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‘Enough is enough’: Scientists from UCLA, USC protest Trump’s policy changes



Hundreds gathered for the Stand Up for Science rally in front of the federal building in Westwood on Friday. The rally brought attention to job cuts and other federal policies affecting scientific research and universities. (Myung J. Chun / Los Angeles Times)



By Lila Seidman

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- Scientists from USC, UCLA and elsewhere rallied in opposition to recent federal job and funding cuts that they say are negatively affecting science, medicine and universities.
- The demonstration was one of at least 32 coordinated events held Friday as part of what's been dubbed the Stand Up for Science movement.

Hundreds of scientists marched under sunny skies in front of federal offices in Los Angeles on Friday as part of a day of nationwide protests against Trump administration policies.

Pushing back against perceived threats to research and science, they bore on-theme signs, including one that read “What would Albert do?” accompanying a photo of Albert Einstein.

The rally outside the Wilshire [Federal Building](#) drew graduate students and professors from USC and UCLA and was held under the banner of the “[Stand Up for Science](#)” movement, which drew inspiration from the [March for Science](#) that was held in 2017 shortly after President Trump began his first term.

Many scientists once again feel under attack. In a matter of weeks, the second Trump administration has slashed jobs at science agencies — including the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation and [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) — [pulled the U.S. out of the Paris climate agreement \(again\)](#), [clawed back research papers](#) under review at scientific journals to scrub

terms that the political right has railed against, such as “transgender,” and terminated funding for [global health programs](#). The administration has also attempted to block grants and [reduce funding](#) for research institutions.



Protesters hold up science-related signs to express their discontent. The Los Angeles rally was one of at least 32 Stand Up for Science demonstrations held nationwide on Friday. (Myung J. Chun / Los Angeles Times)

“We have seen incredible disarray and attempts to dismantle a very effective research infrastructure in this country. And we have to say, enough is enough,” Judith Currier, a professor of medicine at UCLA, said at the demonstration that took place in the shadow of offices for agencies such as the Department of Veterans Affairs.

At least 32 coordinated rallies were held across the country Friday, anchored by a [march on the National Mall](#) in Washington that was attended by thousands.

Duke Han, a professor of psychiatry and family medicine at USC, said that although he wasn't as involved in the March for Science movement during Trump's first stint in the White House, he chose to participate in these protests because the level of interference has grown in significance. Science has historically been considered nonpartisan, but events in recent years have galvanized those in the field to speak out.

"A lot of us are trying to figure out what we can do," Han said. "A number of us are becoming more politically active, or politically active for the first time."

For Han, the effect isn't theoretical. He says his institution has become more cautious about giving offers to graduate students. A grant that was supposed to fund research he's involved with to identify early signs of Alzheimer's disease is five weeks late. He reached out to contacts at NIH but believes "it's something that's happening above them."





The rally outside the federal building in Westwood drew professors, graduate students and others. (Myung J. Chun / Los Angeles Times)

Several people at the protest said that the money used to fund scientific work pays dividends — and that losing it can have disastrous consequences for biomedical research, pharmaceutical development and more. Younger scientists shared the concern at the event. An international student at UCLA said the reason she came to the United States was for the “great opportunities” for research. “But look at the situation now,” said the 21-year-old undergrad, originally from India, who declined to provide her name because of how it might affect her immigration status.

Katherine Karlsgodt, an associate professor at UCLA in the psychology and psychiatry departments, who helped organize the Los Angeles rally, said she was “very upset” by the barrage of changes and concerned about their ramifications.

Alterations to science agency funding, Karlsgodt said, “have the potential to just completely derail scientific research and medical research [and] have a huge impact on universities and university budgets and our ability to train students and do research and basically everything that we do.”

Karlsgodt caught wind of the Stand Up for Science effort but was disappointed when she didn’t see a local rally on the books. Then some people at UCLA and USC got to talking, she said. One of her students — Dylan Hughes, a doctoral student in the clinical psychology program at UCLA — booked the site and they began trying to spread the word. By the evening before the event, 300 people had RSVP’d.



"This is a really dark time for science and for humanity," said Dylan Hughes, a UCLA graduate student who helped organize the Los Angeles rally, "but there's an energy that we've created here that's really helpful and has the power to change the world." (Myung J. Chun / Los Angeles Times)

Expressions of anger and alarm intermingled with hope and solidarity at the rally. Sam Cooke's "A Change Is Gonna Come" played as scores of attendees mingled and flashed pithy signs to passing cars along Wilshire Boulevard. Honks elicited cheers. A dog in the crowd sported a sign around its neck reading "Dogs against DOGE," a reference to the so-called [Department of Government Efficiency](#), headed by Elon Musk, who has led much of the Trump administration's cost-cutting efforts.

What's now a national movement began as a Bluesky post.

On Feb. 8, Colette Delawalla, a graduate student in psychology at Emory University, announced online that she was planning a national protest for science, [according to](#)

[the New York Times](#). It hit a collective nerve, and other scientists quickly hopped on board, evolving into Stand Up for Science.

Behind the rallies are [policy goals outlined on the group's website](#), including ending political interference and censorship; restoring and expanding research funding; and defending diversity and accessibility.

Back in L.A., Hughes, the UCLA doctoral student, who helped spearhead the local event, urged people to take in the moment.

“This is a really dark time for science and for humanity,” Hughes said, “but there’s an energy that we’ve created here that’s really helpful and has the power to change the world.”



The Stand Up for Science movement drew inspiration from the 2017 March for Science. (Myung J. Chun / Los Angeles Times)

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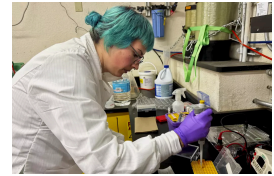
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