



A Union of Professionals

Metropolitan State Faculty Federation

# Newsletter

[MSUDENVERFF.ORG](http://MSUDENVERFF.ORG)

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Photo by Jeffrey Beall

## Join Us - Take Action to Defend Our Students!

The Trump administration has launched a full-scale assault on higher education - beginning with noncitizen students and faculty. We are asking you to join us in fighting back.

The past month has witnessed an attack on students and faculty that rivals any in US history. Students and professors have faced investigation, doxxing, firing, and even deportation because of their speech and work. Academic freedom is, in many ways, too tepid a term to describe what we are defending. Academic freedom is what prevents our universities from becoming nothing more than mouthpieces for the government. We are defending the fundamental principles

of scholarly inquiry - that our ideas are judged by the quality of their evidence and argumentation, not by the whims of those in power. Students and faculty are facing the threat of dismissal and deportation in a state-orchestrated campaign of censorship. If we do not act collectively, we will be destroyed piecemeal - starting with the most vulnerable among us.

We are proposing a campaign to harden our campus against deportation raids. This would be a first step in a collective response to the current attack on higher education.

University policies on ICE enforcement vary widely across the country, and even across

the Auraria Campus. The main differences regard which parts of campus are accessible to agents without a judicial warrant - signed by a judge - as opposed to an administrative order, issued by the agency itself. In comparison to peer institu-

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tions, both MSU Denver and the Auraria campus have relatively strong policies. Both require that authorities obtain a judicial warrant in order to access non-public areas of campus, which include most instructional areas. This contrasts with other institutions, such as Columbia University or CU Denver, which have effectively given immigration agents free reign.

However, these policies could still be strengthened. There are structures on campus that are classified as public spaces and so remain vulnerable to immigration raids. The main chink in the armor at MSU Denver is the Jordan Student Success Building. Public buildings controlled by the campus itself, notably the Tivoli, are also potential weak spots. Another possible measure would be to deploy the campus emergency alarm system to alert students to nearby immigration raids. Stronger policies would ensure that we are doing all that we can to protect our noncitizen students and colleagues and demonstrate that we are making campus as safe as we can.

A group of faculty and staff from the Undocumented Student Network have drafted a precise and thoughtful proposal for locking down the JSSB in case of an immigration raid. The Steering Committee has voted to support this proposal, which is in line with suggestions from the American Federa-

tion of Teachers [AFT] and the American Association of University Professors [AAUP]. But your support and feedback are also critical.

## Action Items

- 1. Vote.** We want our membership to have the chance to vote on our actions going forward. We have assembled a three-question ballot.
  - The first vote is whether or not to officially endorse the JSSB lockdown proposal. A membership vote of support would make our voice far stronger, while a no vote would help us determine where to redirect our efforts.
  - The second vote is whether or not to endorse an identical lockdown proposal to be sent to Auraria Campus, which would protect the Tivoli and other structures. This would extend critical protections across the campus.
  - Third, we are providing a feedback portal so that members can voice concerns and make suggestions. How have recent policy changes affected your life and work? What are you most concerned about? Do you have any suggestions for what the union could or should be doing going forward? And would you like to speak at our rally on 17 April?

Please vote here within the next week. We'll announce the results this Friday, April 4th - though please feel free to pro-

vide input and suggestions after that date.

## 2. Take Action Rally on April 17

On April 17, a range of higher education and labor organizations-including Higher Ed Labor United [HELU] and the American Association of University Professors [AAUP]-have organized a Day of Action to defend higher education as an autonomous public good and university workers as its most important resource.

We are planning a rally on 17 April at 3 pm to defend the rights of students, faculty, and staff to freely teach and learn without the threat of government censorship. If the membership votes to endorse the campus lockdown proposals, we will make them a central theme of the event. But we also want to center attacks on educators, students, and academic freedom more broadly. We plan on inviting all faculty, students, and staff. We also plan to invite student organizations and allied unions to join us.

If you have any feedback or suggestions, or would like to get involved, please email us at [info@msudenverff.org](mailto:info@msudenverff.org). You are welcome to speak at the rally, and if you would like to discuss your experience but are worried about being targeted for doing so, we are happy to share your story anonymously.

# Campus Immigration Update

We are currently working to make campus as safe a place as possible for our immigrant and undocumented students and colleagues and wanted to send an update on the current situation. Both MSU Denver and the Auraria campus have relatively strong policies with regards to immigration authorities on campus, at least in comparison to peer institutions. The main variation between policies regards which parts of campus are accessible to agents without a judicial warrant - signed by a judge - as

opposed to an administrative order, issued by the agency itself. MSU Denver and the Auraria campus have issued policies that require authorities to obtain a judicial warrant in order to access non-public areas of campus, which includes most teaching facilities. This contrasts with CU Denver, which has effectively given immigration agents free reign in its own buildings.

However, these policies could still be strengthened. There are still buildings on campus - the

Tivoli most prominent among them - that are still classified as public spaces, and so remain vulnerable to immigration raids. The main chink in our armor at MSU Denver is the Jordan Student Success Building, which is open to the public and therefore vulnerable to an immigration raid. We are supporting a proposal, recently made by the **Undocumented Support Network**, to initiate a lockdown procedure in JSSB in case immigration authorities come to campus.

## Immigration Town Hall & Faculty Resources

On 24 February, MSFF hosted a Town Hall on the subject of supporting our immigrant students. We hosted five speakers: immigration attorney Belen Albuja, Xóchitl 'Sochi' Gaytán of the Denver Public School Board, Provost Matt Makley, General Counsel David Fine, and Immigrant Service office head Gregor Mieder.

Immigration attorney Belen Albuja drew on her experience with clients to discuss what noncitizen residents - and especially undocumented immigrants - experience on a daily basis. She emphasized the importance of listening, and of demonstrating support and solidarity, given the climate of fear currently sweeping the country. Vocal support from faculty can help counter the effects of this fear, and make a significant impact

on individual students.

Xóchitl 'Sochi' Gaytán, Denver School Board District 2 Representative, provided an invaluable summary of the actions taken by DPS in response to the threat of immigration raids on campus. She discussed the lawsuit filed by DPS - now dismissed - against the Trump administration's immigration actions, which highlighted their educational impact. DPS attendance plummeted due to the recent raids in downtown Denver. Alongside the trauma they caused for students, they have had a clear and detrimental impact on the educational mission of Denver public schools. She emphasized the importance of having clear and forceful policies restricting immigration raids on campuses and prepar-

ing faculty with "Know Your Rights" training.

Matt Makley and David Fine, and provided helpful information on the MSU Denver response, which is effectively to avoid anticipatory compliance. The institution is continuing most operations normally unless given a direct order to change its practices. Finally, Gregor Mieder highlighted the work of the MSU Denver [Immigrant Services Program](#), which is an absolutely invaluable institutional resource. It also includes a [page](#) for educators and allies - faculty are highly encouraged to visit and learn more about getting involved in advocacy work on behalf of our noncitizen students.

We've assembled a list of immigration resources [here](#).

# 20 YEARS AGO

In 2005, MSFF faced a difficult decision of whether to appeal a trial court’s decision in the case *Saxe v. Board of Trustees of Metropolitan State College of Denver*. Bruce Benson was appointed by Colorado’s last Republican governor, Bill Owens to the new board. MSCD was previously governed by a board with jurisdiction over a state system including Western State College, Adams State College, and Mesa State College. The case chal-

## Faculty Tenure in Jeopardy

lenged the new board’s unilateral rewriting of the Reduction in Force (RIF) policy, effectively removing tenure protections. The AFT national legal department that an appeal was that “the arguments for letting the trial court decision stand are marginally greater than those for appealing the decision”.

The MSFF and lead attorney Joseph Goldhammer went against the AFT legal department’s recommendation and filed the appeal - and won! The revised RIF policy restored the protections of tenure. For current RIF policy, see *Handbook sections*

*IX.E. Layoff of Faculty Due to Program Reduction or Elimination Not Mandated by Financial Exigency and IX.F. Layoff of Faculty Due to Financial Exigency.*



## Belt Tightening Ahead

MSFF has a vote on the University Planning and Budget Advisory Committee and representatives Rich Wagner and Sheila Rucki are monitoring progress. The state budget will not increase sufficiently to meet all mandatory costs and desired salary increases. The slight increases

projected for Higher Education in the state budget (and MSU’s share) will not support “mandatory costs” and salary increase, so will likely require some cuts. We are working to advocate against reductions in faculty FTE or further reductions in the employer share of health

insurance benefits, while keeping salary increases. The Board of Trustees approves the FY26 budget in June, so we’ll update on UPBAC recommendations and solicit member prioritization before that. Stay tuned - and reach out to get involved.

# What We're Watching

## ***Know Your Rights Workshop***

Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition and  
MSU Denver Immigrant Services

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_pf3ljcM31o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_pf3ljcM31o)

## Watch the Video

## ***Political Repression:***

### ***Then and Now***

Historians for Peace and Democracy

<https://www.youtube.com/live/o0XG2TA3Zks>

## Watch the Video

# Get Involved!

*The MSFF Membership Committee is looking for volunteers to better organize our operations across departments. Our goal is to involve more non-Steering Committee members in creating a system of contacts across academic departments, so every MSU Denver faculty member is paired with an organizer from the Membership Committee to ensure their voices are heard as we set priorities for our Union. If you are interested, please reach out to Alex Boodrookas at alexboodrookas@gmail.com. This is a great way to get involved!*

# Current MSFF Officers

Richard Wagner..... President  
Alex Boodrookas..... Vice President  
Arlene Sgoutas..... Secretary  
Matt Maher ..... Treasurer

# Current Steering Committee

Jess Bertram  
Executive Board Member

Monica Black  
Executive Board Member

Leslie Boyd  
Executive Board Member

Kim Klimek  
Executive Board Member

Megan Lazorski  
Executive Board Member

Andrea Maestrejuan  
Executive Board Member

Lisa Ortiz  
Webmaster/Newsletter/  
Executive Board Member

Sheila Rucki  
Executive Board Member