



AAUP-Ohio State Statement on the OSU Vote on the Salmon P. Chase Center: WHY WE SAY “NO”

The Salmon P. Chase Center was imposed by law at The Ohio State University to “conduct teaching and research in the historical ideas, traditions, and texts that have shaped the American constitutional order and society.” [The state law](#), initiated as SB 117, which created similar centers at [four other public Ohio universities](#), effectively grants the Center’s director the authority to circumvent OSU policy and explicitly excludes OSU faculty outside the Center from hiring decisions. It represents an unprecedented level of intrusion into Ohio higher education. It is based on model legislation that has been used to establish centers elsewhere in the nation, including in Arizona, North Carolina, Texas, and Florida. These centers have contradicted and repressed norms of shared governance, including the ability to ensure high-quality research and instruction, to prevent curriculum duplication, and to ensure fiscal responsibility. Proponents of the Chase Center, including its legislative sponsors, [argue](#) that this unmitigated authority is necessary due to the “ideological conformity” and “politicization of every discipline” in public universities, as well as the lack of American knowledge about civic engagement and declining interest in obtaining higher education. OSU faculty have [registered many concerns](#) about the Chase Center proposal, which have been shared through the OSU Senate and in direct conversations with OSU administrators.

On January 23rd, 2025, The Ohio State University Senate will be required to vote on the formal establishment of the Chase Center. This vote follows an extraordinarily rushed evaluation and acceptance of the Center proposal relative to normal processes for establishing centers at OSU. Regardless of the OSU Senate vote’s outcome, we expect the Center to be established as appears to be required by law. Nevertheless, the Senate-wide vote has significance as an expression of faculty and other constituents’ concerns and as a referendum on the irregular process by which the Center has been created.

After gathering faculty input and hosting a town hall on January 9, 2025, the AAUP-OSU chapter voted in favor of a “no” vote on the resolution establishing the Chase Center.

WHAT MESSAGE DOES A “NO” VOTE ON THE CHASE CENTER SEND?

We say “no,” in the first place, to the insulting claim that faculty are indoctrinating students. There is no factual evidence for this claim, nor for the claim of discrimination against students on the basis of their beliefs—even though there have been many opportunities for evidence in hearings for [SB83](#), a bill whose sponsor was also a cosponsor on SB117, and one to which students [across Ohio have objected](#). (Note: SB83 is set to be revived this January, likely as SB1.) The “indoctrination” claim insults both faculty and students. The main reason Ohioans and others are currently deterred from pursuing higher education is not faculty bias, but instead the

increasingly high costs of college. That situation is directly related to (among other factors) the Ohio legislature's significant drop in funding to colleges and universities over the past two decades. If legislators are concerned about addressing student needs, they should increase funding and provide greater financial support to students.

We say “no” to the pressure to waste taxpayer money on duplicative programming. We take seriously OSU's motto of “education for citizenship.” The university is *already* rich in expertise and initiatives in civic engagement, citizenship, and intellectual diversity. All students are required to take at least one general education course focused on “Citizenship for a Just and Diverse World,” and they already have access to hundreds of thoughtfully developed courses on this theme. The Chase Center will, additionally, duplicate curricular programs such as the [interdisciplinary leadership major](#) and the Center for Ethics and Human Values' [“Civil Discourse for Citizenship” certificate](#). Such programming ranges across the political spectrum and is aimed at audiences of all types. Nationally, OSU is ranked by *US News & World Report* [#11 in American Politics](#) and [#16 in Public Affairs](#). Notably, these rankings far exceed that of OSU as a whole (#41). The Chase Center purports to fix a problem that doesn't exist. Moreover, given its highly partisan origins, the Center threatens to undermine OSU's reputation for thoughtful, expansive research and curricula on politics and public affairs.

We say “no” to legislative overreach that erodes university shared governance and academic freedom. The Chase Center is empowered by law to operate “as an independent academic unit,” with a director who exclusively controls hiring, firing, curriculum, and programming. This independent status and the total discretionary power of the director make the Center an extreme anomaly at OSU. We are appalled at the Ohio legislature's attempt to politicize curricula, research, and programming. This represents an authoritarian creep into university business and an infringement on academic freedom, which should concern Ohioans across the political spectrum.

We say “no” to the financial risks associated with the Chase Center. The Chase Center's director (currently salaried at \$375,000) plans to hire 15 tenure-line faculty by Fall 2026. The lifetime cost of these faculty additions alone exceeds **\$124 million**, by conservative estimates. This hiring is in addition to costs for staffing, physical plant operations, an extensive annual programming schedule, and curricular activities. The Chase Center proposal fails to offer a good-faith accounting of how these costs will be managed. There are few revenue projections, and all are based on questionable assumptions and comparisons with other universities. Hiring is not benchmarked to any clear thresholds for enrollment progress, donor development, or grant procurement. This lack of budget specification violates norms for center proposals at OSU. Moreover, while the current legislature has voiced its ongoing support for the Chase Center, the director will be obligated to re-ask the legislature for funding biennially. Political will is changeable: there is no guarantee, even along party lines, that state legislators will be inclined to reinvest in a university center. (In fact, current trends in higher education divestment suggest otherwise.) With no guaranteed long-term financial support, the Center may lose funding at any time, and OSU stands to be left with a substantial financial burden of paying the salaries of Chase Center faculty, a burden that would essentially be borne by everyone at OSU—faculty, students, and staff.

HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMED?

- Check out [AAUP-OSU's FAQ sheet](#) on the Chase Center.
- Review the [Chase Center proposal](#). (Note: this is the latest publicly available version as of 1/18/25).

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

- Contact your [OSU Senator\(s\)](#), as well as any undergraduate, graduate, staff, or administrative contacts you have, and share your concerns and a clear message to vote “no” on the Center. We have several [suggestions for how you might go about this](#). If questions arise that cannot be answered with the information provided, you may contact [Erynn Beaton](#), the corresponding member of the AAUP legislative committee.
- Attend the University Senate Meeting on January 23rd.
- Share this information with others who you believe would be interested in knowing more as well.
- If you would like to speak with other AAUP-Ohio State-affiliated senators, you can reach out to [Jill Galvan](#) and/or [Ashley Hope Pérez](#).