

## Geographic and Political Trends in Signers of “A Call for Constructive Engagement”

On April 22, AAC&U released a public statement from college and university presidents and leaders of scholarly societies in response to the Trump administration’s ongoing actions affecting higher education. Titled “[A Call for Constructive Engagement](#),” the statement marked the first time current presidents had spoken out collectively in large numbers about these issues.

### There has been robust public interest in the statement.

The statement has been quoted in subsequent public statements and covered by major national and international media outlets. In the 10 days following the statement’s release, AAC&U garnered nearly 1,500 media mentions for a potential news reach of 6.27 billion people. You can see highlights of [the media coverage here](#).

Signatures from current leaders of colleges, universities, and scholarly societies [continue to be accepted](#). Between April 22, when the statement was released, and May 15, the number of signatories has grown from 175 to 650.

During the first 24 hours after its release, the statement was viewed nearly 1.5 million times, garnering more traffic alone than the entire AAC&U website in February and March combined.

### Signatories represent a broad cross-section of US colleges and universities.

According to a [May 3 analysis by the Heterodox Academy \(HxA\) research team](#), 9% of American colleges and universities had signed “A Call for Constructive Engagement.” Together, these institutions employ nearly a quarter-million full-time equivalent faculty members and enroll over 4 million students, about 22% of all students enrolled at US colleges and universities.

Most signatory institutions (60%) are privately controlled, though over 200 public colleges and universities had signed by May 3, when the analysis was conducted.

Signatories include baccalaureate colleges, master’s degree-granting universities, research-intensive universities, community colleges, and special-focus institutions.

### State-level politics may play a role in leaders’ decisions whether to sign the statement.

Signatories come from campuses in 42 US states, plus the District of Columbia. About a third of all signatories represent colleges and universities in the mid-Atlantic region, whereas colleges and universities from the Southeast and Southwest regions are underrepresented among signatories. Raul Fernandez is [mapping](#) the geographic location of presidents who have signed the statement.

New York and California (both “blue states”) have the most signatories on the statement. In contrast, as of May 15, no colleges in the following states (all archetypal “red states”) have signed the statement: Alaska, Arkansas, Idaho, Louisiana, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and West Virginia.

HxA identified a [moderately strong negative correlation](#) between the percentage of a state’s colleges and universities that signed the open letter and the percentage of that state’s popular vote that went to Donald Trump in 2024. In general, the higher the rate of presidential votes for Trump in a state, the smaller the percentage of that state’s colleges and universities that have signed the statement.

### Federal actions precipitated the statement and may also play a role in leaders’ decisions whether to sign it.

Most, though not all, colleges and universities named in recent US Department of Education investigations for antisemitism or racial discrimination have signed “A Call for Constructive Engagement.”

Recent US Department of Education press releases announcing investigations have named about 10% of all statement signatories.