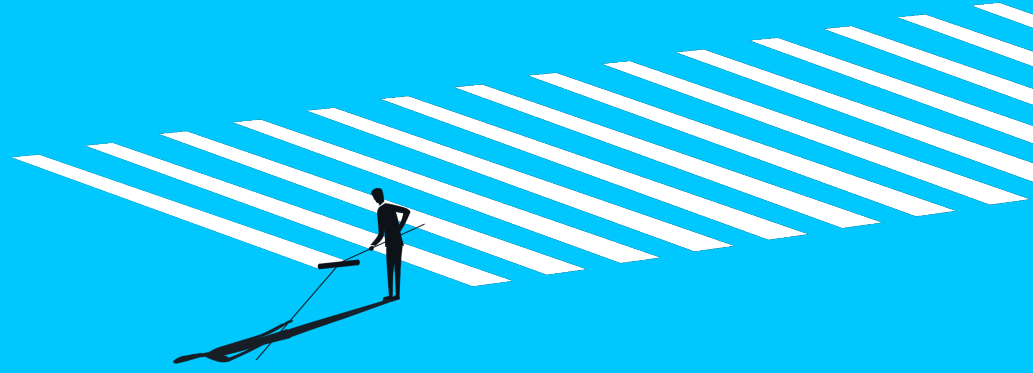
- University of Michigan Provost, Laurie McCauley



University of California strike is massive example of how Golden State problems are warning to rest of nation



Tenure



TOTAL MENTIONS AY 22-23

398K

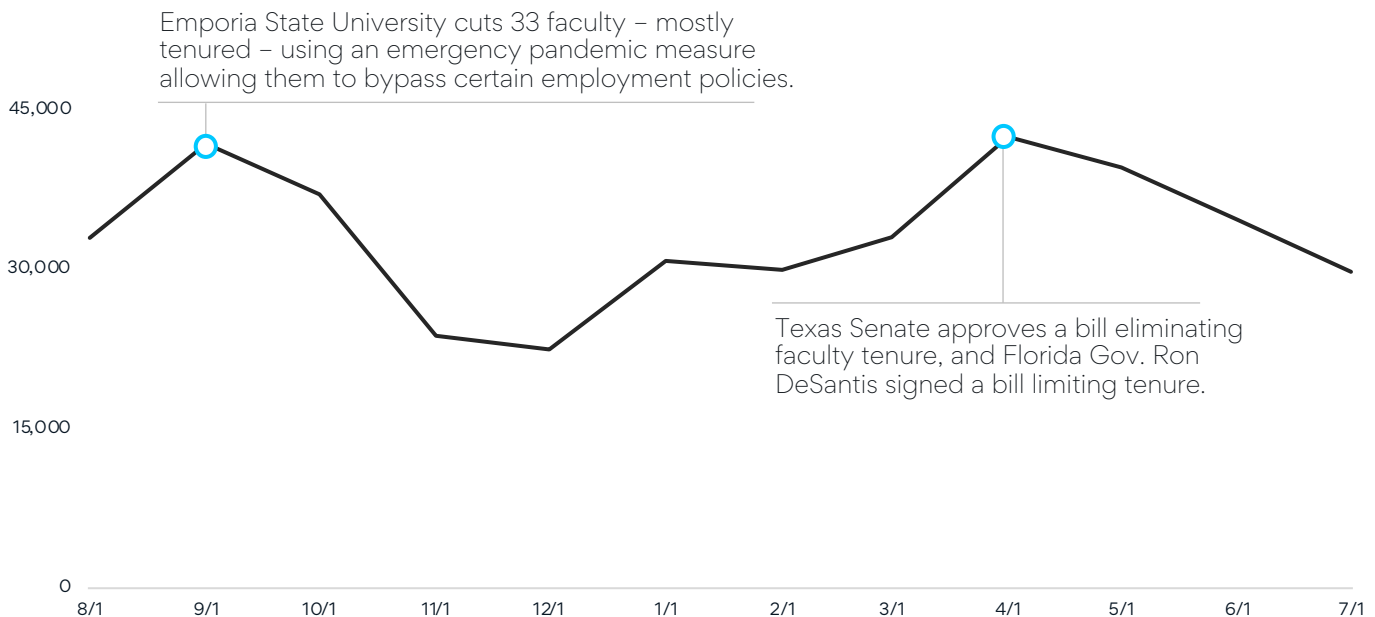
TOTAL NEWS MENTIONS AY 22-23

176K ▲ 24% vs previous period

Tenure came to prominence as right-leaning legislatures and governors sought greater oversight over what they perceive to be Left-leaning campuses. As such, tenure discussion was often interwoven with DEI or academic freedom coverage at the national level. Traditionally an inside-baseball topic, tenure was the least media-driven of the five trending topics in terms of the number of stories written. Unsurprisingly, the conversation was more pressing for academics and policymakers than for the public at large.

TENURE

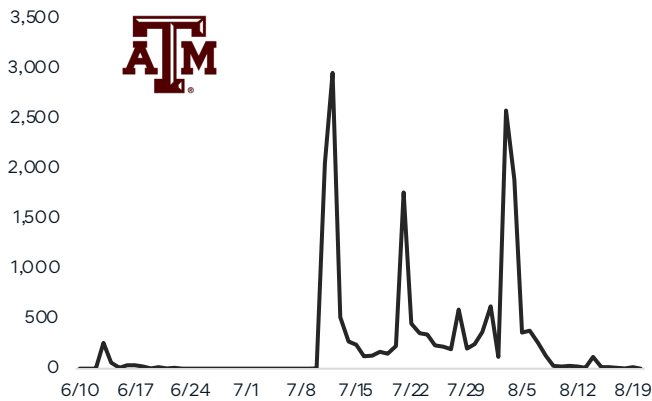
MENTION VOLUME OVER TIME



CASE STUDY: A&M PRESIDENT RESIGNS AFTER KATHLEEN MCELROY CONTROVERSY

A&M tapped Kathleen McElroy to head up the university’s journalism program but rescinded the offer after a backlash from conservative stakeholders and media outlets. However, news of the about-face made even greater waves, leading to national headlines, a faculty firestorm, the A&M president’s resignation, and a hefty legal settlement with McElroy.

TEXAS A&M & KATHLEEN MCELROY MENTION VOLUME OVER TIME



A text from Jay Graham, a member of the Board of Regents, to Chancellor John Sharp

“Please tell me this isn’t true. But since it’s not April Fools Day, I assume it is. I thought the purpose of us starting a journalism program was to get high-quality Aggie journalist[s] with conservative values into the market. This won’t happen with someone like this leading the department.”

Texas A&M Faculty Senate Letter to Chancellor Sharp

“This is not only having a chilling effect on our faculty but is further damaging the national reputation of our university. And it will make it even more difficult to recruit and retain the best and brightest talent.”

KEY EVENTS

- June 13** - A&M announces Kathleen McElroy will lead the university's new journalism program as a tenured professor.
- June 15** - Texas Scorecard publishes "Aggies Hire NY Times 'Diversity' Advocate to Head Journalism Program." In response, President M. Katherine Banks receives calls from members of the University System Board of Regents raising concerns about McElroy's hiring related to her past DEI advocacy and work for The New York Times.
- July 9** - A&M alters the terms of its original offer to a five-year contract position without tenure. (A&M would later alter the terms further, offering a one-year hire/fire contract, which McElroy would reject).
- July 21** - A&M president Katherine Banks resigns following a faculty and media backlash.
- August 3** - McElroy receives a settlement of \$1M from A&M.

A TALE OF TWO TENURES: UNC & TEXAS A&M

A&M’s backtracking on McElroy’s tenure offer drew comparisons to a similar incident involving Nikole Hannah-Jones at the University of North Carolina in 2021. The cases have highlighted concerns about political interference, backlash against diversity efforts, and unfair treatment of Black women leaders in academia.

UNC (2021)

- Hannah-Jones was criticized for the 1619 Project in her previous role at *NYT*.
- Recommended for tenure by faculty but only offered 5-year contract.
- UNC trustees eventually offered Hannah-Jones tenure.

BOTH CASES

- Both McElroy and Hannah-Jones are Black women journalists who previously worked at The New York Times.
- Both were recruited by their alma maters for historically tenured leadership roles related to journalism programs.
- Both had tenure offers were abruptly blocked at the board level.
- Coverage focused on the conservative backlash to DEI and a perceived lack of transparency in the process.

TEXAS A&M (2023)

- McElroy faced backlash for diversity efforts and research while at the University of Texas.
- Had tenure offer rescinded multiple times.
- McElroy’s offer was never fully reinstated.

TENURE TARGETED: PROPOSED LEGISLATION IN THE PAST YEAR

As conservative legislators took aim at higher education, bills introduced in multiple states sought to weaken or eliminate tenure for college faculty.



TEXAS

- A Senate bill was introduced to prohibit tenure at public universities.
- The House substituted the Senate bill with a watered-down version that strengthened post-tenure reviews instead of prohibiting tenure.
- The bill was signed by Governor Abbott on June 14, 2023. Tenure was weakened but remains largely intact.



FLORIDA

- A bill proposed giving Florida universities the power to evaluate tenured professors at any time.
- The bill was amended to include specific parameters and examples of reasons for the review of tenure, like negligence, insubordination and violation of the law.



LOUISIANA

- A bill to reshape tenure policies was introduced but never brought up for a hearing, so did not advance.



NORTH CAROLINA

- A proposed bill would prevent new faculty hired after 2024 from getting tenure, instead giving renewable contracts.

Defenders of tenure cast the practice as fundamental to ensuring academic freedom and as an engine of innovation and intellectual progress, while also cautioning that state bans would put in-state universities at a recruiting disadvantage. They also decried what they perceived as the weaponization of tenure in pursuit of anti-DEI and anti-CRT measures. Across the aisle, tenure detractors focused their message on correcting what they perceive as a lack of accountability within the academy that both devalues and derails the research and teaching missions of public universities.

THE EYES OF TEXAS ARE UPON...TENURE



It is shocking that these professors, who live inside a bubble, genuinely believe they are not accountable to anyone.

- Dan Patrick, Lieutenant Governor of Texas

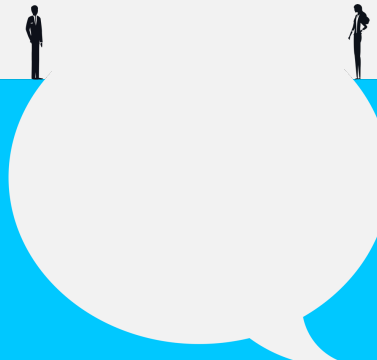
Tenure is a national institution... If that institution no longer exists in Texas ... they will go to another state.

- Andrea Gore, Professor at the University of Texas at Austin

Removing tenure would not only cripple Texas' ability to recruit and retain great faculty members, it would also hurt Texas students, who would not be able to stay in state knowing that they will be learning from the very best in the country.

- Jay Hartzell, President of the University of Texas at Austin

Free Speech



TOTAL MENTIONS AY 22-23

493K

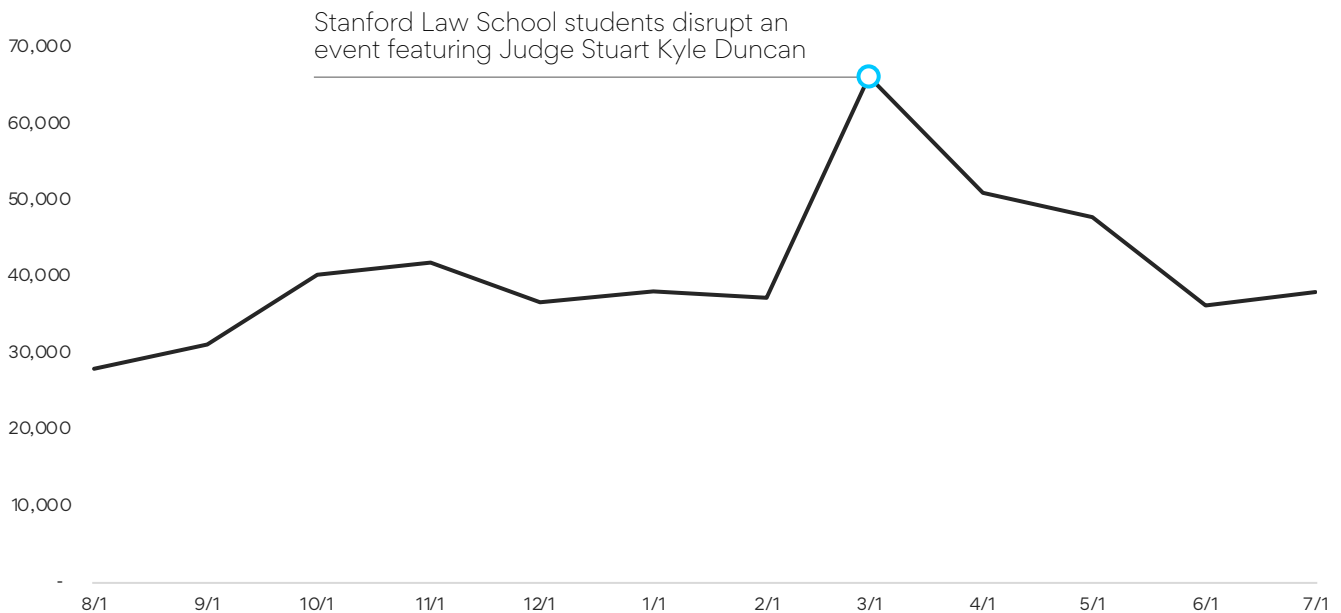
TOTAL NEWS MENTIONS AY 22-23

186K ▲ 25% vs previous period

Controversies related to free speech and assembly continued to flare up periodically, often in response to Left-leaning student protests that sought to disrupt conservative speaking events. While conversation spiked at specific moments, a pronounced rise in the conversation floor spoke to a renewed national focus on campus climate and free speech.

FREE SPEECH

MENTION VOLUME OVER TIME

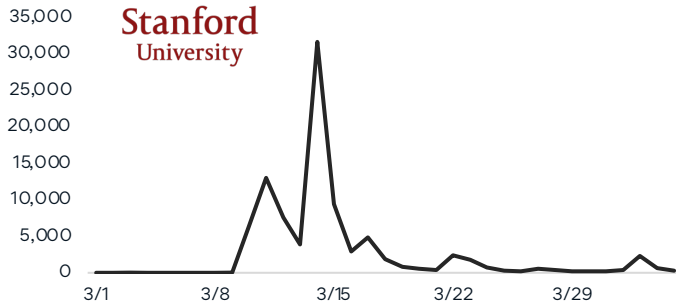


CASE STUDY: STANFORD LAW STUDENTS HECKLE GUEST SPEAKER

Stanford administrators felt compelled to respond when an associate dean joined protestors in disrupting an event featuring a conservative federal judge.

STANFORD & JUDGE DUNCAN

MENTION VOLUME OVER TIME



Reactions Spanned the Ideological Spectrum:



Parents don't realize the Soviet level of indoctrination that their children are receiving in elite high schools & colleges!

“A more productive mode of discourse for the protesters would have been to ask him to clarify the thinking behind his positions and then challenge it.”
- Ilana Redstone, Washington Post

KEY EVENTS

- Mar. 10** - Stanford Law School students disrupt an event featuring Judge Stuart Kyle Duncan. An associate dean for DEI joined the hecklers.
- Mar. 11** - Stanford's president and law school dean publish an apology to Duncan, noting that the associate dean failed to enforce university policies.
- Mar. 14** - Hundreds of students wearing “masks and all-black clothing” gather outside the law school dean's office on Monday, creating a “makeshift walk of shame.”
- Mar. 22** - Stanford suspends the associate dean and establishes a mandatory half-day session in the Spring quarter for all students on the topic of freedom of speech.
- Apr. 2** - U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit Judge James Ho announces that he and Judge Elizabeth Branch won't hire clerks from Stanford Law School.
- July 20** - The associate dean leaves Stanford.

CASE STUDY: ASU SHUTS DOWN T.W. LEWIS CENTER

After faculty protested a high-profile conservative speaking event on campus, a prominent ASU donor withdrew funding for the center that had sponsored the programming.

ASU & T.W. LEWIS CENTER

MENTION VOLUME OVER TIME



OPINION | COMMENTARY [Follow](#)

I Paid for Free Speech at Arizona State

The university is firing me for organizing an event featuring Charlie Kirk and Dennis Prager.

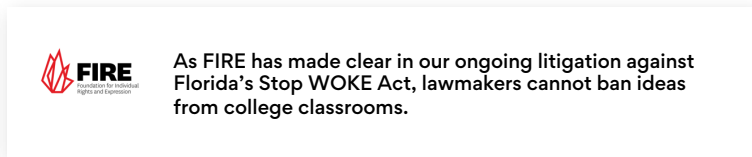
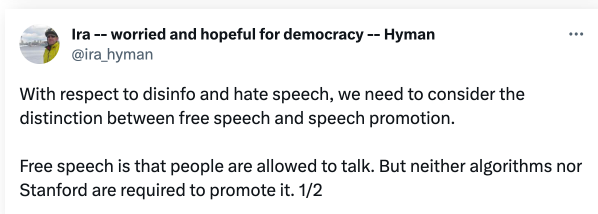
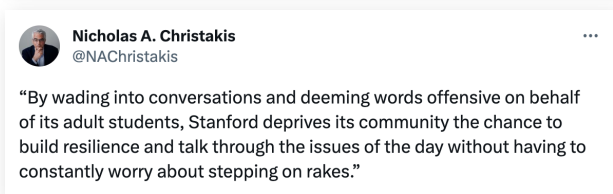
Arizona State Responds on Free Speech

The campus event was a success: Speakers came, they spoke and more than 600 people attended.

KEY EVENTS

- Feb. 3** - A majority of honors faculty sign a petition protesting a planned conservative speaking event on campus.
- Feb. 8** - A conservative speaking event at ASU's Lewis Center goes ahead as planned drawing over 600 attendees.
- Jun. 19** - An ASU administrator publishes an op-ed in The Wall Street Journal claiming she and others were fired for bringing conservative speakers to speak on campus.
- Jun. 20** - The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) announces they are working to learn more about this “troubling” allegation. The Lewis Center publishes a statement later in the day that the center was closing because the donor who funded the center terminated his donation.
- Jun. 21** - Wall Street Journal publishes a response to the June 19 editorial stressing that the university “is committed, in practice, not just rhetoric, to all things that support free speech and its components.”
- Jul. 18** - ASU donor Tom Lewis publicly announces he is pulling funding from the Lewis Center due to “Left-wing hostility and activism.” The Republican-led legislative committee also has its first meeting to investigate free expression at Arizona's public universities.

Conservative voices drove coverage, arguing that activist de-platforming proved that the Left no longer values free speech. Administrators responded by unequivocally committing to free speech, sometimes borrowing from the DEI lexicon to embrace a “diversity of viewpoints.” Those protesting portrayed conservative odes to free speech as poorly disguised apologies for hate speech. Aside from vague allusions to students “doing better” or being “more resilient,” debate generally lacked any practical edge with both sides seeing themselves as the standard bearers of democratic norms. In addition, Left-leaning news sites have increasingly framed Republican anti-DEI and anti-tenure measures as an attack on free speech. For example, resistance to Florida’s “Stop WOKE” Act centered on its alleged potential to restrict race-related curriculum and conversation in workplaces, schools and colleges.

Universities are increasingly responding to a perceived deterioration of free speech on campus. In August 2023, fifteen university presidents, including those from Cornell, Duke, Georgetown, and Notre Dame, formed the College Presidents for Civic Preparedness consortium to reaffirm their commitment to open discourse and academic freedom. Thirteen of the consortium member schools noted above are spearheading “Free Expression” programming, including scholarly events, guest speaker debates, convocation remarks, summer seminars, and freshman orientation activities.

NOTABLE ACTIVATIONS



Cornell University

Cornell University plans a series of scholarly and creative events for students, staff and faculty that will include debates among guest speakers who model civil discourse and exhibitions and performances.



Duke University will host a summer seminar for faculty intended to promote the civic discussion of sensitive topics, and its First Amendment Clinic will allow law students to work directly with clients facing free expression concerns.

FIRE’S 2024 FREE SPEECH RANKINGS

TOP 3 (BEST)



BOTTOM 3 (WORST)



MEDIA BIAS

Public perceptions of *value* and *values* are shaped by the different ways people consume news reporting. In addition to monitoring online conversation, Legend Labs analyzed media coverage through the prism of political bias. Using the AllSides media bias chart as a framework (albeit an imperfect one) we identified nearly 26,500 higher education articles, written across the political spectrum that reference at least one of our five trending topics.



MEDIA BIAS CHART



Ratings based on online, U.S. political content only – not TV, print, or radio. Ratings do not reflect accuracy or credibility; they reflect perspective only.

LEFT	CENTER-LEFT	CENTER	CENTER-RIGHT	RIGHT
<p>AlterNet</p> <p><i>The Atlantic</i></p> <p>DEMOCRACY NOW!</p> <p>DAILY BEAST</p> <p>HUFFPOST</p> <p>The Intercept</p> <p>JACOBIN</p> <p>Mother Jones</p> <p>MSNBC</p> <p>THE NEW YORKER</p> <p>The New York Times (opinion)</p> <p>Nation.</p> <p>SLATE</p> <p>Vox</p>	<p>abc NEWS</p> <p>AP</p> <p>AXIOS</p> <p>Bloomberg</p> <p>CBS NEWS</p> <p>CNN</p> <p>The Guardian</p> <p>INSIDER</p> <p>NBC NEWS</p> <p>The New York Times (news)</p> <p>npr</p> <p>POLITICO</p> <p>PROPUBLICA</p> <p>TIME</p> <p>The Washington Post</p> <p>USA TODAY</p> <p>yahoo! news</p>	<p>BBC NEWS</p> <p>THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR</p> <p>Forbes</p> <p><i>MarketWatch</i></p> <p>[NEWSNATION]</p> <p>Newsweek</p> <p>REUTERS</p> <p>RealClear Politics</p> <p>THE HILL</p> <p>THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (news)</p>	<p>THE DISPATCH</p> <p>THE EPOCH TIMES</p> <p>FOX BUSINESS</p> <p>NEW YORK POST (news)</p> <p>The Post Millennial</p> <p>reason</p> <p>THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (opinion)</p> <p>Examiner</p> <p>The Washington Times</p>	<p><i>The American Conservative</i></p> <p>THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR</p> <p>BREITBART</p> <p>Blaze media</p> <p>CBN</p> <p>DAILY CALLER</p> <p>Daily Mail</p> <p>DAILY WIRE</p> <p>FOX NEWS</p> <p>the FEDERALIST</p> <p>JR. INDEPENDENT JOURNAL REVIEW</p> <p>NATIONAL REVIEW</p> <p>NEW YORK POST (opinion)</p> <p>NEWSMAX</p> <p>WASHINGTON FREE BEACON</p> <p>OAN</p>

*AllSides Media Bias Ratings™ are based on a multi-partisan, scientific analysis. Visit AllSides.com for balanced news and over 1,400 rated sources.

Key topics analyzed account for 37% of total higher education article coverage in AY 22-23.

Articles covering the five key reputation topics

37%

26,466 ARTICLES



Remaining articles covering higher education

63%

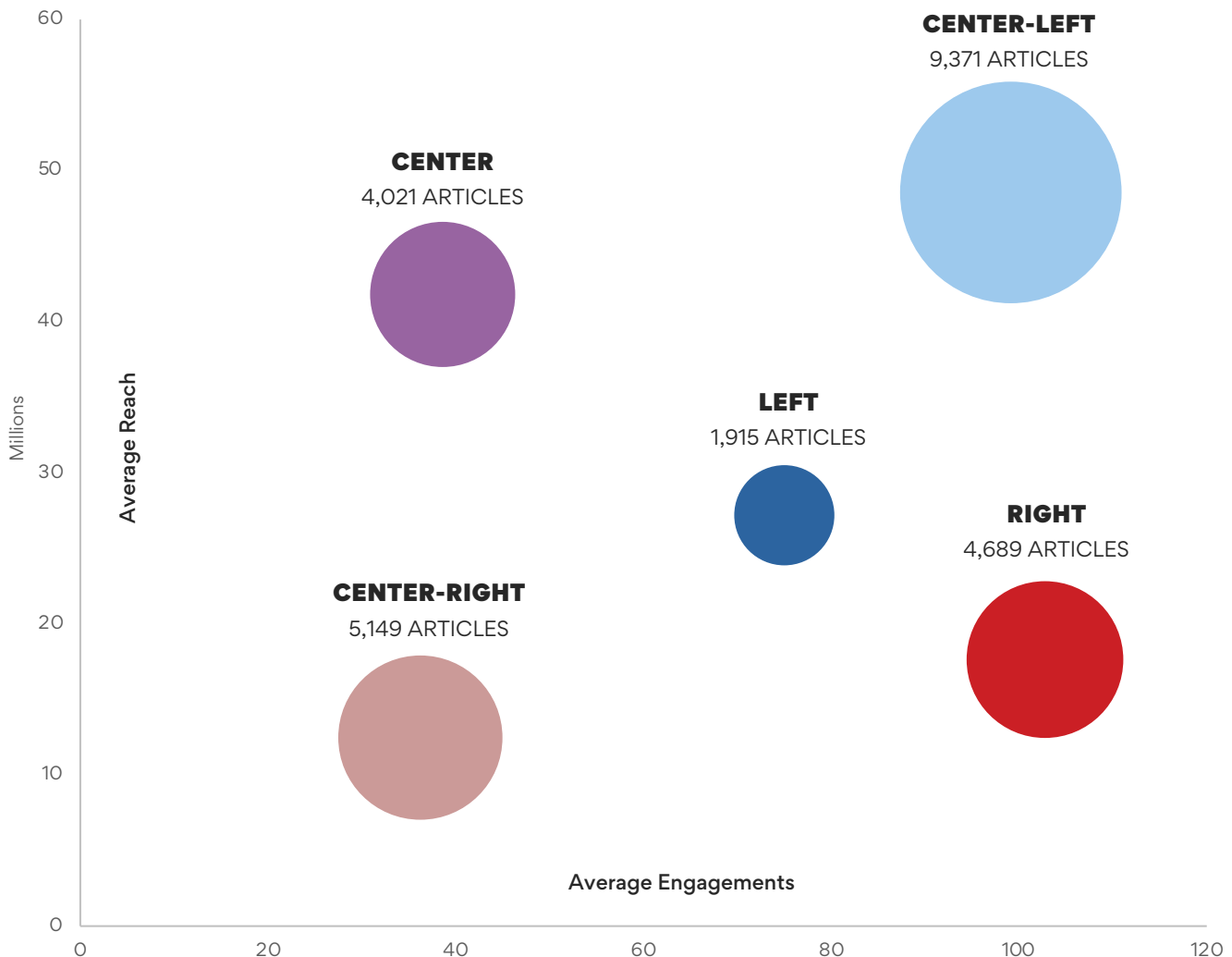
45,047 ARTICLES

Reach, engagement and article count across ideological segments

The chart below shows the volume of articles written by each ideological segment of the media, the average reach of those articles, and the average level of engagement they produce (in terms of comments and social shares). Center-Left outlets clearly dominated the conversation, writing more than other segments while also boasting high engagement and the strongest reach. Right outlets generated the most engagement of any segment with their content (significantly more than their ideological kin on the Center-Right). Centrist publications wrote as widely on higher education as Right or Center-Right media, but their content boasted significantly greater reach. While Left outlets had high levels of reach and engagement, they wrote the least amount of articles of any segment.

AVERAGE REACH AND ENGAGEMENT FOR MEDIA BIASES LIMITED TO OUR FIVE REPUTATION TOPICS

Bubble size indicates volume of articles



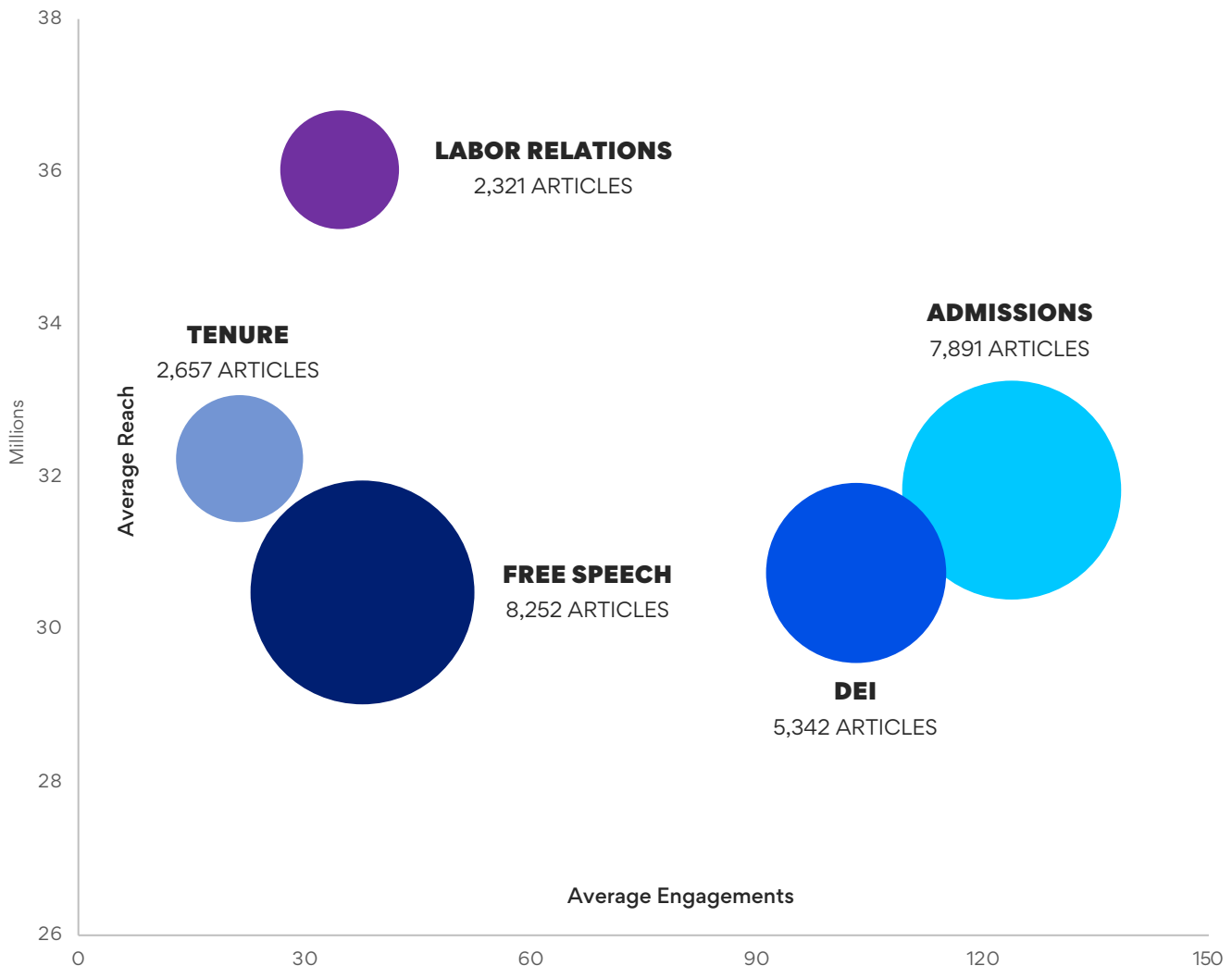
Reach, engagement and article count across subject areas

Free speech and admissions were the most covered news media topics (by volume of articles) but yielded very different levels of engagement. DEI was the second most engaged-with topic while tenure was the least, reflecting the inside-baseball nature of that discussion. Labor relations were written about less than other subjects and boasted only middling levels of engagement. Nevertheless, those articles had the highest average reach, reflecting the relative clout of Center and Center-Left media, especially when they fixate on a topic.

REPUTATION-RELATED TOPICS AVERAGE REACH AND ENGAGEMENT

LIMITED TO MEDIA OUTLETS INDEXED BY ALLSIDES

Bubble size indicates volume of articles

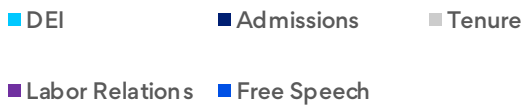


News coverage of subject areas across ideological segments

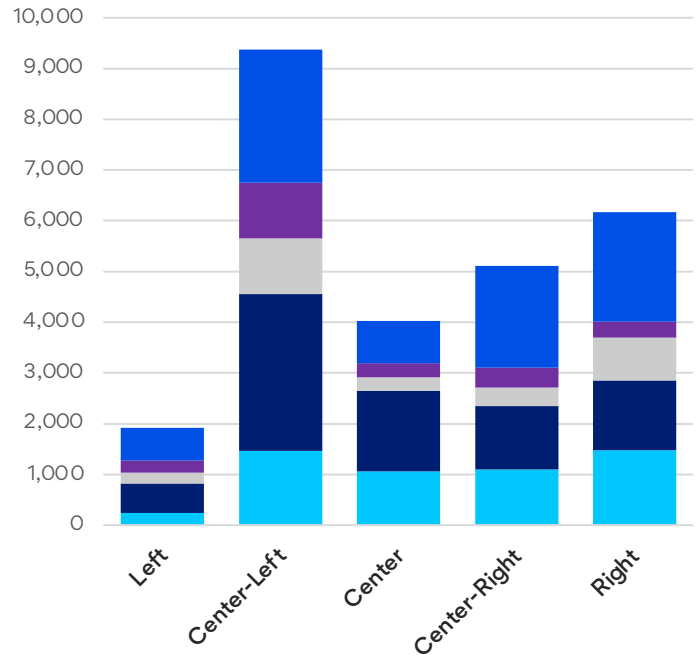
Of the 26,466 total articles in our media bias sample, 35% were written by Center-Left outlets, reflecting the outsized reach of media juggernauts such as the Associated Press, New York Times and Washington Post.

However, Right-leaning outlets (Right and Center-Right combined) such as Fox News and the New York Post constituted 42.5% of articles, demonstrating their significant clout and interest in higher education.

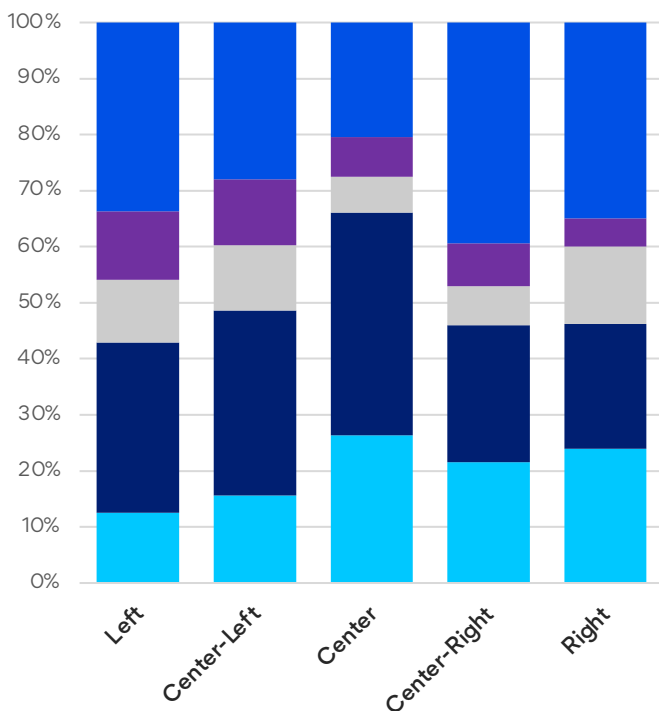
Center publications, including Reuters, The Hill and The Wall Street Journal, constituted just 15% of all articles, illuminating how higher education news coverage is increasingly dominated by more pronounced ideological (even ostensibly partisan) outlets.



REPUTATION TOPICS
NUMBER OF ARTICLES BY MEDIA BIAS SEGMENT



REPUTATION TOPICS
TOPIC SHARE OF VOICE BY MEDIA BIAS SEGMENT

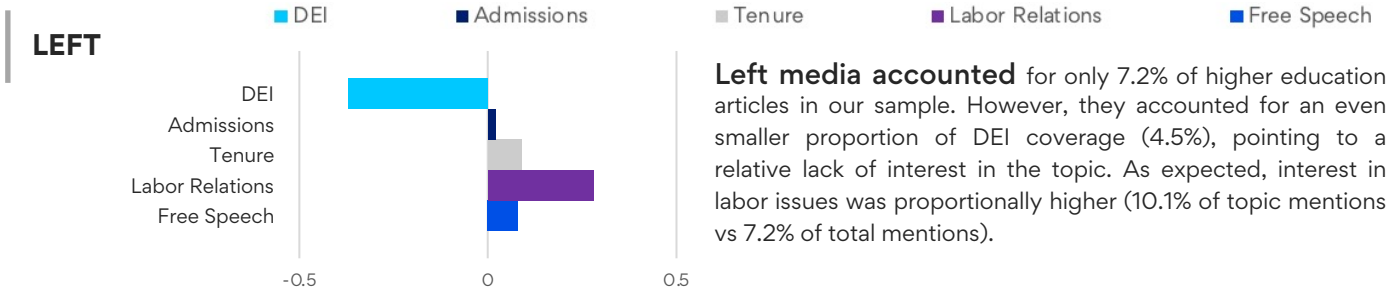


Despite varying levels of reach, engagement and writing volume, each ideological segment covered the five trending topics extensively.

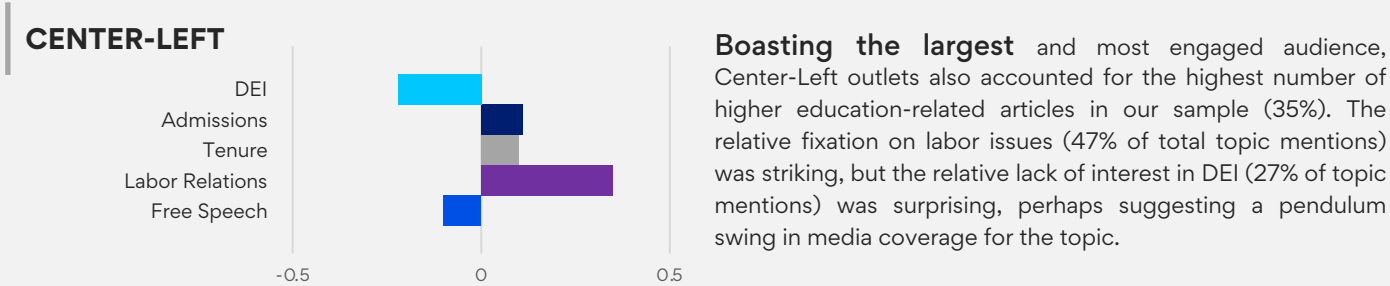
However, news media segments exhibited significantly different levels of interest in each topic — driving coverage for some while neglecting others.

Media Bias and Trending Topics

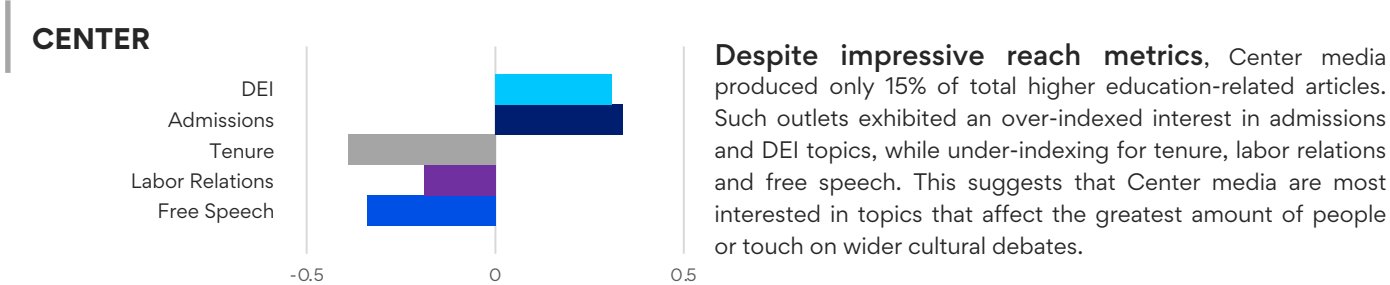
Legend Labs used coverage data to index the level of interest each media segment has across different topics. For example, the Center-Right accounted for 19.4% of all higher education articles in our sample, but 24.4% of articles mentioned Free Speech, reflecting an outsized interest in that topic. Similar discrepancies were noted across the ideological spectrum and across topics. Scores ranged from +/- 0.02 to +/- 0.42, with 0 representing the mean level of interest in a topic. We regard +/- 0.20 as a significant indicator of interest or disinterest in a topic.



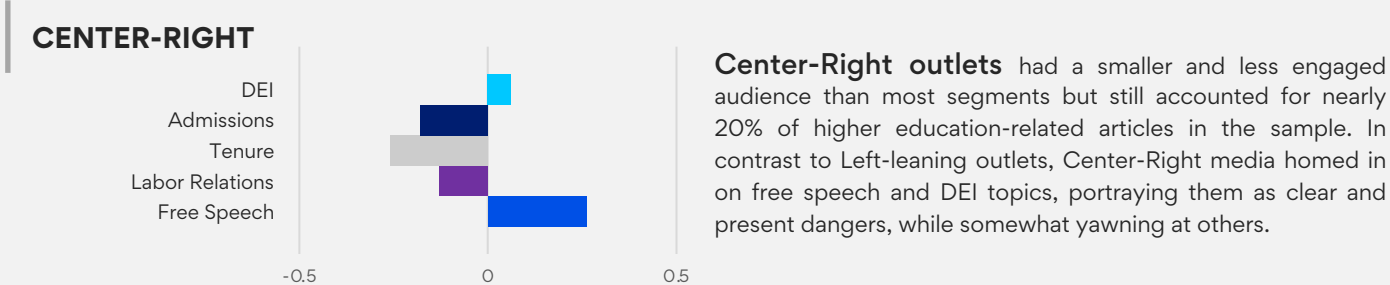
Left media accounted for only 7.2% of higher education articles in our sample. However, they accounted for an even smaller proportion of DEI coverage (4.5%), pointing to a relative lack of interest in the topic. As expected, interest in labor issues was proportionally higher (10.1% of topic mentions vs 7.2% of total mentions).



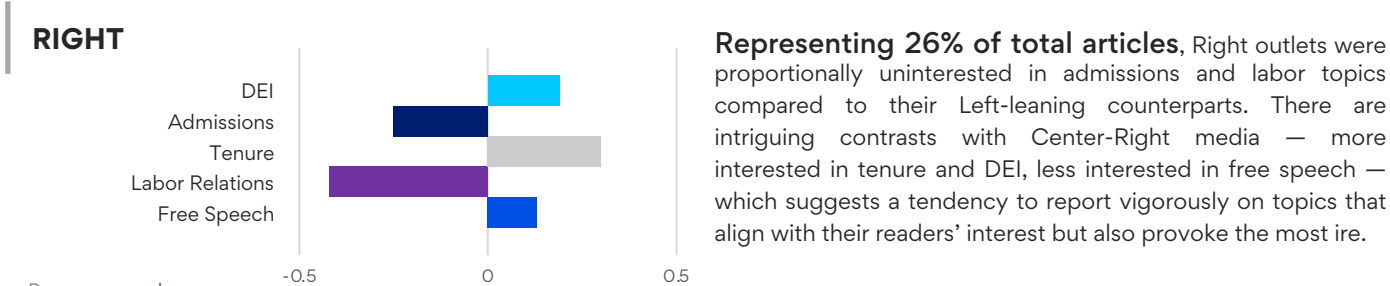
Boasting the largest and most engaged audience, Center-Left outlets also accounted for the highest number of higher education-related articles in our sample (35%). The relative fixation on labor issues (47% of total topic mentions) was striking, but the relative lack of interest in DEI (27% of topic mentions) was surprising, perhaps suggesting a pendulum swing in media coverage for the topic.



Despite impressive reach metrics, Center media produced only 15% of total higher education-related articles. Such outlets exhibited an over-indexed interest in admissions and DEI topics, while under-indexing for tenure, labor relations and free speech. This suggests that Center media are most interested in topics that affect the greatest amount of people or touch on wider cultural debates.



Center-Right outlets had a smaller and less engaged audience than most segments but still accounted for nearly 20% of higher education-related articles in the sample. In contrast to Left-leaning outlets, Center-Right media homed in on free speech and DEI topics, portraying them as clear and present dangers, while somewhat yawning at others.

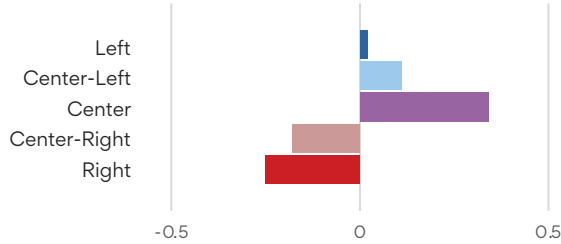


Representing 26% of total articles, Right outlets were proportionally uninterested in admissions and labor topics compared to their Left-leaning counterparts. There are intriguing contrasts with Center-Right media — more interested in tenure and DEI, less interested in free speech — which suggests a tendency to report vigorously on topics that align with their readers' interest but also provoke the most ire.

Media Bias and Trending Topics

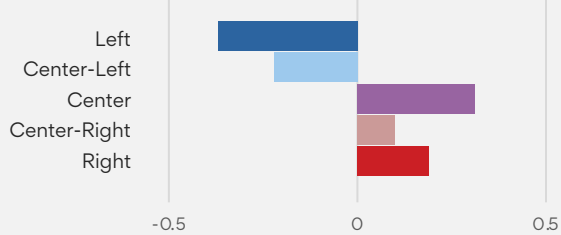
Looking at the same data topic-by-topic can help administrators and communicators anticipate media interest across the ideological spectrum on a given subject.

ADMISSIONS



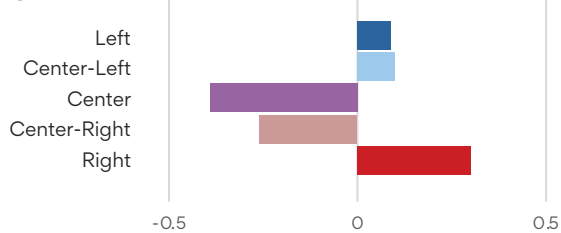
Center and Left-leaning outlets were more interested in the admissions debate than those on the Right, accounting for 57% of all higher education articles, but 67% of those mentioning admissions. Right-leaning outlets were comparatively uninterested.

DEI



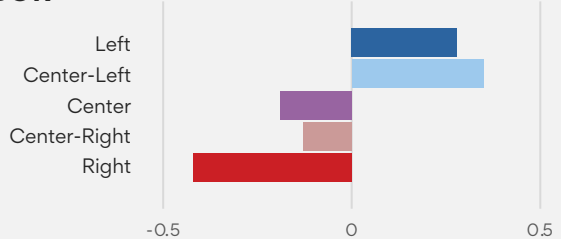
Center and Right-leaning outlets showed a greater fixation on DEI than other segments. When combined, such outlets account for 58% of total higher education mentions, but 68% of DEI mentions. Left-leaning outlets were comparatively uninterested, though the impact of this is somewhat attenuated by the reach and prolific writing of the Center-Left.

TENURE



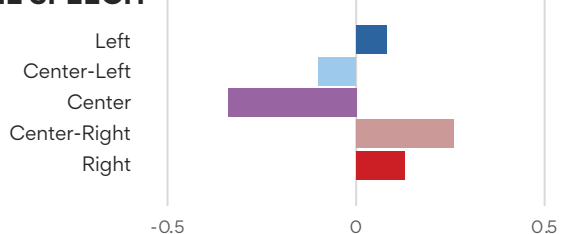
Both ends of the political spectrum showed an outsized interest in the tenure debate but reported on it in very different ways. While the Left may see anti-tenure legislation as a threat to academic freedom, the Right seemingly regards such legislation as a way to pull academia away from DEI and CRT. The Center and Center-Right were comparatively uninterested despite covering legislative developments positively.

LABOR



The most obviously polarized of our topics with Left and Right-leaning outlets preoccupied and uninterested in roughly equal measure. Somewhat surprisingly, the success of organized labor on campus in AY 22-23 did not pique much interest on the right. This is perhaps explained by the tendency to view labor issues as evidence of liberal failure than as a threat to conservative values.

FREE SPEECH



Right-leaning outlets fixated on free speech compared to other segments. Just over 50% of all free speech news mentions came from Right-leaning outlets, despite those news sources accounting for only 37% of total higher education mentions. Strong interest among Left outlets contrasted starkly with relative Center-Left indifference, suggesting unlikely bedfellows in the wider debate.

KEY TAKEAWAYS



Key Takeaways

TAKEAWAY 1

Politicians are increasingly driving conversation and scrutiny around higher education

From federal actions on affirmative action and student loan forgiveness plans to state legislative activity regarding tenure and DEI, higher education is being politicized against its will. Campus communicators and administrators can take solace in the fact that higher education matters across the ideological spectrum like never before.

Rep. Jim Jordan @Jim_Jordan

Who will ultimately pay the price of Joe Biden's student loan handout?

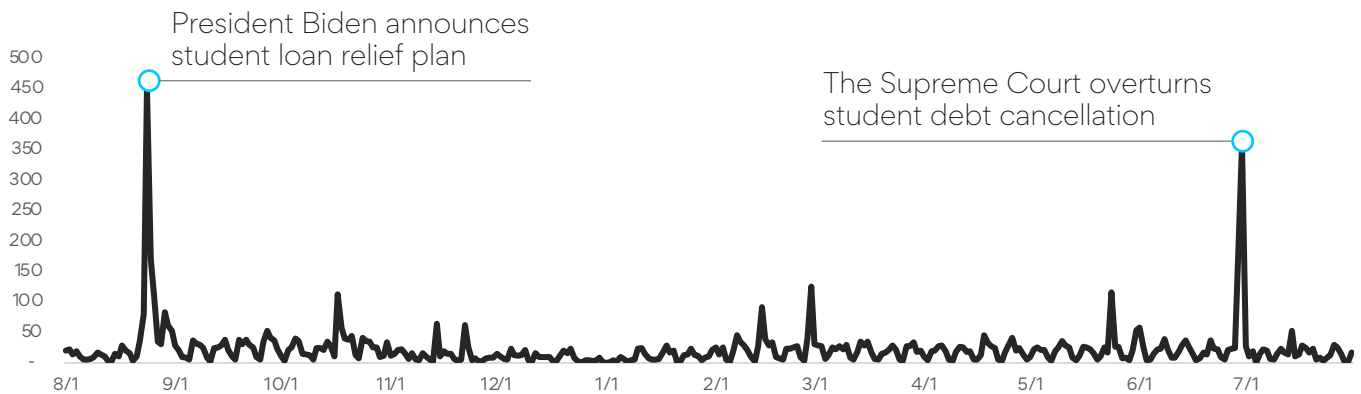
The 87% of Americans who don't have student loans!

Bernie Sanders @SenSanders

Following today's legally unsound Supreme Court ruling, I am urging the Biden Administration to implement a Plan B immediately to cancel student debt for tens of millions of Americans.

LEGISLATORS AND GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES ON HIGHER EDUCATION

MENTION VOLUME OVER TIME



Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick proposes ending university tenure to combat critical race theory teachings

“ Let them raise their own funds to teach, but we're not going to fund them. I'm not going to pay for that nonsense.

- TX Lieutenant Gov. Dan Patrick

Robin Vos says UW System won't get \$32 million unless it tosses diversity programs

“ We are not giving UW that money unless they work with us to eliminate all this racial preferences (sic) and all the things that are rampant on college campuses.

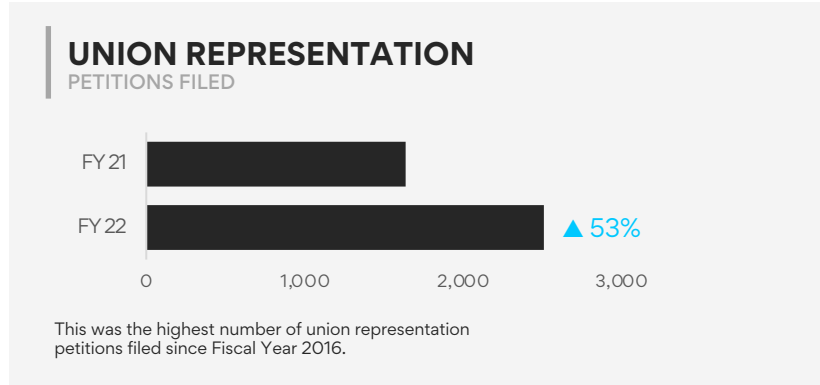
- Wisconsin Assembly Speaker Robin Vos

TAKEAWAY 2

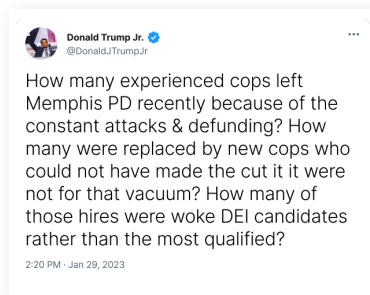
Higher education remains a battlefield in the culture wars

It is a cliché to frame higher education as a microcosm of society, but issues on campus often end up functioning as the tip of someone else’s spear in wider public debates around cultural and political topics.

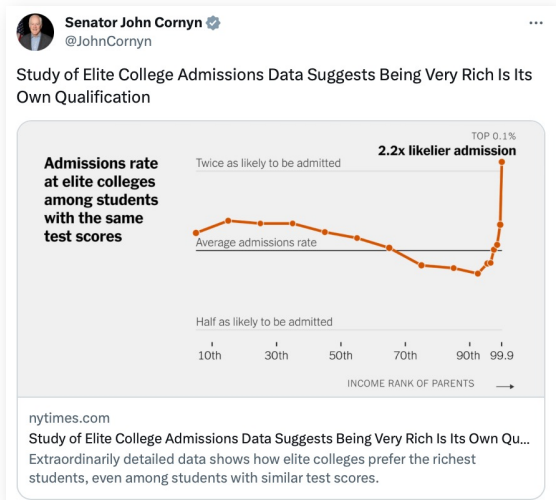
Grad student unionization efforts are part of a more general push for workers’ rights, as demonstrated by the writers strike in Hollywood and the victories wrought by the Teamsters Union on behalf of UPS workers.



Anti-DEI efforts on campus and in state legislatures are part of the much documented and larger “woke backlash” driven primarily (though not exclusively) by the American Right.



Anger at persistent economic inequality factors into the admissions debate.



“For the nation’s more affluent families (and their children), the rules of the higher education game are clear, and the benefits are almost always worth the cost. For everyone else, the rules seem increasingly opaque, the benefits are increasingly uncertain and the thought of just giving up without playing seems more appealing all the time.

- Paul Tough, contributor to The New York Times

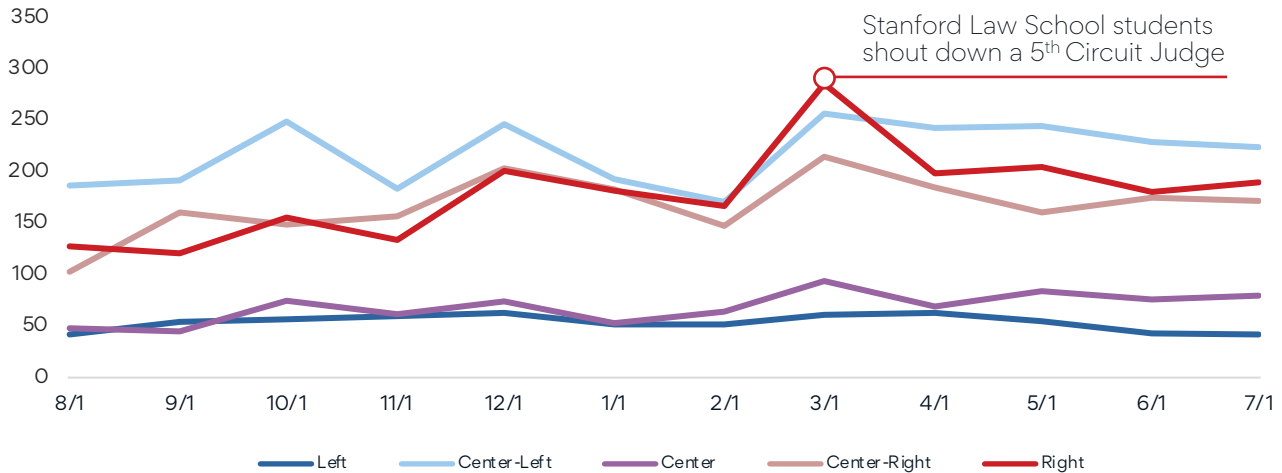
TAKEAWAY 3

Left and Right media drive interest in the same topics at different times and for different reasons

Higher education coverage is a product of the newsroom’s polarization. Even when opposing media segments are interested in the same topic, they are miles apart in their analysis. As such, different media segments can drive the same topic at different times or for different reasons. For example, digging deeper into conversation spikes around free speech (measured by news media article output) illuminates how the Center-Left drove discussion in Fall ‘22 while the Right drove those later in the Spring semester.

FREE SPEECH

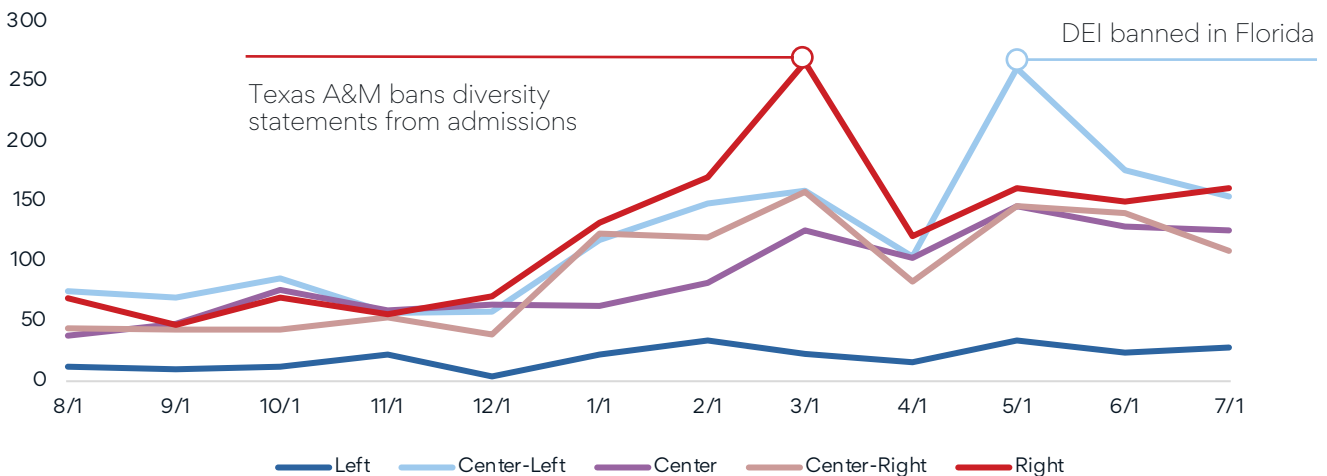
MENTION VOLUME OVER TIME BY MEDIA BIAS SEGMENT



The same phenomenon is found by digging into the DEI data. The Right drove news coverage in March (generally cheering on A&M for banning diversity statements) while the Center-Left drove coverage in May (generally ruing Florida’s passing of legislation to increase oversight of university boards).

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

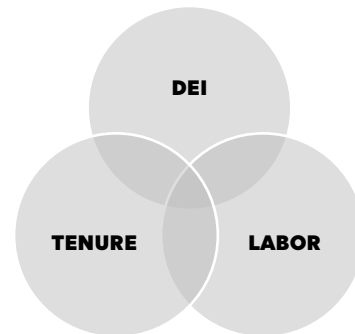
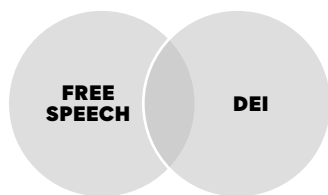
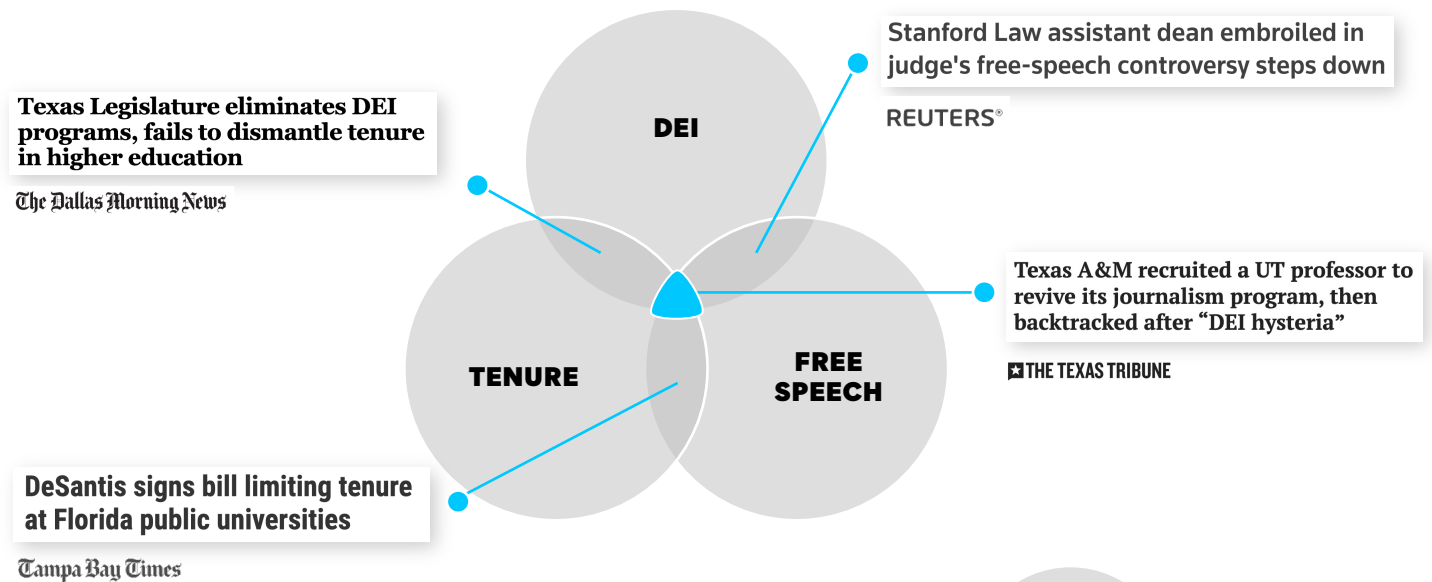
MENTION VOLUME OVER TIME BY MEDIA BIAS SEGMENT



TAKEAWAY 4

Hot topic combinations are greater than the sum of their parts

Numerous controversies in AY 22-23 were especially potent because they stood at the intersection of multiple topics. Such combinations have the capacity to activate coverage across the political spectrum and speak concurrently to a variety of pressing issues. For example, coverage around A&M’s botched recruitment of journalism professor Kathleen McElroy simultaneously touched upon DEI, tenure and academic freedom debates. This confluence of topics meant reactions across the media landscape ranged wildly — from sympathy to schadenfreude. In short, everyone got interested, everyone got upset, and the president ended up resigning.



“Our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is not going to take the form of having the school administration announce institutional positions on a wide range of current social and political issues, make frequent institutional statements about current news events, or exclude or condemn speakers who hold views on social and political issues with whom some or even many in our community disagree.”

- Jennifer Martinez Dean of Stanford Law School



Stanford Dean's Letter and Limited-Purpose Institutions

The vaunted UC system employs 48,000 unionized students to teach, grade papers, and conduct research. That might make some wonder what it is exactly that tenured professors do all day other than dream up new woke nightmares to visit upon the nation in coming years. As underemployed as professors might be, university administrators are far less productive.

- Chuck DeVore for Fox News



University of California strike is massive example of how Golden State problems are warning to rest of nation

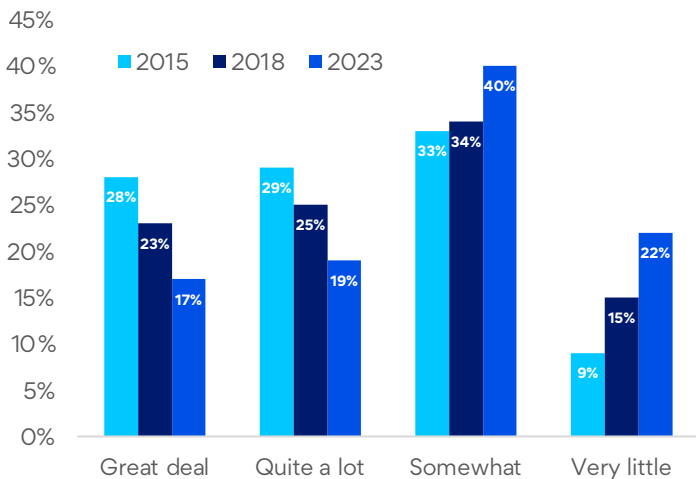
TAKEAWAY 5

Negative media coverage and political scrutiny are likely fueling a decline in public confidence in higher education

As with previous flashpoints in the higher education debate, our five trending topics represent vulnerabilities more than they do opportunities for universities, underlining the fact that negative news dominates online conversation and news media coverage. Polling data strongly suggests this negativity has taken a toll. A recent Gallup poll exploring public confidence in higher education showed a steep decline over the past decade. Furthermore, the decline exists across political ideologies, genders, demographics, and age levels. However, the steepest decline has been among Republicans — a pattern mirrored in the general tendency of right-leaning media to cover higher education scornfully. While more needs to be done across the board to flood social and news media conversation with positive research and teaching stories, communicators and administrators would do well to specifically improve their outreach strategies with Right-leaning outlets.

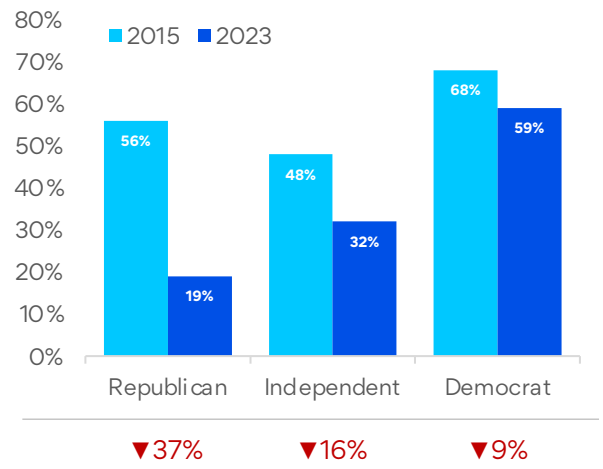
AMERICANS' CONFIDENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Respondents' prompt: Now I am going to read you a list of institutions in American society. Please tell me how much confidence you, yourself, have in each one -- a great deal, quite a lot, some or very little: Higher Education



2015-2023 CHANGE PERCENTAGE POINTS

% of U.S. adults with "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in higher education



Years of attacks against colleges, universities and public education in general by Right-wing politicians has taken a toll, particularly among political conservatives.

- Michael T. Nietzel

Forbes

Americans' Confidence In Higher Education Sinks To A New Low

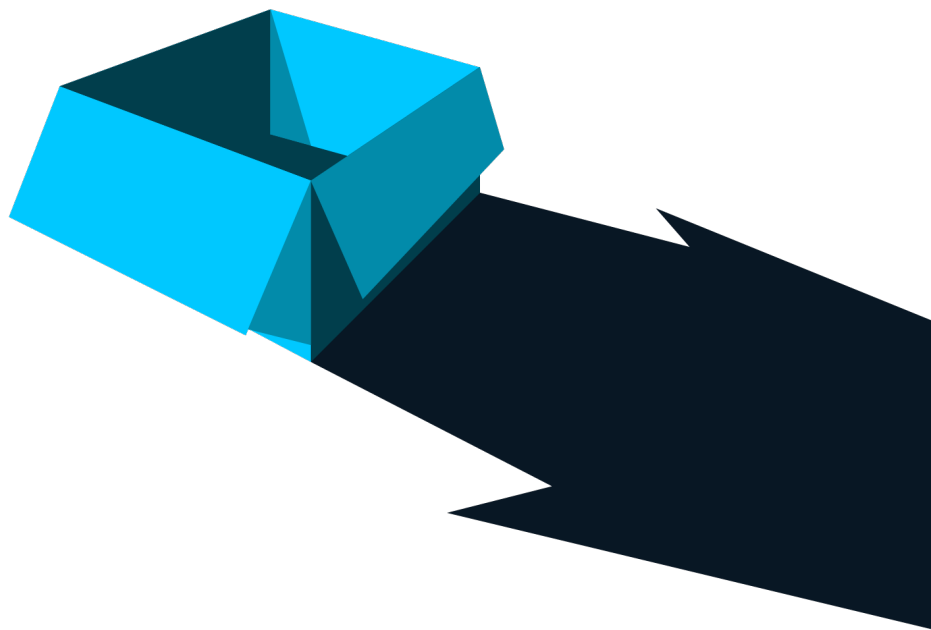
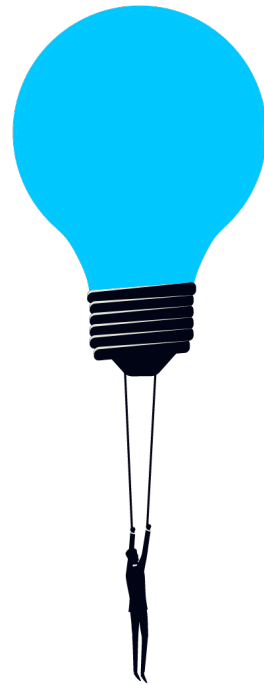
The fact is, there's a strong return on investment for a bachelor's degree, and plenty of data is available about the value and ROI of different programs. To some extent, we have a communications problem.

- Jamie Merisotis



Here's what schools should do about lack of faith in college education and its high cost

PREDICTIONS FOR AY 23-24



PREDICTION 1

Value to march further into the center of higher education conversation

If we were to treat the discussion around the value of a college degree as its own topic, it would have skyrocketed (336k mentions ↑ 268%) during AY 22-23. In reality, the conversation around *value* (and indeed *values*) is most often woven into the wider higher education discussion. As already mentioned, anxiety around AI, social inequality and the macroeconomic outlook all feed into the value discussion. But so do perceived debacles around DEI, tenure and free speech.



Republicans have grown more skeptical that colleges are environments where either their ideas or their children are welcome.

- Frederick Hess, an education-policy analyst at the conservative American Enterprise Institute



Georgetown CEW
@GeorgetownCEW

There is significant value in a college degree. However, with the rise of AI and decline in college enrollment threatening white-collar employment, it may be time to reevaluate trade and vocational schools a little bit more. [@opinion](#) [@BrokeMillennial](#)

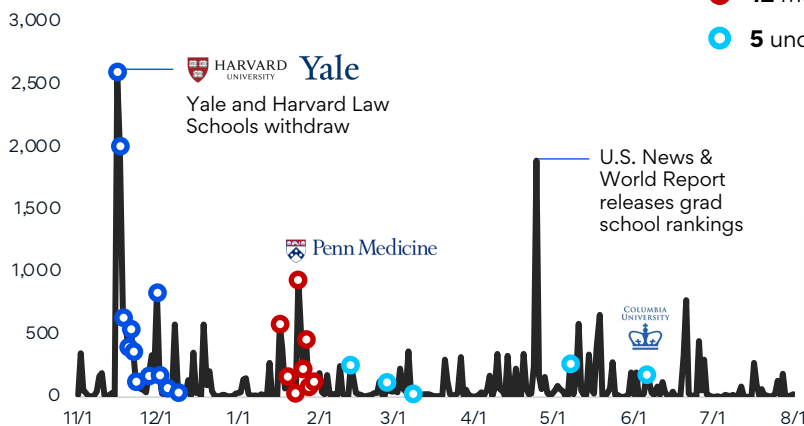
PREDICTION 2

College rankings to become less relevant, further muddying the waters around value

Universities and colleges across the country have taken aim at the U.S. News & World Report rankings, with some even electing to stop submitting information. Controversy surrounding the rankings acted as a proxy of sorts for the *value* debate, spurring U.S. News to make “the most significant methodological change in the rankings’ history” by adding a “greater emphasis on social mobility and outcomes for graduating college students.” However, if rankings are further called into question, value will become even more difficult to standardize, making reputation management all the more important for universities.

U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT RANKINGS

MENTION VOLUME OVER TIME



- 16 law schools withdraw from the rankings
- 12 medical schools withdraw from the rankings
- 5 undergraduate schools withdraw from the rankings

TIME

The College Ranking Process Is Under Scrutiny. What That Means If You're Deciding Where to Go

PREDICTION 3

AI set to become a trending topic

The general uptick in media coverage around AI is no longer driven by curiosity in generative AI apps like ChatGPT but by discussion around the plight of white-collar professions to which universities have traditionally been a gateway. By disrupting such professions, AI also disrupts confidence in post-college income (in relation to post-college debt), making a degree look like a risky investment. AI has also factored into labor issues on and off campus as many workers seek to protect their jobs from the technology. At the same time, universities are research engines for AI and machine learning, while also offering a vital means of training for future AI professionals. AI can also boost research and teaching in the arts and humanities as the ethics, philosophy and history of technology become a more pressing concern. This section was written by a human.

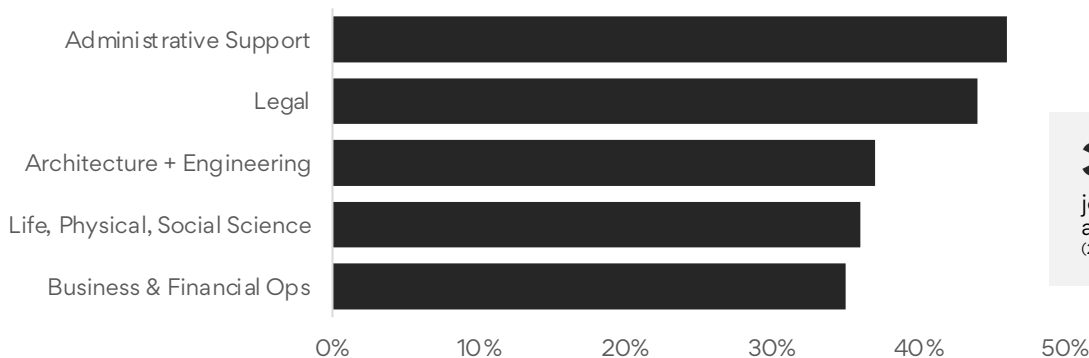


Surveys from various organizations show increasing concern among students and the workforce regarding the impact AI may have on job opportunities and preparedness.



ESTIMATED WORK TASKS THAT COULD BE AUTOMATED BY AI

* According to a Goldman Sachs analysis



300 MILLION
jobs will be automated by AI, according to Goldman Sachs (2023)

Generative AI platforms such as ChatGPT have already demonstrated the capacity to undermine student learning and admissions processes. In AY 22-23, colleges generally responded by focusing on plagiarism and AI-assisted writing and stressing the fundamental value of academic integrity. (In many instances, individual professors were allowed to ban the use of AI in coursework). Meanwhile, major research universities touted their expertise in AI research and teaching, positioning themselves as innovators and leaders in the space. Both messaging pillars will need to be supplemented with a wider vision of how universities can ensure the knowledge and training they provide — especially in engineering, business, medicine and so on — will remain relevant in a world where machine learning is rapidly encroaching on traditional white-collar professions.

PREDICTION 4

A great emphasis on first-generation student stories... at the expense of DEI messaging

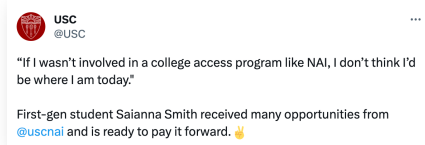
University-generated content around DEI grew in AY 22-23, but not at the same rate as it did for first-generation students or social mobility. DEI mentions across university content grew by less than 8% (compared to nearly 20% for news media generated content). Meanwhile, first-generation student mentions across university content grew rapidly — and social mobility mentions (albeit a much smaller content pool) grew exponentially. The relative plateauing of university-generated DEI content makes sense within the context of the right-leaning backlash against DEI efforts, especially in conservative states or at institutions where the parent community, alumni base or governing boards wax conservative. However, the growth of first-generation student and social mobility content points to the relative ease of tying such stories to more traditionally expressed values such as meritocracy and the American Dream. As this trend develops, look out for skepticism on the Left from academics and media outlets wedded to a racialized view of social class and American history. Look out for it as well from Right-leaning lawmakers and media outlets, who may perceive such stories as DEI or Affirmative Action “by other means.”

PERCENT CHANGE IN REFERENCES TO THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGE ON AAU UNIVERSITY’S OWNED SOCIAL ACCOUNTS IN FY 23 VS. FY 22

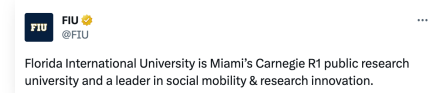
DEI ▲ 8%



1ST GENERATION ▲ 37%



SOCIAL MOBILITY ▲ 113%



A sign of things to come? While some universities are dissolving DEI offices, others are reimagining or rebranding them. UT Austin now has a “Center for Equity and Inclusion,” while the University of South Carolina’s former Vice President of DEI is now VP of Access, Civil Rights and Community Engagement. Look out for an Office of First-Generation Students or a Deputy to the President for Social Mobility coming to a university near you.



PREDICTION 5

Political theater on campus to reach fever pitch as electoral candidates jockey for position

As the primary season enters full swing, an increasing number of political events on campus will drive the free speech discussion to new heights. Expect particularly intense scrutiny around commencement ceremonies and conservative speaker events. Video footage of jeering, picketing and chanting will spice coverage and demand institutional response. It is plausible that COVID-19 could return to prominence as a topic if political candidates attempt to make hay by rehashing pandemic controversies.



3.2M VIEWS **11.5K ENGAGEMENTS**



854K VIEWS **11.2K ENGAGEMENTS**

PREDICTION 6

College Presidencies to remain Hobbesian: nasty, brutish and short

Recent data show college presidential terms are getting shorter — five sudden resignations by college presidents in July 2023 only served to underline this trend. In addition to running multi-million-dollar research and teaching enterprises, college presidents are now expected to respond to everything from campus weather events to national controversies, all the while balancing a variety of audiences (alumni, students, parents, donors, lawmakers, and so on) who are all different, delicate and indispensable in their own ways. Eloquence is expected, and missteps can prove disastrous. Nevertheless, no one else on campus moves the needle like a college president — a diverse crowd is baying and listening in equal measure.



Stanford resident resigns after report found flaws in his research



Texas A&M University president resigns following controversy over failed plans to hire journalism professor



Michigan State president resigns, saying he lost confidence in trustees



Thomas Jefferson president who liked controversial tweets resigns



Seton Hall president Joseph Nyre resigns in surprise move



Broward college president resigns abruptly

PREDICTION 7

NIL 2.0 will catch everyone by surprise

Meanwhile, college athletics. The Name, Image and Likeness revolution is underway and no one knows how the story ends. College presidents will find themselves to blame when things go wrong as underlying tensions around the role that sports revenue and athletics programs play in higher education resurface. Student-athletes (assuming that will still be the appropriate term) will have more power than ever as influencers. Their activism will be both caffeinated and tempered by new financial considerations. Legend Labs will follow up with a separate piece on college athletics later this year. Are you ready for some football?

\$1.17B

Projected Market Spend (2023)

CALLS FOR REGULATION



Congressional action is then the only way to provide a national uniform standard for name, image, and likeness activity and to draw the lines around the boundaries that do not become simply pay for play...

- SEC Commissioner Greg Sankey

Conclusion

REPUTATION BUILDING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

The Fall 2023 semester will likely see the mood on campus improve since the nadir of Fall 2020. Nevertheless, universities should buckle up for the Spring when national primaries will turn up the political temperature on campus. With that in mind, communicators and administrators must bank the lessons of previous controversies and focus efforts on first-class storytelling that emphasizes higher education's role as a guardian of American values with an incredible return on investment.

Doing so is not easy. Concepts of value and values are contested, while the public sphere is crowded, noisy and fickle. Getting stories out effectively requires precision, agility, courage, nuance and resources. However, if universities deploy creative, data-driven strategies, they can cut through the noise and balance different audiences, all the while building a portfolio of positivity that weatherizes their brand against future cultural and political storms — a reputational rainy-day fund.

Higher education leaders should remember that universities face scrutiny and attention because they matter to everyone. Their research drives innovation. Their classrooms cultivate talent, skills and values. Their campuses drive local economies. By educating first-generation, low-income and minority students, universities drive social uplift. Effective storytelling involves constantly communicating this incremental impact across a variety of social and news channels.

While controversy and scrutiny are unavoidable, they can be anticipated and prepared for. Ultimately, the right approach, tools and guidance empower universities to navigate difficult moments, engage hostile audiences and debate wider societal questions.



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Legend Labs is a brand and reputation consulting firm for the digital age. We operate at the intersection of strategy, data and creativity, bringing deep experience and innovative thinking to the brand, communications and reputation management challenges posed by accelerating digital disruption.

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Value and Values

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