



Letter to the Editor | When politics override expertise

Sara McDaniel, Guest Columnist

The University of Alabama continues to invite political interference into the work of UA. After the passage of House Bill 580 in April, University administration has rolled out voluntary compliance to this bill. It is voluntary because UA was explicitly exempt from this bill. The new policies require redundant and more time-intensive post-tenure reviews.

New language was added to allow for subjective termination of faculty. At the same time, President Mohler claimed to want a “University for Alabama.” Taken separately from all of the previous political interference in Alabama higher education, this doesn’t sound like a bad idea. However, UA is not intended to be a university that only serves Alabama.



CW / Tala Mott

The Rose Administration Building, photographed on Aug. 30, 2026.

UA worked tirelessly under previous leadership to gain Research 1 designation. At its most basic, this R1 status indicates a large academic and research mission to examine and solve global problems through rigorous research — free from political interference — that follows the principles of good science. Science does not know or adhere to politics, and nor should it.

Do students, their families and alumni understand that what students will now receive is an education limited by political and state official interference? AAUP members are concerned that faculty will limit teaching that challenges assumptions, considers competing perspectives and teaches difficult subjects.

High-level faculty recruitment and retention will also suffer. Faculty will be replaced by applicants who do not mind performing their job duties under political interference.

Ironically, HB 580 was sold to the public as a law that would strengthen institutions, but instead, it will attract less competitive faculty applicants and limit the instruction and research that currently makes our university excellent.

Maybe that was the point. Maybe HB 580 wasn’t meant to make our institutions better and hold faculty accountable. Maybe it was meant to control students, faculty and research to fit political ideologies and agendas.

Sara McDaniel is the president of the University of Alabama AAUP chapter.

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