

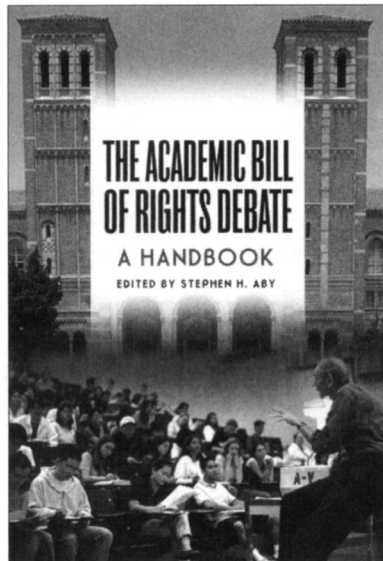
Thank You, Mr. Horowitz

The Academic Bill of Rights Debate: A Handbook

Stephen H. Aby, ed. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2007

REVIEWED BY
JEFF LUSTIG

Since 2003, David Horowitz has been touring the land decrying the takeover of academia by “liberals,” the obeisance of professors to a “one-party state,” and the consignment of students in “courses of indoctrination masquerading as education.” He has offered his “academic bill of rights” (ABOR) as the corrective for this unfortunate situation. Ostensibly seeking merely to assure students’ academic freedom and promote “intellectual diversity,” Horowitz and groups like the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) and the National Association of Scholars (NAS) have impugned current methods of campus hiring, firing, promotion, tenure review, curriculum development, grading, text selection, and invitation of outside speakers. Their efforts have sparked the most wide-ranging debate about academic freedom in America since McCarthyism.



In *The Academic Bill of Rights Debate: A Handbook*, Stephen H. Aby, a professor and bibliographer at the University of Akron, has collected the major statements, documents, and accounts of this controversy into a compendium of great breadth and interest. The handbook includes a helpful précis of the history of the American university and of academic freedom by Lawrence Poston, professor emeritus of English at the University of Illinois at Chicago; the AAUP’s statement on ABOR; the 1940 *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*;

remarks by Horowitz; the extended contretemps between him and art historian Graham Larkin; storm warnings of university corporatization; case studies of state battles over ABOR-inspired legislation; an annotated list of materials for further inquiry; and more. The collection as a whole enlivens the current debate while identifying the enduring issues in it.

Horowitz is organizer of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture, founder of Students for Academic Freedom, and conduit, as sociologists Rudy Fenwick and John Zipp tell us in their chapter, of at least \$13 million in funding from the Bradley, Scaife, and Olin foundations to spread conservative doctrines in higher education. Horowitz has always possessed a nimble pen. In his 1962 book *Student*, he gave the nation its first report of the 1960s campus protests. I still consult the 1969 *Ramparts* magazine articles in which he detailed how the Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Ford foundations fostered the rise of behavioralism in political science and reduced the universities to cogs in the foreign-policy machine. It would have taken a skillful seer at the time to know he was crafting the script for his own future efforts.

INSTITUTIONS SANCTIONED FOR INFRINGEMENT OF GOVERNANCE STANDARDS

Reports of an Association investigation at the institutions listed below have revealed serious infringements of generally accepted standards of college and university government endorsed by this Association, as set forth in the *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities* and derivative governance documents. Institutions are placed on or removed from this sanction list by vote of the Association’s annual meeting.

The publication of these sanctions is for the purpose of informing Association members, the profession at large, and the public that unsatisfactory conditions of academic government exist at the institutions in question.

The sanctioned institutions and the date of sanctioning are listed, along with the citation of the report that formed the basis for the sanction.

Lindenwood University (Missouri) (<i>Academe</i> , May–June 1994, 60–69)	1994
Elmira College (New York) (<i>Academe</i> , September–October 1993, 42–52)	1995
Miami-Dade College (Florida) (<i>Academe</i> , May–June 2000, 73–88)	2000

Horowitz today has lost a good deal of his former directness and clarity, as both Larkin and the National Education Association's Mark Smith show in analyses of the pastiche of claims that underlie Horowitz's conclusions. From "a series of recent studies by independent researchers" showing that Democratic Party registrants outnumber Republicans in American universities, Horowitz concludes that "professors to the left of the political center outnumber professors to the right . . . by a factor of 10–1," a ratio he then raises to 28–1 and 30–1 at "some elite schools like Brown and Wesleyan." His "left-of-center" reference then gives way to loose talk about a "leftist agenda," then "hard leftists . . . dominat[ing] entire fields," which in turn invites improvisations like Ohio state senator Larry Mumper's: "80 percent or so of [professors] are Democrats, liberals or socialists or card-carrying Communists." The charges of blacklisting conservatives, indoctrination, and suppression easily follow. Horowitz's cure? Eliminate "bias." Provide diversity. If you want to condemn the Spanish Inquisition,

you better find someone first to defend it.

As the Larkin and Fenwick and Zipp chapters explain, however, there was no "series of independent studies," probably only two—one paid for by Horowitz's center and the other coauthored by Horowitz himself. And both were deeply flawed. (A long-term UCLA study shows that there are 2.6 liberals for every conservative in higher education as a whole, not ten for every one, and that the ratio of liberals to conservatives is approaching parity in the fast-growing two-year segment of higher education.) Horowitz never even offers a definition of his pivotal term, "liberal." Democratic Party registration alone does not supply one. Horowitz once knew that, just as he knew that a liberal is not a leftist—let alone a "hard leftist," a species as rare where I live as the delta smelt. His argument turns out to be a rope of sand. It is no surprise that students have been absent from this student movement.

The fact that the right-wing attack on higher education lacks substance does not mean that it can be taken lightly. This volume shows

that the attack has been political rather than intellectual from the first. The controversy does, however, raise intellectual questions fundamental to any society. One, noted by Aby, concerns what knowledge is to count in higher education, and as a corollary, who is authorized to decide. A second, recurrent in American society since colleges broke from their religious origins, is the question of whether educational institutions are supposed to transmit received doctrines unquestioned or have a responsibility to examine, contextualize, and perhaps challenge inherited beliefs. Horowitz is with the revanchists on this.

The AAUP, in its response to the ABOR, makes the crucial point for determining answers to these questions: "A fundamental premise of academic freedom is that decisions concerning the quality of scholarship and teaching are to be made by reference to the standards of the academic profession, as interpreted and applied by the community of scholars who are qualified by expertise and training to establish such standards." Judged by this standard, the ABOR infringes on

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the very academic freedom it purports to protect.

Horowitz, ACTA, and the NAS would allow politicians and powerful social interests to influence decisions about what is taught and who is appointed to faculty positions. Horowitz has been a frequent visitor at the state capitols: twenty-three states so far have responded to his call to deny the independence of colleges and universities by attempting to impose oversight of course offerings, inquiry into course syllabi, public hearings for faculty "alleged" to have "bias," and a student right to sue professors when their beliefs are not "respected." One state, Arizona, has proposed a right to do alternative coursework when a student "finds the assigned material personally offensive."

None of these bills has yet made it into law. The book's concluding chapters, by Rodger Govea of Cleveland State University, Mark Smith, and Dana Waller of Front Range Community College (and supplemented by the pointed testimony of Joan Wallach Scott), about the fights in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Colorado, respectively, explain

how faculty aided by the AAUP, the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, and the American Civil Liberties Union organized to defeat such efforts. They make for instructive reading.

The handbook also goes beyond puncturing the false threat of a left-liberal coup to identify the real threat to academic freedom posed by the corporatization of the American university. The chapters by Aby, Fenwick and Zipp, and David Witt of the University of Akron explain how campus administrators have increasingly mimicked business "partners" and funders in their priorities, centralizing methods, and commercial orientation. The recasting of faculty as employees and the conversion of two-thirds of the teaching staff into part-timers lacking job security and academic freedom protections means that faculty wind up "virtually silenced." The privatization of campus services and enclosure of large areas of the academic commons by the ethos of patent seeking after the 1980 Bayh-Dole Act further transform the university

from a public good into a means of private gain.

This handbook is especially valuable at this time because, as Michael Bérubé observes, "Few people know what academic freedom is." That goes for people inside the university as well as outside. Too few faculty know about the struggles that were necessary to create it and how fragile it remains. Too many think of it only as a grant of individual rights and not also as conferring collective duties. They miss historian Thomas Haskell's point, quoted by Poston, that "historically, the heart and soul of academic freedom lies not in free speech, but in professional autonomy and collegial self-governance."

To the extent that David Horowitz reawakens our appreciation of this point we owe him a note of thanks. And we also owe it to ourselves, as Witt says, to keep organizing and "engage our communities [about these issues] at every level." Horowitz's critics may have the facts and best arguments, but Aby's handbook shows that it will take more than facts and good arguments to win this battle.

