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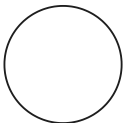
A university for Alabama, a university for everyone: op-ed

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By Waleed Hazbun, Nirmala Erevelles, James McNaughton, and Sara-Maria Sorentino

This is a guest opinion column

As faculty members of the University of Alabama chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), we write to express our concern that, following the passage of HB 580 in April 2026, the University of Alabama System trustees and the University of Alabama administration are advancing policy changes that could hamper the pursuit of the university's educational mission. The HB 580 legislation does not apply to the University of Alabama, yet these policy changes have been advanced. They do not appear to address any documented deficiencies in existing practices, but rather appear to follow a political agenda developed outside the state.

The new policies diminish the role of the elected Faculty Senate and assert the trustees' authority over courses and curriculum. We feel the development of a vision for instruction and knowledge production benefit from faculty expertise. The university's mission, as well as the trustees' long-range vision, are better protected with a robust role for faculty in shared governance. When faculty become shared authors of new policies, they can facilitate their effective implementation.

We support President Mohler's vision of creating a "University FOR Alabama," and as faculty employees of a public university we are committed to the core AAUP goal of ensuring that higher education serves the common good. That said, a university for Alabama, means putting community and public interest ahead of the interests of any political agenda. Remember that UA recruits the majority of its students and faculty from out of state. UA's teaching and research mission professes that we offer "a global perspective." We are a stronger institution when we resist short-term political mandates and cultivate a deeper sense of belonging and shared mission across our diverse community.

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As AAUP members we view education as an essential component of democracy, along with the rule of law, equal rights, academic freedom, and a free press. The faculty takes pride in the university's mission which seeks to produce "socially-conscious, ethical and well-rounded leaders." In times of uncertainty, such as these, we need leaders who seek expertise from the faculty and staff directly engaged in the organization's tasks. Shared governance builds dignity and makes the institution more resilient. Let's navigate a path to a better future together.