

AIJAC summary of Stanford and Columbia Universities' reviews into antisemitism on campus

Some universities overseas have not been as slow to act as Australian universities. In the US, Columbia and Stanford Universities have both concluded inquiries into the antisemitism and hatred that filled their campuses since October 7 last year.

These efforts have yielded robust recommendations for addressing the untenable circumstances faced by many Jewish individuals and Israelis within the university environment. There is an opportunity for the Senate Committee to benefit significantly from these findings and the valuable lessons they provide. AIJAC urges the Committee to carefully examine the recommendations of these inquiries, as well as those of former Acting Dean at the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland, William A. Galston (see below), and incorporate, as relevant, those recommendations into the current review.

The Columbia¹ and Stanford² inquiries uncovered that large numbers of Jewish students reported experiencing harassment, intimidation and even physical assault. Students wearing yarmulkes faced spitting, humiliation and being shoved against walls, while necklaces adorned with Jewish symbols have been ripped from their necks. Jewish students have been chased off campus by groups threatening violence, and repeatedly excluded from public spaces.

The Columbia task force observed that “some critiques of Zionism on campus...incorporated traditional antisemitic tropes about secretive power, money, global conspiracies, bloodthirstiness, and comparisons of Zionists to Nazis or rodents.” The Stanford task force stated that “antisemitism exists today on the Stanford campus in ways that are widespread and pernicious.”³

Both campuses documented troubling instances of faculty misusing their authority to stigmatise and humiliate Jewish students. Many Jewish students, faculty and staff reported that their complaints of misconduct were often dismissed by administrators, with some being directed to seek mental health counselling instead of receiving appropriate redress. Additionally, there has been a concerning reluctance to establish clear rules of conduct or hold violators accountable.

¹ “Columbia University Student Experiences of Antisemitism and Recommendations for Promoting Shared Values and Inclusion”, Task Force on Antisemitism, Columbia University, August 2024, <https://president.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/content/Announcements/Report-2-Task-Force-on-Antisemitism.pdf>

² “‘It’s in the Air’: Antisemitism and anti-Israel bias at Stanford and how to address it”, A report from the Subcommittee on Antisemitism and Anti-Israel Bias of the Jewish Advisory Committee at Stanford University, May 31, 2024, https://news.stanford.edu/data/assets/pdf_file/0033/156588/ASAIB-final-report.pdf

³ Reproduced in “Can College Campuses Get a Grip on Antisemitism?” Wall Street Journal, William A Galston, September 3, 2024, <https://www.wsj.com/opinion/can-college-campuses-get-a-grip-on-antisemitism-675dcc21>

Columbia's task force concluded, “the surge in violent antisemitic and xenophobic rhetoric that shook our campus this past academic year has revealed that the consensus around our norms and values no longer exists, and that the rules and procedures we thought we were operating under are not working or are insufficient to address our current problems.”

There are clear parallels between the experiences of Jewish students on US campuses and of Jewish students on Australian campuses.

In an article in the *Wall Street Journal*, opinion columnist and former Acting Dean at the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland William A. Galston cites some of the most egregious examples of campus antisemitism in the United States since October 7, 2023.⁴

He cites the findings and recommendations made by Columbia and Stanford task forces, and offers his own recommendations. Galston recommends that universities must prohibit conduct that disrupts core academic activities such as teaching, learning, and research. No individual or group should be allowed to interfere through classroom disruptions, noisy demonstrations or attempts to silence invited speakers. Institutions must establish clear limits on the time, place, and manner of public speech, while resisting any efforts to restrict access to campus public spaces.

Further, he recommends that all complaints of misconduct should be taken seriously, with strict disciplinary measures for administrators who fail to uphold this standard. Rules must be clearly communicated to incoming students, and enforcement should be firm and consistent. For serious breaches, an escalating system of punishments should be implemented, starting with a warning for the first offense, suspension for the second, and expulsion for the third. In cases of major disruptions, university leadership—not mid-level administrators—must take decisive action, ensuring enforcement rather than negotiation in response to any interference with core functions.

Please find in Appendix 1 the Galston *Wall Street Journal* article, in Appendix 2 the executive summary of the Columbia inquiry and in Appendix 3 the executive summary of the Stanford inquiry.

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⁴ “Can College Campuses Get a Grip on Antisemitism?” *Wall Street Journal*, William A Galston, September 3, 2024, <https://www.wsj.com/opinion/can-college-campuses-get-a-grip-on-antisemitism-675dcc21>

Appendix 1: Galson *Wall Street Journal* article

Can College Campuses Get a Grip on Antisemitism?

William A Galson, *Wall Street Journal*, September 3, 2024

<https://www.wsj.com/opinion/can-college-campuses-get-a-grip-on-antisemitism-675dcc21>

As college students began returning to campus, news broke of Hamas's cold-blooded murder of six hostages in a tunnel under Rafah. This crime should remind everyone how the Gaza war began, and in a better world it would deter student radicals from chanting pro-Hamas slogans.

The real issue, however, is whether campus administrators have learned anything from their disastrous mishandling of campus protests last academic year—and whether they are prepared to respond differently now.

High-level task forces are at work in many of the most visible sites of disruption, and two of these groups, representing Columbia and Stanford, have issued detailed reports of their findings and recommendations.

What they uncovered is deeply disturbing. Large numbers of Jewish students report harassment, intimidation and even physical assault. Students wearing yarmulkes have been spat on, humiliated, and shoved up against walls.

Necklaces with Jewish symbols have been ripped from their necks. Jewish students have been chased off campus by groups threatening violence, and many avoid walking alone on campus. Some have been excluded from public spaces. An Israeli student at Columbia reported that when she went to the university's health services, no one came to see her, and she overheard a conversation between two healthcare professionals in the next room during which one refused to treat her because of her national origin.

The Columbia task force found that “some critiques of Zionism on campus in recent months have incorporated traditional antisemitic tropes about secretive power, money, global conspiracies, bloodthirstiness, and comparisons of Zionists to Nazis or rodents.” The Stanford task force concluded that “antisemitism exists today on the Stanford campus in ways that are widespread and pernicious.”

At both campuses, there were prominent examples of teachers abusing their authority to stigmatize and humiliate Jewish students. At both, Jewish students, faculty and staff reported that when they took their stories of misconduct on campus and in the classroom to administrators, their complaints often weren't taken seriously, and some students were advised to seek mental-health counseling instead of redress. A senior administrator told the Stanford task force that “at the end of the day, antisemitism is institutional, there is nothing I can do about it.” (Imagine the outcry if this administrator said the same thing about antiblack racism.)

At both campuses there has been a persistent reluctance to state clear rules of conduct or to hold violators accountable. At Stanford, encampments persisted even though they violated university rules. Students, faculty, staff and alumni have expressed concern that “the University’s inability to enforce its rules forbidding unauthorized overnight camping has generated a larger climate of impunity and contempt for rules and norms,” the task force reported. Columbia’s task force concluded that “the surge in violent antisemitic and xenophobic rhetoric that shook our campus this past academic year has revealed that the consensus around our norms and values no longer exists, and that the rules and procedures we thought we were operating under are not working or are insufficient to address our current problems.”

Based on my three decades as a faculty member of two large state universities and a short stint in an administrative post, let me offer a few suggestions. Colleges and universities should forbid conduct that disrupts teaching, learning and research. They shouldn’t allow anyone to interfere with these core activities through classroom disruptions, noisy demonstrations, or actions designed to prevent invited speakers from expressing their views. They should establish reasonable limits on the time, place and manner of public speech and expression. They should resist any effort to close off campus public spaces for any individuals or groups. They should treat complaints of misconduct with concern and respect, regardless of the identity of the complainant, and administrators who violate this norm should be disciplined.

Rules mean nothing unless they are enforced. All incoming students should receive not only written notice of campus regulations but also mandatory, in-person briefings to explain the rules and answer questions about them, including the consequences of violating them. For serious violations, there should be a system of escalating punishments—a warning after the first offense, suspension for at least a semester after the second, and expulsion without the possibility of readmission for the third.

In cases involving major disruptions, top officials, not midlevel administrators, should take the lead. The response to interference with core functions should be enforcement, not negotiation. If presidents and provosts aren’t serious about institutional rules and norms, no one else will be, and the outcome will be a repetition of the collapse of authority that I saw as a student in the 1960s.

Appendix 2: Columbia inquiry executive summary

“Columbia University Student Experiences of Antisemitism and Recommendations for Promoting Shared Values and Inclusion”

Task Force on Antisemitism, Columbia University, August 2024

<https://president.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/content/Announcements/Report-2-Task-Force-on-Antisemitism.pdf>

Executive Summary

The demonstrations that roiled our campuses during the past academic year uncovered deep disagreements about the mission of our University. During those months, consensus around the university’s formal rules and informal norms of behavior broke down, interfering with our charge to educate students and engage in research.

In addition, the testimonies of hundreds of Jewish and Israeli students have made clear that the University community has not treated them with the standards of civility, respect, and fairness it promises to all its students.

After October 7, many Jewish and Israeli students began to report multiple instances of harassment, verbal abuse and ostracism, and in some cases physical violence. Given the volume of these reports, the Task Force invited all students—not just Jewish and Israeli students—to tell us their stories. Over the course of the spring, nearly five hundred students offered testimonials, at over 20 listening sessions, which provided invaluable insights into the campus climate during these troubled times. These student stories are heartbreaking, and make clear that the University has an obligation to act.

This report recounts student experiences in a wide variety of venues—day-to-day encounters, including dorm life and social media; clubs; and the classroom. Unfortunately, some members of the Columbia community have been unwilling to acknowledge the antisemitism many students have experienced—the way repeated violations of University policy and norms have affected them, and the compliance issues this climate has created with respect to federal, state, and local anti-discrimination law. Many of the events reported in the testimonials took place well before the establishment of the encampments and the takeover of Hamilton Hall; the experiences reported during that period were even more extreme.

We heard about troubling incidents from a diverse group of Jewish students from across the political spectrum; and, even more pronouncedly, from Israeli students, whose national origin both make them members of a specifically protected class under federal law and frequently has caused them to be singled out for particularly terrible treatment.

Students also reported that their efforts to seek redress from the University for the hostility and bigotry they were encountering were often unsuccessful. Many students did not understand how to report these incidents. Although some faculty and staff responded with compassion and determination, others minimized the concerns of these students, reacting sluggishly and ineffectively even to the most clear-cut

violations. Even students who had successfully reported an incident spoke of a recurring lack of enforcement of existing University rules and policies.

The experiences of these students demonstrated that there is an urgent need to reshape everyday social norms across the campuses of Columbia University. We need to promote a richer ethic of pluralism, which would encourage greater tolerance of and respect for differences in religion, culture, and national origin. If we were really to succeed in promoting tolerance, students would come to understand and value these differences.

But we are a long way from there. The problems we found are serious and pervasive. We recognize that the University is not monolithic, and the environment at some schools is especially challenging. A wide range of responses is needed—indeed, a broader range than we discuss in this report (which focuses on training, defining antisemitism, reporting, and rules for student groups) and in our last report (which focused on the rules governing protests). We do not want to give the impression that the recommendations here are all that is required. We will address other issues in future reports.

In this report we draw on the many accounts shared with us over the past several months to produce a working definition of antisemitism. Instead of relying on an existing definition, we crafted a working definition that is rooted in recent experiences at Columbia:

Antisemitism is prejudice, discrimination, hate, or violence directed at Jews, including Jewish Israelis. Antisemitism can manifest in a range of ways, including as ethnic slurs, epithets, and caricatures; stereotypes; antisemitic tropes and symbols; Holocaust denial; targeting Jews or Israelis for violence or celebrating violence against them; exclusion or discrimination based on Jewish identity or ancestry or real or perceived ties to Israel; and certain double standards applied to Israel.

This working definition draws on experiences of many Jewish and Israeli students, who were on the receiving end of ethnic slurs, stereotypes about supposedly dangerous Israeli veterans, antisemitic tropes about Jewish wealth and hidden power, threats and physical assaults, exclusion of Zionists from student groups, and inconsistent standards. We propose this definition for use in training and education, not for discipline or as a means for limiting free speech or academic freedom.

This report also identifies significant problems in university policy and practice and makes recommendations for fixing flawed administrative systems, improving campus climate, and building consensus for a more inclusive and pluralistic university. Specifically, we recommend anti-bias and inclusion trainings for students, resident advisers, resident assistants, teaching assistants, student-facing staff, and faculty. In a community dedicated to freedom of speech and pluralism, we must prepare students with different views and backgrounds to engage with each other. We must encourage mutual respect, tolerance, civility, and an open learning environment.

We also recommend in-person workshops about antisemitism and Islamophobia, as well as a range of optional training and workshops for others in our community, including on implicit bias and stereotypes, bystander interventions, and having difficult conversations.

Given the urgent need to train administrators who play critical roles in responding to student needs, we also suggest a range of trainings in dispute resolution.

As part of this effort, we recommend that the Interim President and Provost establish a Cross School Committee that includes all schools at Columbia, along with Barnard College and Teachers College, to share information and establish a baseline standard for trainings, workshops, and website information for all schools. The Committee should aim to overcome the problem of decentralization within Columbia, which is a barrier to maintaining common objectives across the many spaces shared by undergraduate and graduate students.

We also recommend that the University establish a repository for best practices in anti-bias and inclusion trainings and that it develop a plan for evaluating these programs.

Customized trainings aimed at specific constituencies are particularly important, including first year orientation and new student orientation for graduate programs—a recent area of focus for University Life—and new faculty orientation at all Columbia schools, including affiliate schools, Barnard College, and Teachers College. We recognize that University Life has been working to update and improve its training for student orientation.

We call attention to the need to train teaching assistants (TAs) in sensitivity to bias, exclusion, and antisemitism. Currently, the online course required for all Columbia TAs, available through the Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action (EOAA) website, lacks guidelines on diversity, inclusion, and bias. TAs need guidance on how to respond to classroom scenarios that stray into discrimination and bias; currently, they are told that no single best practice exists. We recommend giving attention to topics related to race, religion, and national origin in all their complexity. We point to several excellent models offered by other universities in guiding TAs and first-time instructors.

Resident assistants and advisers (RAs) are another group in need of customized training; we offer suggestions for how RAs can foster better attention to inclusion, identification of bias, and elimination of harmful behavior signaling derision and hatred. RAs must fully understand their role as leaders in inclusion: they need to be prepared to listen with respect and to mediate conflicts.

In place of the confusing multiplicity of reporting structures that currently exist, we suggest ways of revamping procedures so that students are not discouraged from speaking with advisors and administrators about prejudicial treatment. Transparency and consistency in how we handle student reports of bias and exclusion are of the utmost importance if we want students to share their experiences. Our aim is for students to engage with faculty or staff who can resolve conflicts before situations rise

to the level of legal violations. Antisemitism complaints deserve careful attention from deans and administrators, alongside all forms of bigotry and discrimination.

We also recommend ways to ensure that student groups contribute to the University's pluralist mission and comply with anti-discrimination law. Unfortunately, we have heard from many Jewish and Israeli students who have been excluded from student groups because of their Zionist beliefs. This is not acceptable. Student groups must be inclusive, with membership limited only for reasons connected to their mission. Student groups generally should not issue statements unrelated to their missions, so they can welcome students with diverse views and backgrounds. Groups also should have a robust consultation process before issuing statements or joining coalitions. To be clear, there should not be any limits on the free speech rights of a group's members. They must be free to speak about any issue as long as they are speaking for themselves, not for the group.

Appendix 3: Stanford inquiry executive summary

“‘It’s in the Air’: Antisemitism and anti-Israel bias at Stanford and how to address it”
A report from the Subcommittee on Antisemitism and Anti-Israel Bias of the Jewish
Advisory Committee at Stanford University, May 31, 2024

https://news.stanford.edu/data/assets/pdf_file/0033/156588/ASAIB-final-report.pdf

Executive Summary

This Report presents the findings and recommendations of a Subcommittee of twelve members (six Stanford faculty, three staff, two students, and one alumnus) appointed by President Richard Saller in the late fall of 2023 to consider how Stanford could “educate the community and take measures designed to reduce, eliminate, and respond to antisemitism,” while also fostering dialogue with the Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian communities and working “to build a more cohesive community” at Stanford. To respond to President Saller’s charge, we first had to assess the nature and extent of antisemitism on campus, against the backdrop of a national surge in antisemitism following the horrific terrorist attacks on Israel on October 7, 2023. We also found it necessary, with his approval, to expand the scope of our investigation to assess the closely related form of bias against Israelis as a nationality group.

While our work focused on the specific issues and challenges confronting Jewish and Israeli members of the Stanford community, the concern “to build a more cohesive community” across Stanford was never far from our minds. And we came to conclude that the best way for Stanford to respond to antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias is for it to re-commit to core university principles that should be promoted and defended equally for all groups, irrespective of race, religion, nationality, or other forms of identity.

We rejected the idea that “safety” requires “protecting” students from views that might make them uncomfortable. Universities exist to consider contending perspectives and subject them to rational debate and critical inquiry. Our goal is for community members to be safe from injury or the threat of it. Acts of bigotry—hatred or intolerance based on a person’s ethnicity, religion, or other identity—violate the standards of safety students have a right to expect and universities have an obligation to afford.

To assess the nature and extent of the problem, during the first three months of 2024 we conducted more than 50 different listening sessions for undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, staff, alumni, and parents. More than 300 Stanford-connected people attended these sessions. We also conducted nearly four dozen individual interviews with members of these constituencies and senior and mid-level administrative officials at Stanford (including deans and vice-provosts). All our listening sessions and interviews were conducted on a not-for-attribution basis to enable people to express themselves candidly.

We did not attempt to offer a single definition of antisemitism or its relationship to antiZionism. However, we noted that different definitional efforts agree on a wide range of narratives and behaviors that are characteristic of this form of bias, such as demonizing or dehumanizing Jews through false and malicious tropes and stereotypes

about their imagined influence, power, wealth, rituals, or hidden loyalties. Whether one equates anti-Zionism with antisemitism by definition, these two biases are in fact closely intertwined.

What We Found

After many months examining the social climate in the undergraduate and graduate levels and in diverse schools, programs, departments, residences, workplaces, and physical spaces at Stanford University, our Subcommittee reached this unanimous conclusion: antisemitism exists today on the Stanford campus in ways that are widespread and pernicious. Some of this bias is expressed in overt and occasionally shocking ways, but often it is wrapped in layers of subtlety and implication, one or two steps away from blatant hate speech. Antisemitism and bias against Israelis as a nationality group are not uniformly distributed across campus. We found schools, departments, dorms, and programs that seem largely unaffected, where Jewish students, faculty, and staff did not report issues with bias, harassment, intimidation, or ostracism. But a few portions of the campus appear to have very serious problems that have deeply affected Jewish and Israeli students. The most succinct summary of what we found is in our title, “It’s in the air.”

We learned of instances where antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias reached a level of social injury that deeply affected people’s lives: students moving out of their dorms because of antisemitic acts or speech; students being ostracized, canceled, or intimidated for openly identifying as Jewish, or for simply being Israeli, or expressing support for Israel, or even for refusing to explicitly condemn Israel; students fearing to display Jewish symbols or reveal that they were Jewish for fear of losing friendships or group acceptance.

Some of the examples we heard did not involve singular actions or expressions but a pattern of bias and intimidation that need to be energetically addressed. Students also complained of being “tokenized,” viewed as “a representative of the Jewish people all the time.” Graduate students also complained of “a lack of any mechanism to support us,” a fear of retaliation if they reported what they were experiencing, and a lack of confidence that anything would be improved if they did report.

We were struck by the fact that many of the Jewish and Israeli students who were subjected to these patterns of intimidation were well to the left of center in relation to the Israeli political spectrum. They were critical of the current government and many of its policies and actions. The hostility directed toward them appeared to have little or nothing to do with their political views but rather with their Jewish or Israeli identities—or at least with their unwillingness to qualify or reject those identities through abject apology for having any connection, however ancestral, to the State of Israel. The imposition of a unique social burden on Jewish students to openly denounce Israel and renounce any ties to it was, we found, the most common manifestation of antisemitism in student life.

It was not only students who felt unsafe. A few faculty and staff members told us that they had begun to feel physically unsafe for the first time in their many years or decades at Stanford.

More often, Jewish students (and some faculty and staff) felt isolated and abandoned, with no clear expression of support from the University (or from their school or program) for the pain and trauma they were feeling after the October 7 attacks, or for the intimidation and hostility they encountered in their programs or residences.

Beyond the widely reported incident of antisemitism in a freshman COLLEGE class, which we describe at some length in this Report, we learned of other instances of antisemitism or anti-Israeli bias in the classroom, and incidents where teaching assistants abused their positions and class communication networks to proselytize for their personal views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or to urge students to attend protest rallies or demonstrations.

No venue has provided a wider and more uninhibited berth for the expression of hostility toward Jews and Israelis than social media. Jewish and Israeli students frequently reported being denounced or canceled for dissenting from the prevailing orthodoxy of virulent condemnation of Israel. Students (not only Jewish or Israeli) also spoke of pressure to post material that demonstrated agreement with the prevailing anti-Israel political orthodoxy. Most troubling is the social media platform, Fizz, where all posts are strictly anonymous. We were presented with countless examples of Fizz posts that appeared antisemitic in tone and intent, blaming “you guys” for the violence in Gaza, suggesting a Jewish student cabal behind the candidacy of a Jewish student for the ASSU Senate, and urging that a Jewish student who had written a national magazine article about the antisemitic climate on campus be waterboarded with gasoline and lit on fire.

Among the most troubling realms we learned about were the student residences. Some Jewish students reported intimidation or vandalism in their residences that appeared to be directed at them as Jews, including instances of mezuzahs (mezuzot) being ripped from door frames, a swastika being drawn on a Jewish student’s door, and scrawls and graffiti directed at Jewish students in a way that was meant to harass and intimidate them.

Given the importance and influence of the role, we were troubled by reports of Resident Assistants (RAs) failing in their obligation to foster a safe and respectful environment and to lead with integrity, either for their own reasons or due to insufficient training. In some instances, Ras posted antisemitic or threatening content on social media, for example, that Jews don’t need protection because antisemitism isn’t real. In others, they abused their role to advance divisive political agendas that left their Jewish residents feeling that they could not trust or approach them.

Many students—as well as faculty, staff, alumni, and parents—were distressed by the growing signs of antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias in protests, demonstrations, and encampments in the University’s public spaces. We recognize the importance of

preserving these spaces as free speech zones where even the most vehement criticism of Israel, as well as strident calls for changes in US or University policy, enjoy a constitutional right to expression. But the encampments and other protests have, at times, gone beyond these lines of argument and advocacy to call, implicitly or even explicitly, for violence, as in “Death 2 Settler Colonial Projects,” “Long Live Palestine, Die Israel,” and occasional expressions of support for terrorist organizations. The White Plaza protests have also featured versions of the infamous antisemitic blood libel that Jews were drinking the blood of non-Jewish children—in this case the baseless and outrageous allegations that Israel was harvesting the organs or skin of Palestinians. The current encampment also hosted a speech by an imam who is nationally known for his antisemitism and calls for violence. We also heard frequent concern about the presence at these various protests of external actors, who bring their own agendas and who are not subject to university discipline.

Some faculty shared incidents or climates of antisemitism or anti-Israeli bias in their departments or schools. More often, however, faculty complained of the general atmosphere of antisemitic and anti-Israeli sentiment on campus and the failure of the university to condemn blatant expressions of it. Faculty felt particularly shocked and appalled (as did many students) by certain signs and statements on campus justifying and celebrating the terrorist violence on October 7.

Many faculty condemned the disruptions of classes, university events, and the academic working environment. Independent of their specific concerns about the proliferation of antisemitic and anti-Israeli tropes and narratives, faculty expressed distress about the climate of extreme polarization and personal invective in expression related to the Israel-Palestine conflict, and the paucity of opportunities to cultivate civil discourse and rational, informed debate.

By contrast, we found that faculty in the Graduate School of Business, the School of Engineering, and the Doerr School of Sustainability felt positively about the climates there or at least did not report any issues.

The staff we interviewed echoed many of the same themes we heard from students and faculty. They lamented the polarization, the lack of mutual respect, the ignorance about Jews. They spoke of feeling isolated, “unsafe and unsupported.” This has affected their performance at work and has led them to want to avoid campus and work remotely as much as possible.

We heard many complaints about the University’s programmatic commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. What upset people was not the goals of DEI but the exclusion of Jews and Israelis, who (our study makes clear) confront bias and harassment on campus that should be addressed by campus DEI programs, if they exist at all. The clear and consistent appeal from our listening sessions was for equal recognition and treatment.

Another recurrent theme in our listening sessions and interviews was the failure of the University to respond to complaints of bias adequately, or expeditiously, or at all.

Examples include antisemitic vandalism and mezuzah desecrations that were barely investigated in some instances and for which accountability was never established. Some said requests to assess antisemitism on campus and reform policies to reflect it have been basically ignored. We heard many complaints about lack of follow-up after students filed reports through the Protect Identity Harm (PIH) system. And there was widespread skepticism about the capacity of the Office of Community Standards to hold students accountable for violations of rules that contribute to a hostile environment for Jewish and Israeli students, faculty, and staff.

Nearly 100 alumni and parents participated in our listening sessions. They expressed acute concern for the physical safety of Jewish students and for their emotional wellbeing in the face of numerous threats and forms of antisemitic bias and harassment. Some shared stories we had not otherwise heard. Many parents and alumni were deeply distressed and disheartened that their children and other Jewish Stanford students feel the need to hide their views or their identity, feel unsafe or unwelcome in their dorms or other campus spaces, and confront a degraded climate for discourse on campus, lacking in civility, rationality, and mutual respect. They were also the most vocal of all constituencies in calling for the University to enforce its own rules with respect to protests and encampments.

The core problem, we concluded, is not simply the failure to punish rule violations in a concrete way. It is the broader deterioration of norms that once stigmatized antisemitism. The trend in recent years, but especially since October 7, has been a normalization of antisemitic and anti-Israeli speech on campus, and an “impression of indifference” on the part of the University—or at least many actors within it—to antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias.

What We Conclude and Recommend

To address antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias—or for that matter, other forms of prejudice—we must address the broader campus culture.

Doing this requires Stanford to re-commit to six principles that are foundational to a healthy, thriving university community: safety, free expression, tolerance and pluralism, equality, accountability, and education. Stanford must work comprehensively, energetically, and imaginatively to generate a campus culture where all members of the community are: 1) physically secure; 2) free to express their opinions and beliefs; 3) tolerated and respected for their beliefs, even when such beliefs diverge strongly from those held by others; 4) equally treated and protected; 5) accountable for their speech and behavior; and (6) engaged in a process of education about complex and difficult issues that is characterized by rigorous inquiry based on facts and reason without devolving into personal animus, particularly that which is based on intolerance.

Safety

- We recommend that the PIH system be revised to provide more appropriate feedback to those who initiate complaints and more transparency to the university community. We welcome the Provost’s appointment of a committee, chaired by Professor Diego Zambrano, to consider changes in the PIH system.

- The student residences should offer a safe, welcoming, and inclusive second “home” for students. They should refrain from imposing any political orthodoxy or tolerating the projection of any identity bias that leaves any dorm residents feeling marginalized and unsafe.
- Student mental health should be a priority. The Vaden Health Center should ensure that it has adequate staff (in number and training) to respond to the psychological manifestations of injury and stress due to antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias
- We urge the University to carefully review its policies and practices concerning the presence of non-Stanford-affiliated individuals at campus protests (and particularly, protracted encampments) and to evaluate whether it has adequate resources for verifying people’s connection to the campus and removing visitors who violate its rules.

Free Expression

- We support freedom of speech and respect the protections for it under the First Amendment and California’s Leonard Law. However, this protection does not extend to hate speech that calls for specific violence against individuals or classes of people, or to speech that disrupts classes, public events, or essential university business. Such speech can and should be sanctioned. Time, place, and manner restrictions banning audible demonstrations and political banners from the Quad and from the vicinity of other academic buildings should be strictly enforced.
- In addition to more clarity around sanctions and when they will be consistently imposed, University leaders should exercise their own free speech rights to call out and condemn antisemitic and anti-Israeli speech on campus.

Tolerance and Pluralism

- We recommend that the University work more energetically and consistently to promote norms of tolerance for different views and identities and respect for social, intellectual, and political pluralism.
- Stanford must work harder to create a culture where disagreement can be expressed without devolving into personal animus, political intolerance, or social exclusion. This requires comprehensive efforts to promote the norms and skills of mutual respect, tolerance, and civility, with a pedagogical emphasis on the method of critical inquiry. We identify several efforts now underway at Stanford to promote critical inquiry, evidence-based debate, and a civil climate for discourse. In addition to the COLLEGE curriculum, these include the Stanford Civics Initiative, the Intercollegiate Civil Disagreement Fellowship, and the Spring Quarter course on Democracy and Disagreement.
- We recommend adding a comprehensive program to begin developing in all incoming members of the freshman class the norms and skills of critical, mutually respectful discourse. And we also urge that Stanford continue and enhance messaging to newly admitted undergraduates about the kind of academic culture we seek and uphold.

- Stanford should also address the challenge of toxic social media. It could perform a national service by engaging the leadership of Fizz to strengthen content moderation and the reporting system for violations.

Equality

- In the short term, we recommend that Jews and Israelis be added to the panoply of identities recognized by DEI programs so that the harms they are enduring are treated with the same concern as those of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ members of the community.
- In the longer-term, however, we make a different recommendation. We believe this identity-driven approach to belonging and inclusion is anathema to the University's educational mission, and that it ultimately works to the detriment of the very groups it seeks to aid. We propose moving from DEI programs as presently constituted to a pluralist framework that benefits individuals from all backgrounds, including Jews and Israelis, who are not currently protected, and indeed are disadvantaged, by DEI. We believe the best approach lies in Harvard Professor Danielle Allen's call for "a framework of confident pluralism—inclusion and belonging, academic freedom, and mutual respect." The goal should be to produce authentic understanding of differences without uniformity of thought.

Accountability

- Stanford must have the ability to enforce its rules and norms, provided that they do not inappropriately thwart political discourse. Stanford should not rely solely on external law enforcement action or criminal referrals to hold its students accountable for actions that violate its rules. It must be able to rely upon its own system of compliance and enforcement.
- An independent evaluation should be conducted of the Office of Community Standards to assess whether and to what extent it has proved able to impose accountability for student violations regarding the time, place, and manner of speech, and for other rules violations that propagate antisemitism, anti-Israeli bias, Islamophobia, and other forms of bigotry unprotected by the First Amendment.
- The University should also ensure that it can be held accountable for its success or failure in honoring its commitments. Beyond periodic and comprehensive release of data on all incidents of antisemitic and anti-Israeli bias, Stanford should establish baselines and measure progress for addressing antisemitism and other forms of non-race-based hate and bias that are not now measured. It should commit to annual reporting and review of this progress.
- We also recommend identifying a senior administrator who is empowered to pursue this work across the university, is accountable to the President or Provost, and makes public reports on their progress at regular and predictable intervals both to the President or Provost and to the Board of Trustees.

Education

- The University should incorporate into its existing educational programs for faculty and staff (including resident fellows and residence deans), and for students in positions of authority, such as teaching assistants and residence

staff, instruction about the history and diverse forms and manifestations of antisemitism—the negative tropes, stereotypes, and misinformation.

- More broadly, the University should promote education about the culture, religion, history, and ethnic diversity of the Jewish people, and sensitivity to the consequences for Jewish community members’ sense of safety, belonging, and inclusion that follow from characteristic forms of speech and action.
- Instructors and teaching assistants should avoid using the classroom (and communications and meetings related to instruction) as a vehicle for propagating their personal political views and involvements.
- Stanford should also offer pedagogical training in the methods of teaching critical inquiry and cultivating civil discourse. This should be a required part of training for graduate and postdoctoral teaching staff (especially in the COLLEGE program) and encouraged of faculty as well.

Improving and Supporting Jewish Life at Stanford

The University responded forthrightly to some of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Jewish Admissions in its September 2022 Report. But action is still needed on other issues, including more training of staff, more education about Jews and antisemitism, more provision for the religious and cultural needs of religiously observant Jewish students, and a comprehensive study of Jewish life at Stanford.

- We recommend the University appoint a standing advisory committee to advise on all these issues and monitor implementation.
- Given the importance of Hillel at Stanford in serving the social, cultural, and spiritual needs of Jewish students and the broader needs of Stanford community members interested in Jewish life, we encourage the University to recognize Hillel more explicitly as its key partner supporting Jewish life on campus, for example, by memorializing it in a Memorandum of Understanding.
- We also recommend that Stanford consider joining Hillel International’s Campus Climate Initiative, to give form and structure to our commitment to address antisemitism and anti-Israeli bias.

Conclusion

What is needed now is the institutional will to reassert, defend, and promote our core values as a university, and to do the hard work of instruction, engagement, and dialogue so that these values become not simply lofty ideals, but norms deeply embedded in the lived culture of the University. To achieve a university that is free of identity bias may seem an unrealistic goal. In striving toward that end, we will not reach perfection. But we will become a stronger, healthier university, better poised to realize our limitless possibilities for advancing knowledge while fulfilling our founding purpose: “to promote the public welfare by exercising an influence in behalf of humanity and civilization [and] teaching the blessings of liberty regulated by law.”