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CALIFORNIA

# University of California orders hiring freeze, cuts in response to Trump threats



The UCLA Faculty Assn. held a rally as part of a UC-wide day of action on Wednesday, calling for the protection of all community members regardless of immigration status and the stopping of federal and state funding cuts to higher education. (Al Seib / For The Times)

**By Jaweed Kaleem**Staff Writer | [Follow](#)

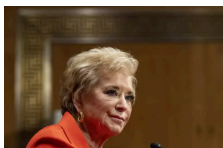
March 19, 2025 Updated 3:44 PM PT

- The University of California will pause all hiring and make additional cuts to maintenance, business travel and other areas.
- The pullback comes in response to threats from the Trump administration to slash federal funding for universities.
- UC was already preparing ahead of proposed cuts in state funding.

The University of California on Wednesday announced a systemwide hiring freeze to stave off layoffs and downsizing as it confronts unprecedented threats by the Trump administration to slash medical and science research funding key to its mission as the nation's premier public university system.

Saying American higher education is in a "time of great uncertainty," President Michael V. Drake explained the decision in a Wednesday letter and during a UC regents meeting. He said the cutbacks would affect nearly every aspect of the far-reaching UC operation, including administrative offices and all 10 campuses.

"The new administration in Washington, D.C., has announced a number of executive orders and proposed policy changes, including ones that threaten funding for lifesaving research, patient care, and education support," Drake said. Coupled with preparations the university was already making in response to a proposed \$396.6-million state funding cut, Drake said he and chancellors were ready for "significant financial challenges ahead."



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**The California Office for Civil Rights is closing. What now for school discrimination cases?**

March 17, 2025

## Hiring freeze

The UC actions announced Wednesday include a systemwide hiring freeze, delays in maintenance work and reductions in business travel. Drake said he also directed all UC locations to “prepare financial strategies and workforce management plans” to address shortfalls.

Drake did not announce layoffs. But UC officials said campus chancellors could cull employment rolls to cut costs. It is unclear whether the cost-cutting directives apply to salary increases. UC is also facing labor unrest among several of its more than two dozen unions, some in contract negotiations demanding higher pay and other workplace improvements.



UCLA faculty members stage a rally Wednesday. (Al Seib / For The Times)

Last month thousands of UC healthcare, research and technical employees [walked off the job](#) for three days, urging the university to address staffing shortages among other issues. On Wednesday, about 20 members of the American Federation of State, County



and Municipal Employees Local 3299 briefly shut down the UC regents meeting, protesting a pay proposal and treatment of members. The union represents patient care and service workers.

Pro-Palestinian students, who have protested on campus since regents began meetings Tuesday, also briefly occupied parts of an engineering building at UCLA and hung banners. They rallied for divestment from Israel and against what they said is an inadequate UC response to the Trump administration's [actions against](#) pro-Palestinian student activists.

UC has thousands of openings across its 10 campuses, six academic medical centers and 20 health professional schools. At UCLA, there are hundreds of academic jobs posted online, and more than 1,000 health-related positions in nursing, medical research and other clinical and nonclinical roles.

With more unfilled positions, students could see fewer lecturers and class options, increased wait times to enroll in courses and bigger class sizes.

UC joins a growing list of universities nationwide that are shrinking their ambitions in response to President Trump's actions.

Hiring freezes have hit Stanford, Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania, North Carolina State University, the University of Pittsburgh and MIT, among others. Within the UC system, UC San Diego already said last month that it was implementing its own hiring freeze.

Nationally, dozens of universities have renamed or gotten rid of diversity, equity and inclusion offices and positions in response to a directive from the Education Department that suggested DEI programs amount to illegal discrimination against white and Asian American students. UC has mostly resisted changing course, saying its diversity programs abide by federal and state law, including Proposition 209, which



more than two decades ago banned the use of race in admissions to California's public institutions.

At USC, a universitywide DEI office recently shut down and merged with a "culture" team. Departments deleted online diversity statements. The School of Cinematic Arts removed websites promoting a scholarship for Black and Indigenous students.

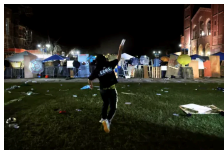


Faculty members demonstrate. "UCLA cannot submit to anything. Colleges and universities have been one of the foremost institutions in defense of democracy in the world," one faculty member said. (Al Seib / For The Times)

"These are attacks coming from Trump," said Michael Chwe, a political science professor who joined a UCLA Faculty Assn. rally on Wednesday opposing White House actions against universities. "UCLA cannot submit to anything. Colleges and universities have been one of the foremost institutions in defense of democracy in the world. We have to resist now because it's possible higher education as we know it might not exist in five or 10 years."

Speaking at the regents meeting, UC Academic Senate Chair Steven W. Cheung said he and colleagues were looking at changes that could include the restructuring of academic programs — possibly through resizing — and “realignment of funding sources with activities.”

“The last ding-dong of doom has hardly clanged,” Cheung said. He later added: “As the university finds its footing in an increasingly challenging higher education landscape, our usual practices will be upended. The faculty will need to weigh in on what sacrifices will be required.”



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**Trump court action accuses UCLA of trying to ‘evade responsibility’ for alleged antisemitism**

March 18, 2025

The Trump administration has made multiple threats to defund schools and universities that it identifies as wasting federal money or as not aligned with the president’s opposition to DEI programs, transgender women playing on sports teams and pro-Palestinian student protests he deems “illegal.”

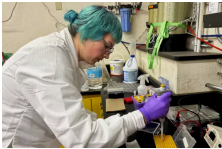
On Wednesday, the [White House announced](#) it had suspended \$175 million in federal funding for the University of Pennsylvania over a transgender swimmer who last competed for the school in 2022. Trump signed an [executive order](#) intended to ban transgender athletes from competing in girls’ and women’s sports. The university said in a statement that it had not been formally notified of the change.

## UC fights research cuts

Last month, UC submitted court documents to support a lawsuit California and 21 states filed in response to deep cuts and a potentially devastating hit to university budgets after the National Institutes of Health announced billions of dollars removed from

overhead funding for grants focused on cancer, diabetes and other major disease research.

A Massachusetts judge [ordered a temporary pause](#) to the cuts while the case proceeds through federal court.

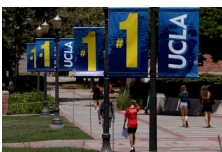


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## Judge halts Trump's NIH cuts that support medical research after California and 21 states sue

Feb. 10, 2025

The threat of [losing NIH funding looms large](#) at UC, which received \$2.6 billion from the agency out of the system's \$4.2 billion in federal awards last year. San Francisco, San Diego and Los Angeles campuses took in the bulk of the funding.



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## NIH cuts put medical research at risk, scientists say, raising concerns at UC and elsewhere

Feb. 8, 2025

At UCLA, about \$1.1 billion of the \$11-billion budget comes from the federal government, including the NIH, NASA, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. Roughly \$900 million of that is direct federal funding for research and projects that include medical and scientific areas, and an additional \$200 million covers overhead.

Jan Nolta, who directs the stem cell program at the UC Davis medical school, said she opposes the hiring freeze in connection to uncertainty over the future of research funding.



“We are devastated. Hard to imagine that the United States does not want cures for cancer,” Nolta said. “Did they truly vote for this?”

During a university town hall last month, UCLA Chief Financial Officer Stephen Agostini and campus leaders said they were scrambling to find alternate funding sources and coming up short. “There’s really no way to sugarcoat it,” he said of the potential funding shortfall.



Katherine C. King, professor of comparative literature, left, and Chris Tilly, professor of urban planning, join the UCLA faculty rally. (Al Seib / For The Times)

The Trump administration has also threatened to revoke federal monies from universities that do not, in its view, comply with federal antidiscrimination law. This month, federal authorities [canceled \\$400 million in grants](#) to Columbia University, accusing it of mishandling pro-Palestinian protests and ignoring alleged incidents of antisemitism.

UC and several of its campuses are facing an onslaught of federal investigations or warnings — from the Department of Justice, the Department of Education, a new multiagency task force on antisemitism and other agencies — over allegations that they have mistreated Jewish students and employees.

On Wednesday, Drake said UC would still “show up” for campus communities and others that UC aids.

“Throughout our history as an institution and as a nation, we have weathered struggles and found new ways to show up for the people we serve,” he wrote. “We will address these challenges, together. I have tremendous confidence in the team that is working on these issues, and in the dedication of our students, faculty, and staff.”

## More to Read

### UCLA launches effort to fight antisemitism as Trump says more pro-Palestinian activist arrests ahead

March 11, 2025



### California sues Trump administration for cutting teacher training over ‘illegal DEI’

March 7, 2025



### Jobs lost in every state and lifesaving cures not discovered: Possible impacts of research cuts

March 6, 2025



Jaweed Kaleem

Jaweed Kaleem is an education reporter at the Los Angeles Times, where he covers news and features on K-12 and higher education. He specializes in reporting on campus activism and culture, including issues on free speech, religion, race and politics. Kaleem previously worked for The Times as a Los Angeles-based national correspondent and a London-based foreign correspondent. Follow him on Bluesky [@jaweedkaleem.bsky.social](https://jaweedkaleem.bsky.social) and X [@jaweedkaleem](https://twitter.com/jaweedkaleem).