

**Cultivating Human Intelligence and Morality in the Age of Artificial Intelligence:
The Imperative for Good Universities that provide Education as a Public Good**

Higher education in Australia has become a commodity, but it must become a public good again. As artificial intelligence (AI) begins to massively transform various industries and aspects of our daily lives, there is growing concern about its impact on society. While AI has the potential to bring about significant advancements, there are also legitimate fears that it could exacerbate existing societal inequalities, further erode privacy, and potentially pose a threat to national security.

In light of these concerns, it is imperative that we prioritize investing in high-quality universities where human intelligence and morality can be cultivated. This is crucial because the development of AI will require not just technological expertise but also an understanding of its societal implications, including ethics, privacy, and security concerns.

By fostering a culture of critical thinking and moral responsibility in our universities, we can ensure that the next generation of AI developers and decision-makers are equipped with the necessary skills to navigate the complexities of this emerging technology. Moreover, good universities that treat education as a public good provide a fertile ground for interdisciplinary research aimed at understanding the impact of AI on society and developing strategies for mitigating its potential negative effects. In fact, it is precisely through such research and academic principles that we can develop effective solutions to address the challenges posed by AI.

The University of Sydney Association of Professors (USAP) has been actively promoting academic values and freedom within our institution and, through its contributions to the Australian Association of University Professors (AAUP), in other Australian universities. Over the past seven years, we have developed the first version of the "10 Pillars of a University," which became part of the AAUP constitution after an extensive national consultation.

As a founding chapter of the AAUP, USAP aims to provide advice to local politicians and advocate for the needs of universities and society. Through our work, we have highlighted the importance of credible academics taking on leadership roles to support the university's true purpose. We have also emphasized the need for collaborative leadership and concerted action between university executives and professors to navigate the current crisis and rebuild the system with a focus on academic values.

Our association has addressed various issues affecting our university, including managerialism, bullying, lack of consultation with academics, and the undermining of smaller disciplines, among other problems. We have submitted a proposal to the Vice-Chancellor's 10-year strategic plan, advocating for a more academic and democratic university culture. Our submission emphasizes the need for adherence to academic principles at all levels, including management, HR, audit, and legal counsel. Through our efforts, we have highlighted the importance of protecting

democracy through critical thinking, fundamental research, and academic freedom. We have also called for the inclusion of diverse disciplines, particularly in the humanities, to achieve a truly inclusive university culture.

Our concerns about the infiltration of private consulting firms in universities and the lack of academic representation on the Accord panel and ministerial reference group have led us to support Public Universities Australia (PUA). We have also made a submission to the NSW Minister of Education, emphasizing the importance of academic principles and offering assistance to the Vice-Chancellor.

As we look to the future, our Action Manifesto (the latest version is attached) aims at a radical reform of public universities in Australia, prioritizing academic values and freedom as the guiding principle. We call for governance to be placed predominantly in the hands of well-credentialed scholars, ensuring that vice-chancellors and presidents excel in disciplinary scholarship and operate with suitable management expertise.

If you are a financial member (or want to become one: usap@professoriate.org), please attend this year's USAP AGM, scheduled to be held on 8 August 2024. The final version of the Manifesto will be discussed, where USAP members may be interested in being involved and making some finishing touches. It has already been circulated nationally and found much support. We can then send the final version out to all MPs, Senators, and the media, as with previous communications.

Our key actions for reform aim to promote human agency for scholarship, entrust autonomous expertise, foster mutual respect between academics and the wider community, and create a tolerant environment for all members of the academic community. By adopting these reforms, we believe that our and other Australian universities can reclaim their academic integrity, promote human agency, and contribute to a globally sustainable environment. We need good universities to control the rise of AI.

Most importantly, do not give up. The changes initiated by the launch of AAUP and PUA, which could not have happened without USAP's support, are irreversible, as other democratic countries have had similar organizations for much longer periods. They have been dearly missing in Australia. Persistence and perseverance are essential in bringing about meaningful change. While bureaucratic hurdles and political delays can be frustrating, giving up only maintains the status quo. Bureaucracies and political systems are designed to be stable, but by consistently engaging with these systems, individuals and groups can gradually influence policy and reform institutions over time. This persistence not only leads to significant improvements but also builds valuable skills, social contacts, and credibility that may prove instrumental in achieving long-term goals. Remember, many impactful changes were the result of sustained effort in the face of daunting obstacles.

Therefore, patience and determination are crucial in creating a better higher education system.

23 July 2024

Manuel B. Graeber

USAP President

On behalf of USAP Council