Association of American Universities Committee

LYMUN XI



Chair: Nate Leonauskas

Table of Contents

Table of Contents **2**
Letter from the Chair **3**
Members List **5**
Committee Background **9**
AAU Membership Principles 10
Topic A: Pricing & Tuition **11**
Topic Background 11
Historical Context 12
Current Issues 13
Questions to Consider 14
Works Cited 14
Topic B: Protests **17**
Topic Background 17
Historical Context 17
Current Issues 19
Questions to Consider 21
Works Cited 21

Letter from the Chair:

Howdy delegates!

Welcome to LYMUN XI! My name is Nate Leonauskas, and I am thrilled to be chairing the Association of American Universities (AAU) committee. I'm looking forward to this engaging committee which I hope y'all'll find insightful.

This is now my third year of MUN at LTHS. At LT (Go Lions!), I also participate on the math team, and we had a terrific time competing in the state tournament at ISU last year. Additionally, tutoring STEM subjects has been one of my strong suits which is why I teach math as a Mathnasium instructor. While I have a passion for most things STEM-related, I'm also enthusiastic about geopolitics which MUN has helped me pursue. At LTHS, my Global Relations elective made for a fascinating semester and I strongly encourage anyone to take a similar class if it's available at your school.

I imagine that it's safe to assume most of us plan on attending college—some in just a couple months while others in several years. It's approaching us quickly, becoming an increasingly important (and maybe terrifying) part of our lives. With it being so relevant to fellow high school students, I decided to focus on a college-based committee, desiring to foster a better sense of understanding the whole daunting process. For the first topic, y'all'll be tackling pricing and tuition from the perspective of your college. This has become increasingly unaffordable, with some schools hovering around six figures a year for their total cost of attendance. The second topic is protests which I chose because it has been prevalent in the news, especially in regards to the Israel-Gaza conflict. This is obviously a contentious issue, so I will guide this committee towards focusing solely on the protests themselves. Make sure to be

respectful and learn from fellow delegates' ideas. In general, my goal is that both of these topics expand your horizons on these relevant issues and provide you with deeper insight.

Also, position papers are mandatory to be considered for awards and must be your own content. Generative AI and plagiarism are not allowed. You can email them to me before committee or preferably print them and hand them to me the day of.

I am so excited to meet everyone! Feel free to email me questions at any time, especially if you aren't familiar with MUN yet—always more than happy to help. Get well-rested and arrive prepared. See y'all soon!

Nate (Nathan) Leonauskas

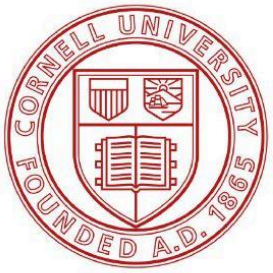
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Association of American Universities – Members List



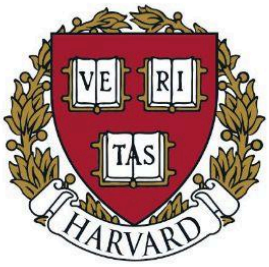
Columbia University

Private | NY | Member since 1900



Cornell University

Private | NY | Member since 1900



Harvard University

Private | MA | Member since 1900



Johns Hopkins University

Private | MD | Member since 1900



Princeton University

Private | NJ | Member since 1900



Stanford University

Private | CA | Member since 1900



University of California, Berkeley

Public | CA | Member since 1900



University of Chicago

Private | IL | Member since 1900



University of Michigan

Public | MI | Member since 1900



University of Pennsylvania

Private | PA | Member since 1900

Association of American Universities – Members List



University of Wisconsin–Madison

Public | WI | Member since 1900



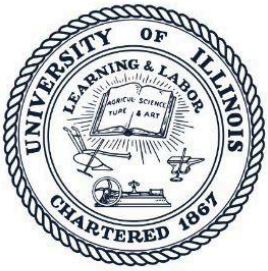
Yale University

Private | CT | Member since 1900



University of Virginia

Public | VA | Member since 1904



University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Public | IL | Member since 1908



University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

Public | MN | Member since 1908



Indiana University Bloomington

Public | IN | Member since 1909



University of Iowa

Public | IA | Member since 1909



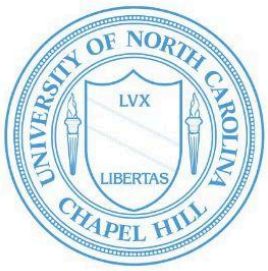
Ohio State University

Private | NY | Member since 1916



Northwestern University

Private | IL | Member since 1917



University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Public | NC | Member since 1922

Association of American Universities – Members List



McGill University

Public | QC | Member since 1926

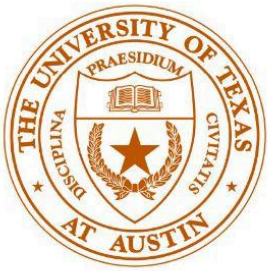




University of Toronto

Public | ON | Member since 1926





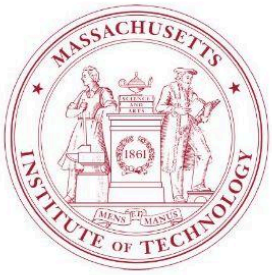
University of Texas at Austin

Public | TX | Member since 1929



California Institute of Technology

Private | CA | Member since 1934



Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Private | MA | Member since 1934



New York University

Private | NY | Member since 1950



University of Washington

Public | WA | Member since 1950



Vanderbilt University

Private | TN | Member since 1950



Pennsylvania State University

Public | PA | Member since 1958



Purdue University

Public | IN | Member since 1958

Association of American Universities – Members List



University of Oregon

Public | OR | Member since 1969



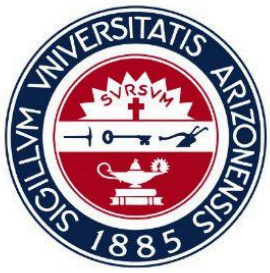
University of California Los Angeles

Public | CA | Member since 1974



Rice University

Private | TX | Member since 1985



University of Arizona

Public | AZ | Member since 1985



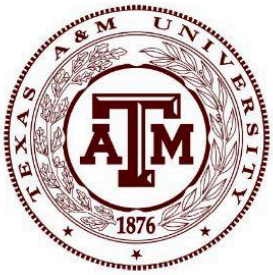
University Florida

Public | FL | Member since 1985



Rutgers University–New Brunswick

Public | NJ | Member since 1989



Texas A&M University

Public | TX | Member since 2001



Georgia Institute of Technology

Public | GA | Member since 2010

Committee Background:

Fourteen universities met at the University of Chicago to establish the Association of American Universities (AAU) in 1900. Since its inception, the organization has been primarily committed to research and garner respect for American educational institutions. As of 2025, the AAU comprises 71 member universities—69 of which are in the United States with the other two located in Canada. The AAU remedied the overly decentralized and unregulated nature of universities which in the 19th century led to American students studying overseas in Europe to obtain more respectable degrees than those at home. AAU membership was historically used as a key indicator for the quality of a university, particularly for graduate school admissions abroad. Scientific research has directly led to the United States' dominance in many fields, not just scientific ones, but that has been increasingly challenged by other nations. This organization is in many ways intertwined with the federal government and its priorities. The AAU directly works with governmental entities such as the NIH, NSF, NASA, NEH, and AFRI as well as the Departments of Defense, Education, and Energy. Considering funding, the AAU works closely with Congress in annual budget considerations. As the AAU, you will be focusing on tuition and protests while keeping in mind the organization's research-dedicated focus, prioritization of high-quality education, and role in maintaining America's high standing in the international stage. Most motions will be passed by a simple majority in this committee. For a new university to join, they must be invited and confirmed by a three-fourths vote.

AAU Membership Principles

As per their website

A. *The primary purpose of AAU should be to provide a forum for the development and implementation of institutional and national policies promoting strong programs of academic research and scholarship and undergraduate, graduate, and professional education.*

B. *The members of AAU should be comprehensive universities distinguished by the disciplinary breadth and quality of their programs of graduate education and research.*

C. *The members of AAU shall approve appropriate criteria for assessing the breadth and quality of these programs and shall apply these criteria in making judgments about potential new members of the Association and in the assessment of current members.*

D. *All current members are subject to ongoing assessment by the Membership Committee. In those instances in which there appears to be a significant and sustained disparity between the mission or accomplishments of a member institution and that of other members of the association, the Membership Committee will make the appropriate recommendations to the Board about continued membership.*

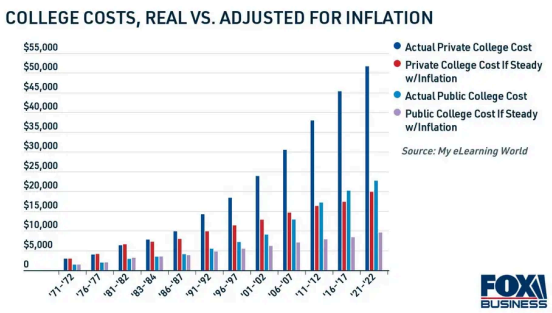
Topic A: Pricing & Tuition

Topic Background:

Affordability of college has increasingly become a key issue for incoming, current, and many former college students. As prices have significantly risen in recent decades, this issue is often the largest deciding factor for incoming students on where they will attend. Tuition and housing are the two biggest costs for students, but many other factors add to the burden, including food, transportation, school supplies, housing necessities, fees, and more. Many reasons are provided for rising costs. For one, many colleges argue that higher prices are warranted because of an expansion of services for students. Some have gone outside their role of simply educating students to provide more mental health support, academic advising, and other assistance which requires additional staff and resources. While these programs cost more, they add to the appeal of universities and importantly help secure students' future success. Also, with publicly funded universities, state and local funding can vary which impacts costs year-to-year. In many cases, reductions in funding passes the cost onto students who pay an increased tuition price, which was seen during the 2008 Great Recession in particular. One reason cited for increasing costs by two professors at the College of William & Mary is cost disease, an economic concept stating that unlike other areas in the economy like manufacturing, it is difficult to increase higher education productivity while maintaining quality. For example, new technology can only minimally benefit class discussions in contrast to how it can greatly boost productivity in a factory. No matter the cause, costs are rising and that is impacting low- and middle-income Americans as well as international applicants the most. While many universities, especially those in the AAU, offer generous need-based scholarships, it is not always sufficient and can lead to financial hardship. The AAU commends the strides its member universities have

taken in making a world-class education affordable. Nevertheless, the simple fact of the matter is that costs associated with college are a restrictive liability for millions of Americans and must be addressed.

Historical Context:

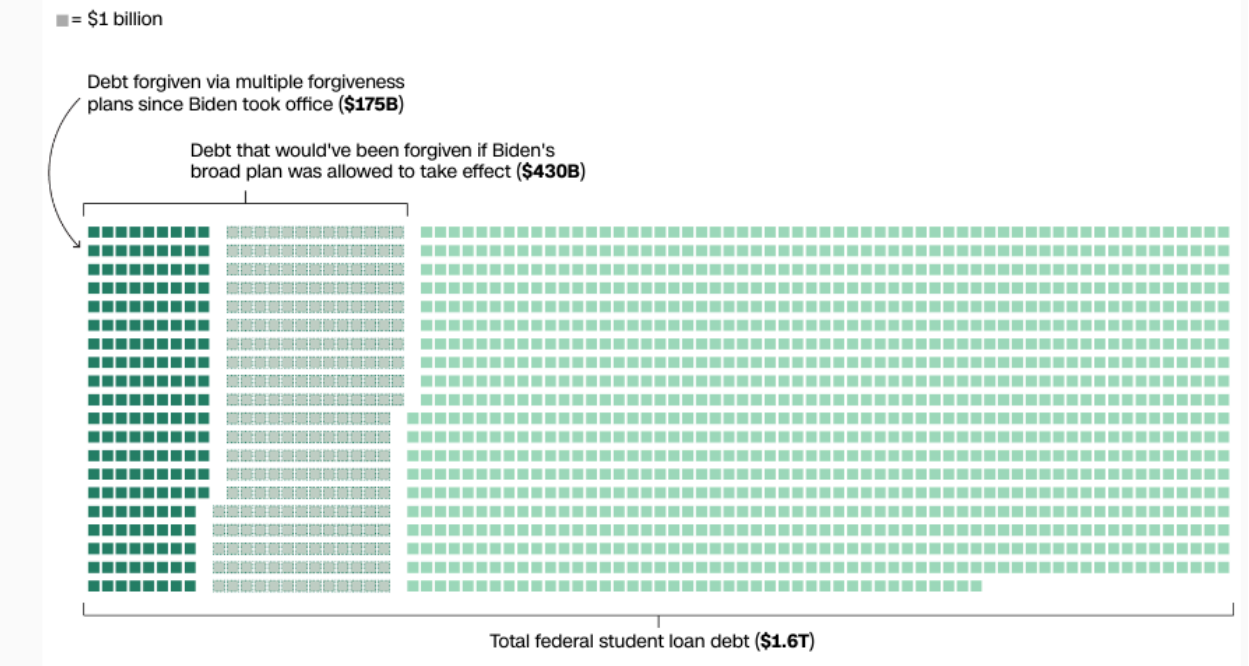


While the cost of attending college has never been higher, the accessibility of college has increased over recent decades. In 1960, only 7.7% of the American population at least 25 years old were college graduates compared to 37.7%. Prior to World War II, college was especially seen as an institution only for wealthy or academically exceptional students. One aspect of the G.I. Bill or formally the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 is that it greatly assisted veterans in paying for high school, college, or vocational school. This acted as a starting point for more financial assistance programs to follow. The 1958 National Defense Education Act provided funding into education, especially for science initiatives, which greatly strengthened the quality of resources at many universities. The Higher Education Act of 1965 similarly worked to improve quality of education while also creating scholarships and low interest loans for students. Still, college produces a heavy financial burden for many families. Between the 1993-4 and 2023-4 school years, four-year public universities have experienced a 109% increase in price when adjusted for inflation while four-year private universities have undergone a 78% price increase. That being said, public universities are still more affordable for the majority of students and the option most choose.

Current Issues:

The average loan debt amongst students stood at a staggering $38,787 in 2023 and in the first quarter of 2024, Americans owed $1.75 trillion in loans. Individually, it is usually a stressful undertaking to pay all of the loans off as defaulting on these can result in serious further financial hardship, like wage garnishments. There are two major types of loans: private loans, lended by banks and other financial institutions, and federal loans, provided by the government. Federal loans. Federal loans are handled through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which provides fixed interest rates that are not related to creditworthiness and various options for repayment. The federal government through FAFSA also awards Pell Grants to undergraduate students which usually do not have to be paid back. Generally, a significantly higher percentage of students have federal student loans than private ones. Approximately 50% of those with a bachelor's degree have federal loans and 10% have private loans. During the outbreak of the COVID-19 outbreak in early 2020, this issue became prominent when the government

CNN, Oct. 16, 2024. How far does Biden's student loan debt relief actually go?



temporarily halted loan repayments and interest accrual on federal loans. The government also expanded loan forgiveness programs, making many more people eligible than before. In June 2023, the Supreme Court struck down the debt-relief plan that Biden pledged during his presidential run. *Biden v. Nebraska* ruled 6-3 that the Biden administration's announced cancellation of $400 billion of student loans in August 2022 was an overstep of authority. The AAU was broadly supportive of Biden's proposal.* Now, it is your job to determine what actions to take as the AAU and to address the prohibitive costs of college.

Questions to Consider:

What have individual universities in the AAU already done?

What actions can the AAU as a whole take in regards to college affordability?

To what degree does research funding play a role?

How do college costs impact families of different income brackets comparatively?

How can the AAU influence federal and local governments on this issue?

Where is the trend of rising costs leading?

How do local scholarship programs play a role?

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*****The AAU with the American Council on Education and 21 other organizations submitted a joint letter about the changes. Their full comments are available on the PDF linked to the following webpage: https://www.aau.edu/key-issues/aau-associations-offer-comments-eds-nprm-student-loan-relief-program

Topic B: Protests

Topic Background:

Universities have been at the epicenter of student activism for centuries. These institutions exist far beyond the obvious purpose of teaching subjects to students. Rather, universities, especially those in the AAU, serve to train students to maintain a passion for research, learning, curiosity while training critical thinking, and various other intra– and interpersonal skills. With such a high density of students building their aptitude in these areas and becoming more knowledgeable of the world yet still inexperienced, it is no surprise that these institutions provide such a platform for activism. Additionally, protests are more important in the modern day since it has become increasingly straightforward to form groups of common interests and act together. Colleges, often viewed as bastions of thought and debate, have traditionally propelled social movements but met resistance and criticism. Free speech is touted as a central pillar of universities, but some argue that it is at times under attack. As the AAU, it is your job to determine the role the organization and individual universities should play in responding to protests, protecting free speech, and maintaining a functional environment for constructive intellectual discourse.

Historical Context:

At the University of Bologna, the oldest university in continuous operation, student protests are mentioned as early as 1217. Students moved the institution from Bologna for several years to protest unfair economic practices and returned upon the introduction of tax reform and price cuts for room and board. This event led to the realization that a collective strike at such an institution could in fact result in significant change and has been repeated throughout history since.

More recently, universities have acted as a major catalyst for change in the post-World War II United States. During the Red Scare provoked by Wisconsin senator Joseph McCarthy's national campaign against communism, state and local governments were encouraged to fire public employees with any suspicion of adhering to communist ideals. This was a threat to many universities, including private ones, which previously had significant autonomy from the government. Sparked by an Indiana book ban, protests began in 1954 across the country called the 'Green Feather Movement' with subsequent counter protests. In response, some universities, especially California public ones, strictly regulated students' political activities. This movement's themes of anti-censorship, justice, and promotion of student activist groups set the tone which have persisted to the modern day.



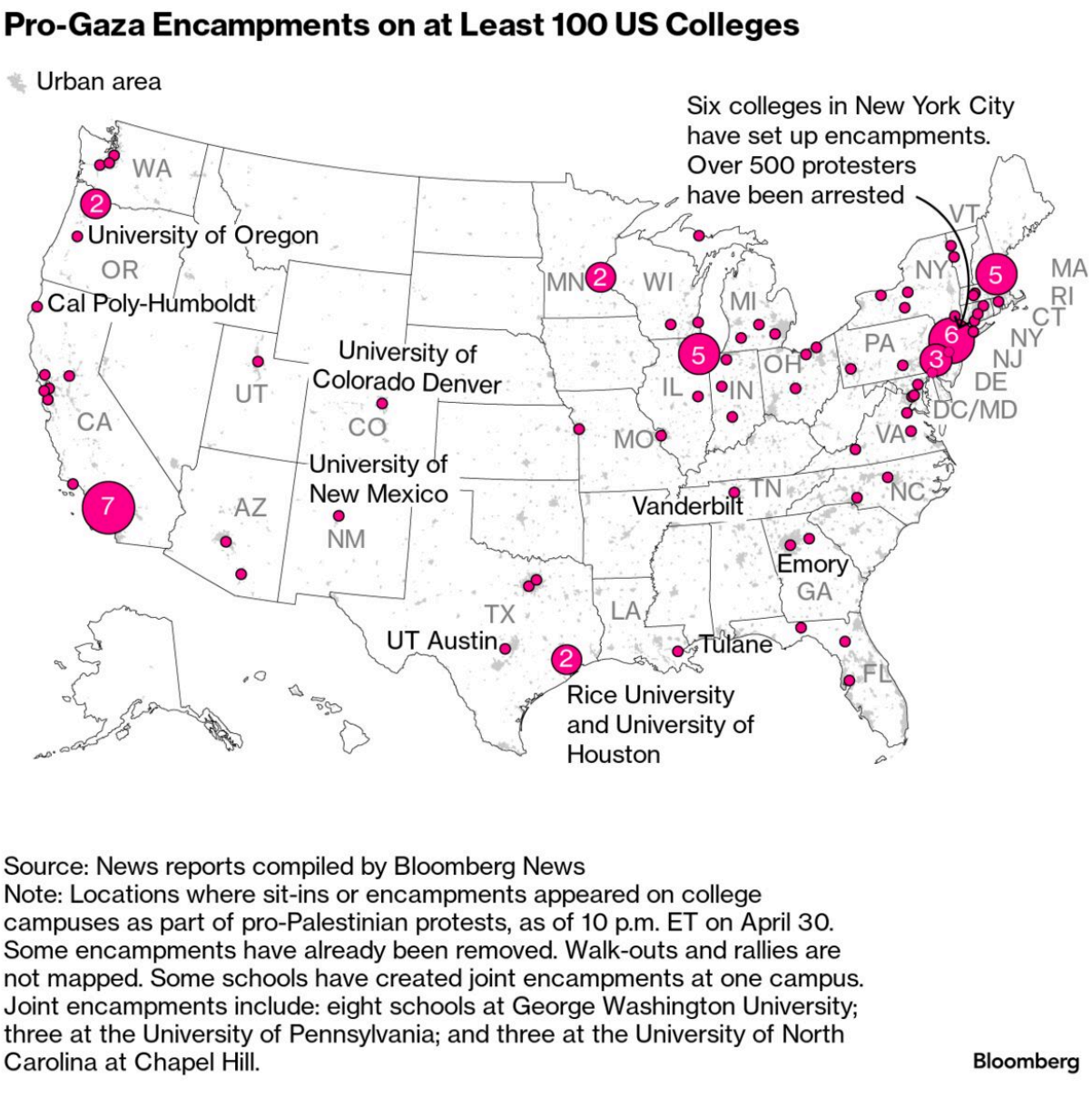
Free speech was also targeted in the 1960s with the Vietnam War and Civil Rights Movement. What began as small sit-ins and demonstrations at the University of California, Berkeley—an AAU founder—transformed into large-scale protests demanding constitutional rights. 800 arrests later, the university finally relented and overturned various policies and now considers free speech one of its most highly regarded values. However, not all colleges responded in an open and constructive manner. The National Guard infamously opened fire into a crowd of anti-Vietnam War protestors at Kent State University in Ohio in 1970, killing four and injuring others. A similar massacre occurred at Jackson State College in Mississippi days later, targeted at mostly black students protesting racial injustice. In what some believe most parallels today, students in the 1980s called for divestment from South Africa and for their colleges to cut ties with groups that supported the apartheid government there. Columbia University, a founding member of the AAU, was the first to stop

business with South Africa and 155 followed in their footsteps, which expedited Congress to pass the 1986 Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act.

Current Issues:



As is evident, campus protests have been frequent throughout recent American history, often enacting serious social change and pressuring politicians. Today, demonstrations in response to the Israel-Gaza War have had similar objectives in mind. Protests with the primarily intention of divesting from Israel have been ignited across over 100 college campuses and off of them as well. Some of these have been met with violent police



crackdowns. Columbia University in particular has stood at the center of protests, starting with on-campus encampments in April 2023 by pro-Palestinian protestors. In response to increasingly numerous pro-Israel and pro-Palestine demonstrations, Columbia University President Minouche Shafik ordered them to be dismantled and authorized police to mass arrest protestors. As protests and responses escalated at Columbia University, a hybrid learning system was implemented for the remainder of the semester, the schoolwide graduation ceremony was canceled, and Minouche Shafik resigned from her role as president on August 14, 2023.

Similar protests have erupted in universities, with over 100 campuses experiencing them, about 97% of which are nonviolent. Over 3100 arrests have been made and numerous student protestors have been expelled. Responses have been varied between universities; some have successfully negotiated with the protestors whereas others have resorted to police. An estimated 8% of college students have protested on either side of this issue and it remains a highly controversial issue within colleges. In regard to this situation, AAU President Barbara R. Snyder has stated the organization's priorities to promote the spread of factual context and information, support constructive discussion on campuses, and take the lead in the issue as the leading American research institution.

In this committee, it is your role to inspect the scale of protests at your university and examine your university's response to them while maintaining its principles. Some universities have prided themselves on their history of protests, so take a look at if that affects the modern day. Student safety and learning should be kept to a high standard as well. Keep in mind the AAU's own guiding values and how it may as an organization impact the issue.

Questions to Consider:

How can the AAU influence universities and lawmakers?

How effective are college protests at each university?

How have protests impacted student safety?

How has the history of campus protests impacted ongoing protests?

To what degree do universities *need* to acknowledge student-led protests?

To what degree do universities *want* to acknowledge student-led protests?

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