

Strong Leadership: Mitch Daniels Shows the Way

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American higher education faces a wide range of difficulties. On the financial side, skyrocketing tuition and record levels of student debt combine to challenge the idea that college is a gateway to the middle-class. Many recent grads enter their job searches only to find that they are ill equipped to succeed in professional environments.¹ Young professionals and employers agree that graduates are ill-equipped to thrive after school.² From a cultural perspective, campuses are increasingly toxic. Instead of being places where rigorous discourse thrives and young people are exposed to a wide range of ideas and beliefs, colleges have become incubators of progressive thought. While academics, pundits, and politicians have devoted countless words to discussing the crisis in higher education and proposing solutions, there is one question that has simply not been asked enough: *who is responsible?*

Some explanations seek to push responsibility off campus. For example, one common narrative about why tuition constantly rises is that policymakers do not allocate enough money for public funding; the situation is out of schools' hands. Universities have been forced to raise tuition to cover the shortfall. The explanation offered when students protest violently, threaten fellow students, and shout down professors and speakers with whom they disagree is that cultural forces have made

¹Hart Research Associates. "Optimistic About the Future, But How Well Prepared? College Students' Views on College Learning and Career Success." Association of American Colleges and Universities. April 29, 2015, <https://www.aacu.org/leap/public-opinion-research/2015-students>

²Kathy Caprino, "How Millennials Can Better Prepare for Today's Workforce: 10 Critical Steps." *Forbes*, February 22, 2014, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kathycaprino/2014/02/22/how-millennials-can-better-prepare-for-todays-workforce-10-critical-steps/#1c61b26167c6>

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them feel unsafe, and so naturally they lash out in self-defense when they encounter ideas they do not agree with.

But these explanations leave something out. They ignore the fact that every decision—whether it is a decision to raise tuition, expand or shrink school offerings, allow a student group to form, or discipline students for “dangerous” behavior—involves a decision maker. On college campuses, those decision makers are administrators. Today, in the highly competitive higher education marketplace, many administrators behave as if students have all the power—after all, if they do not like how they are treated, they can simply go elsewhere. As a result, colleges vie with each other to win students with relaxed academic standards, trendy course listings, and “woke” campuses.³ Broadly speaking, college administrators appear to have lost confidence in their right—and their ability—to do their jobs: namely, lead their institutions, support their faculty, and help their students truly succeed.

In this environment, a college administrator like Mitch Daniels, president of Purdue University since January 2013, stands out. Daniels served as governor of Indiana from 2005 to 2013, and during this time made several significant changes to Indiana’s state government. He inherited a \$600 million budget deficit that was on track to balloon to \$800 million by 2008. By the end of Daniels’s second term, the deficit had been eliminated and the state had experienced six years of budget surplus.⁴ Not all of the changes Daniels introduced were popular; for example, near the end of his tenure as governor Daniels signed a bill making Indiana a right-to-work state. Previously Daniels had voiced a preference for leaving Indiana’s labor laws unchanged, and his decision to support right-to-work received pushback from union leaders and supporters.⁵ Daniels’s approach to financial management and his demonstrated interest in streamlining government caught the attention of conservatives across the county, and many expected him to announce a bid for U.S. president in 2012. Instead, Daniels defied expectations by turning his attention to a different presidential role: that of Purdue University.

As president of Purdue, Daniels has continued to act as a strong leader willing to shoulder responsibility for the success—or failure—of his institution. From

³Philip Babcock, “Standards Have Fallen in Universities,” *The New York Times*, January 21, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2010/08/22/why-are-college-students-studying-less/standards-have-fallen-in-universities>

⁴Michael Scharff, “A New Approach to Managing at the Center of Government: Governor Mitch Daniels and Indiana, 2005-2012,” *Innovations for Successful Societies*, Princeton.edu, February 2013, https://successfulesocieties.princeton.edu/sites/successfulesocieties/files/Policy_Note_ID217.pdf

⁵Monica Davey, “Indiana Governor Signs a Law Creating a ‘Right-to-Work’ State,” *The New York Times*, February 1, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/02/us/indiana-becomes-right-to-work-state.html>

asking that part of his salary be tied to performance goals to crafting a campus culture that embraces free speech, Daniels has demonstrated that many of the challenges facing higher education today can be alleviated by administrators who take responsibility for their institutions' success.

Rising Tuition: A Necessary Evil?

In 2012, when Daniels became president, the tuition for an on-campus student at Purdue University ranged from \$20,032 for Indiana residents to \$41,114 for international students.⁶ During his first year as president, Daniels announced a two-year tuition freeze. The university has extended that freeze every year since. In the six years since Daniels became president, the average annual cost to attend a four-year public university has risen by \$1,000, but the price to attend Purdue has not changed.⁷

Tuition freezes are a controversial topic in the world of higher education. "Tuition freezes are often derided as short-term budgeting gimmicks that ultimately force institutions to raise tuition or severely trim offerings," Greg Toppo writes in *Inside Higher Ed*.⁸ The senior vice-president for government and public affairs at the American Council for Education called tuition freezes a "double-edged sword" that may work for a year or two, but costs tend to go up quickly when the freeze ends.⁹ However, fiscal conservatives laud Purdue's freeze as a sound and responsible policy; in 2015, Reason Foundation awarded Daniels with its inaugural Savas Award for Public-Private Partnerships and referenced his financial management of the university as one of his qualifications for the award.¹⁰

These different perceptions of tuition freezes come from opposing narratives about the reason for the precipitous rise in tuition. For many of today's college students, who graduate with an average of over \$39,000 in debt, their parents' stories from just a few decades ago of

⁶"Tuition and Fees," Purdue University Admissions, <https://www.admissions.purdue.edu/costsandfinaid/tuitionfees.php>

⁷"Trends in Higher Education," CollegeBoard.org, September 12, 2018, <https://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing/figures-tables/tuition-fees-room-and-board-over-time>; "Tuition and Fees."

⁸Greg Toppo, "The Pros and Cons of Purdue's 7-Year Freeze," *Inside Higher Ed*, April 19, 2018, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/04/19/tuition-freeze-raises-purdues-profile-what-cost>

⁹Ellie Bothwell, "US state systems freeze tuition fees as enrolment falters," *TimesHigherEducation.com*, February 6, 2018, <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/us-state-systems-freeze-tuition-fees-enrolment-falters>

¹⁰Leonard Gilroy, "Mitch Daniels Receives Reason Foundation's 2015 Savas Award for Public-Private Partnerships," *Reason.org*, May 25, 2015, <https://reason.org/commentary/savas-award-2015-privatization/>

paying for college by working a part-time job sound fantastical.¹¹ But the question of why the situation has changed so dramatically from the 1960s till now produces very different answers. One explanation is that starting in the 1970s, public funding for higher education was slashed, but the cost of education continued to rise.¹² Universities have to raise tuition as a means of survival—administrators have no choice. If this is true, tuition freezes are indeed a short-term gimmick that will only postpone the inevitable increases.

This narrative of the impoverished university scraping along with fewer and fewer public dollars may be compelling, but the numbers do not necessarily support it. Since 1960, public funding for higher education (in real dollars) has increased dramatically. Contra the narrative that the 1970s saw decreases in public funding for higher education, between 1960 and 1980 “state funding for higher education had increased a mind-boggling 390 percent in real terms,” writes Paul Campos in the *New York Times*.¹³ While the actual amount spent on education is difficult to pin down, data from reputable sources show that expenditures for higher education by the state and federal governments are in the neighborhood of \$190 billion for the most recent years.¹⁴ In direct repudiation of the popular narrative, tuition rose right along with public funding.

There is another explanation of the rising costs of higher education: massive increases in administrative personnel and skyrocketing salaries for college executives. *The Chronicle of Higher Education's* annual report shows that of the top-earning public university presidents from the 2016-2017 school year, twelve earn at least \$1 million per year, and the top 100 presidents earn at least half a million.¹⁵ For comparison, the *Chronicle* report from 2009-2010 found that 35 presidents earned at least half a million and only one earned over \$1 million per year. Presidents are not the only administrators with rising salaries; chancellors and other administrators at some public universities have also received significant pay increases in the last few years.¹⁶

¹¹“A Look at the Shocking Student Loan Statistics for 2018,” Student Loan Hero, May 1, 2018, <https://studentloanhero.com/student-loan-debt-statistics/>

¹²Claudio Sanchez, “How the Cost of College Went From Affordable to Sky-High,” NPR Morning Edition, March 18, 2014, <https://www.npr.org/2014/03/18/290868013/how-the-cost-of-college-went-from-affordable-to-sky-high>

¹³Paul Campos, “The Real Reason College Tuition Costs So Much,” *The New York Times*, April 4, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/05/opinion/sunday/the-real-reason-college-tuition-costs-so-much.html>

¹⁴State Higher Education Executives Association, *State Higher Education Finance: FY 2017*, March 29, 2018; U.S. Congressional Budget Office, *Distribution of Federal Support for Students Pursuing Higher Education in 2016*, June 25, 2016; Jason Delisle, “Putting a Number on Federal Education Spending,” *The New York Times*, February 27, 2013, <https://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/02/27/putting-a-number-on-federal-education-spending/>

¹⁵Dan Bauman, Tyler Davis, Bryan O’Leary, “Executive Compensation at Private and Public Colleges,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 15, 2018, https://www.chronicle.com/interactives/executive-compensation#id=table_public_2017

¹⁶Bryan Anderson, “Pay raises approved for UNC chancellors,” *The News & Observer*, August 5, 2016, <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article92662727.html>

Whether or not administrators merit these high salaries is beside the point; if the salaries of administrators and presidents are rising together, tuition increases are likely unavoidable.

When Daniels came on board at Purdue, he specifically addressed this issue by asking that 30 percent of his salary be “at-risk,” meaning it should be tied to the university’s success at meeting specific goals. After the Board of Governors reviewed Daniels’s proposal for his salary in 2012, the chair said that the requirements for earning the at-risk salary were rigorous: “This contract goes further on performance goals than any we know about.”¹⁷ Demonstrating the high standards attached to the performance goals, the Purdue board awarded Daniels 100 percent of the at-risk money for the first time at the October 2018 board meeting.¹⁸

This is just one example of how Purdue University is committed to finding creative ways to reduce costs instead of raising tuition. “People think there’s some voodoo in here. There’s not,” Daniels’s said in an interview about the tuition freeze.¹⁹

Not surprisingly, Daniels’s commitment to keeping tuition stable has met with considerable resistance. The freeze has forced many departments to tighten their belts, and some faculty have voiced concerns how this has affected school culture, particularly among the teachers. In 2017, one faculty member told *The Indianapolis Business Journal*, “It’s a tense environment . . . There is widespread discontent about the squeezes on departments.”²⁰ But Daniels’s judicious management has allowed the university to avoid program reductions. Quite the opposite, in fact. Romesh Ratnesar writes at Bloomberg.com, “Since Daniels started in 2013 . . . Purdue has added 75 tenure-track positions in engineering and increased the number of students earning STEM degrees by 24 percent, with big gains among women (40 percent) and underrepresented minorities (65 percent).”²¹ In addition, the university’s Polytechnic Institute partnered with the City of Indianapolis to open Purdue Polytechnic High School

¹⁷“Purdue trims president’s pay, breaks new ground for executive compensation,” Purdue.edu, December 15, 2012, <https://www.purdue.edu/newsroom/releases/2012/Q4/purdue-trims-presidents-pay-breaks-new-ground-for-executive-compensation.html>

¹⁸Dave Bangert, “Mitch Daniels’s total salary up 8% at Purdue, hits \$830,000,” *The Journal & Courier*, October 12, 2018, <https://www.jconline.com/story/news/2018/10/12/purdues-mitch-daniels-total-salary-up-8-hits-830-000/1612029002/>

¹⁹Toppo.

²⁰Indianapolis Business Journal, “How long can it last? Purdue extends its tuition freeze through 2019,” *The Republic*, May 27, 2017, http://www.therepublic.com/2017/05/28/how_long_can_it_last/

²¹Romesh Ratnesar, “Can Mitchonomics Fix the Broken Business of Higher Ed?” *Bloomberg Businessweek*, December 18, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2017-12-18/can-mitchonomics-fix-the-broken-business-of-higher-ed>

in August 2017. The charter high school offers advanced courses in STEM subjects at no cost to students who are accepted. According to the website, “Successful graduates earn admission to Purdue University.”²² This innovative program allows high school students with an aptitude for science and technology to begin preparing themselves for successful careers in STEM fields as earlier as ninth grade, without the high costs of private school.

Purdue’s success at attracting students, expanding program offerings, and maintaining high academic expectations without raising tuition is a direct challenge to the narrative that the skyrocketing cost of an undergraduate education is beyond administrators’ control. And Purdue is not alone; other university systems have begun to implement tuition freezes as well. In 2013, Gov. Scott Walker instituted a tuition freeze on the University of Wisconsin public university system, which he promised to extend if reelected in November 2018.²³ In January 2018, the University of Illinois announced that it was extending an in-state tuition freeze that began in 2014.²⁴ The Maine public university system had a complete freeze for six years, and in 2016 only raised tuition enough to compensate for inflation.²⁵ A commitment to these long term tuition freezes at these universities has shown that rising tuition may not be the necessary evil it has long been considered.

Free Speech on Campus: Preparing Students for the Real World

Policy experts are not the only ones who sense that there’s something rotten in the state of higher education; in 2015, *Forbes* found that less than one-third of employers think recent college graduates are generally prepared for professional life.²⁶ In October 2018, a Gallup poll found that less than half—48 percent—of Americans have “a great deal” or “quite a lot of confidence in higher education.”²⁷

²²“About the Purdue Polytechnic High School,” Purdue Polytechnic High School, <https://pphs.purdue.edu/about>

²³Mark Sommerhauser, Matthew DeFour, “Scott Walker says if re-elected, he’ll freeze UW tuition for four more years,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, July 25, 2018, https://madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt-and-politics/scott-walker-says-if-re-elected-he-ll-freeze-uw/article_3129624e-afb2-5883-ba0e-e1cf33ce719a.html

²⁴Lee Gardner, “Universities in Illinois Extend Tuition Freezes to Stem Enrollment Slides,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 5, 2018, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/universities-in-illinois/242176>

²⁵Nick McCrea, “Maine’s public universities to see first tuition bump in six years,” *Bangor Daily News*, March 30, 2017, <http://bangordailynews.com/2017/03/30/news/state/maines-public-universities-to-see-first-tuition-bump-in-six-years/>

²⁶John Hyde, Amy Bravo, “Students think they’re ready for the real world; employers, not so much,” *Forbes*, September 21, 2015, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2015/09/21/students-think-theyre-ready-for-the-real-world-employers-not-so-much/#447d901011ce>

²⁷Jeffrey Jones, “Confidence in Higher Education Down Since 2015,” Gallup Blog, October 9, 2018, https://news.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/242441/confidence-higher-education-down-2015.aspx?g_source=link_NEWSV9&g_medium=TOPIC&g_campaign=item_&g_content=Confidence%2520in%2520Higher%2520Education%2520Down%2520Since%25202015

This is considerably less than in past years, and Gallup noted that the drop was greater among Republicans, many of whom distrust higher education because they perceive it as having a strong left-wing bias.²⁸

A 2017 study by John Villasenor at the Brookings Institute supports the concern that campuses are strongly inclined towards progressive ideas, to the point of denying basic American values like freedom of speech. The study found that a majority of American college students are tepid in their support of first amendment rights of expression. Only 39 percent acknowledge that the First Amendment protects all speech, including offensive speech, as long as it does not incite to violence or consist of an actual threat. Over half (51 percent) of students at public universities believe that it is acceptable to protest a speaker with whom they do not agree by shouting the speaker down. Even more disturbingly, nearly one in five students believe that violence is justified in silencing a speaker with whom they disagree. Finally, 53 percent of public university students believe that a college should create an environment where they will not encounter offensive views, rather than an environment where all views can be expressed and weighed on their merits.²⁹

In the vast majority of cases, conservative or traditionally religious speech and ideas are targeted for suppression on campuses. As progressive, secular college students become less tolerant of ideas they do not agree with, administrators have had to choose between upholding the First Amendment (thereby angering students) and caving to demands for censorship. Unsurprisingly, many administrators have chosen to abnegate their responsibilities, allowing student special interest groups to dictate the terms of campus culture—sometimes through violence.

One well-known instance of student mob violence was Charles Murray's 2017 speech at Middlebury College. Murray was shouted down by a group of students, and as he attempted to leave the building, protestors attacked his car and injured a Middlebury professor.³⁰ In a similar situation, a conservative student group at California State University—Los Angeles invited Ben Shapiro to speak. Prior to the event, protestors surrounded the auditorium and prevented other students from attending the event. Afterwards, the few students who had

²⁸Frank Newport, Brandon Busteded. "Why are Republicans Down on Higher Education?" Gallup. August 16, 2017, https://news.gallup.com/poll/216278/why-republicans-down-higher.aspx?g_source=HIGHER_EDUCATION&g_medium=topic&g_campaign=tiles

²⁹John Villasenor, "Views Among College Students Regarding the First Amendment," Brookings Institute, September 18, 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2017/09/18/views-among-college-students-regarding-the-first-amendment-results-from-a-new-survey/>

³⁰Alex Morey, "Violent Protestors at Middlebury Injure Professor, Force Invited Speaker to Flee Lecture Hall," FIRE.org, March 3, 2017, <https://www.thefire.org/violent-protesters-at-middlebury-force-invited-speaker-to-flee-lecture-hall-injure-professor/>

managed to slip into the auditorium had to sneak out the back door to avoid being assaulted. But the protesting students were not satisfied, and many of them went on to conduct a sit-in at President William Covino's office, demanding that he resign for allowing Shapiro to speak on campus. (Covino declined to resign, but did not apologize to Shapiro for the protests.)³¹

In multiple high-profile situations, college presidents have responded to student criticism by apologizing and walking back their decisions. For example, in 2014, Kathleen McCartney, president of Smith College, sent an email with the subject "All Lives Matter," in which she listed ways for students to work together towards "equality and justice." When students emailed her to complain about the phrase, which had been used online as a counterpoint to the "Black Lives Matter" movement, she publicly apologized.³²

When administrators do attempt to uphold freedom of speech and to model how to interact maturely with opposing views, they face grave consequences. In one of the better known instances of this phenomenon, Yale professor Erika Christakis suggested in an email to students that they could decide for themselves whether particular Halloween costumes were appropriate. Ms. Christakis's email questioned whether the administration needed to be involved in monitoring Halloween costumes, and encouraged students to take responsibility for their own actions. Her email sparked a firestorm of protests, op-eds, and harassment that lasted for months, until Christakis and her husband, Dr. Nicholas Christakis, were forced to resign from their positions as master and associate master of Silliman College.³³

In this environment, President Mitch Daniels stands out for his unwavering commitment to academic freedom and freedom of expression. In October 2018, he received the 2018 Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education from the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), in part due to his efforts to promote free speech at Purdue. Daniels has resisted the impulse to make the Purdue campus a massive "safe space," as many other presidents have done, and has instead preserved first amendment rights of free speech and association for students and faculty. Shortly after Daniels became president, Purdue conducted an audit of its speech codes, and in the

³¹Natalie Johnson, "Campus Protestors Try to Silence Conservative Speaker," *Daily Signal*, February 26, 2016, <https://www.dailysignal.com/2016/02/26/campus-protesters-try-to-silence-conservative-speaker-demand-college-presidents-resignation/>

³²Jessica Chasmar, "Liberal on liberal attack: Smith College president apologizes for email saying 'All Lives Matter'," *The Washington Times*, December 9, 2014, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/dec/9/smith-college-president-apologizes-for-email-sayin/>

³³Zachary Young, "How the Yale Halloween Vigilantes Finally Got Their Way," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 3, 2016, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-the-yale-halloween-vigilantes-finally-got-their-way-1464992297>

spring of 2015 became the first public university to receive the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) “green light” rating.³⁴

When the Yale University Halloween costume debacle became national news, Daniels sent an email to the entire Purdue community, emphasizing that Purdue would remain committed to freedom of speech even as other universities abandoned this freedom. Daniels wrote that Purdue would continue to uphold two core tenets: “First, that we strive constantly to be, without exception, a welcoming, inclusive and discrimination-free community, where each person is respected and treated with dignity. Second, to be steadfast in preserving academic freedom and individual liberty.”³⁵

It is significant that Daniels, unlike many of his fellow college presidents, does not believe there is some kind of necessary opposition between freedom of speech and tolerance. During his first years at Purdue, Daniels came under fire for an email sent while he was governor of Indiana in which he expressed his distaste for Howard Zinn’s book *A People’s History of the United States* and his hope that K-12 schools in Indiana were not teaching from the book.³⁶ In his controversial retelling of American history, Zinn chose to emphasize what he perceived as underrepresented perspectives. His narrative was an attempt to demonstrate that injustice—specifically the dominance of white men in society—is a central element of American history.

Daniels’s objection to *A People’s History* ran along well-worn tracks. Zinn’s credentials as a historian have been questioned by scholars on both the left and the right, and even many of those who agree with his conclusions raise serious concerns with his methods.³⁷ Other scholars, including prominent liberal historians such as Sean Wilentz at Princeton University and Michael Kazin at Georgetown University, have argued that Zinn’s book is blatantly biased, relies on fabrications to prove its point, and sacrifices historical inquiry to score political points.³⁸ Despite this, as the American education system becomes more and more synonymous with

³⁴“Purdue University Eliminates All of Its Speech Codes, Earns FIRE’s Highest Rating.” *FIRE.org*. May 15, 2015, <https://www.thefire.org/purdue-university-eliminates-all-of-its-speech-codes-earns-fires-highest-rating/>

³⁵Mitch Daniels, “Message from President Daniels,” Purdue.edu, November 11, 2015, <https://www.purdue.edu/president/email/2015/151111-statement-of-values.html>

³⁶Scott Jaschik, “Daniels v. Zinn: Round II,” *Inside Higher Ed*, July 18, 2013, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/07/18/mitch-daniels-renews-criticism-howard-zinn>

³⁷David Plotnikoff, “Zinn’s influential history textbook has problems, says Stanford education expert,” *Stanford News*, December 12, 2012, <https://news.stanford.edu/news/2012/december/wineburg-historiography-zinn-122012.html>

³⁸“An experts’ history of Howard Zinn.” *LA Times*, February 1, 2010, <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/feb/01/opinion/la-oe-miller1-2010feb01>; Michael Kazin, “Howard Zinn’s biggest failing,” *The Guardian*, January 30, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2010/jan/30/howard-zinn-america>

identity theory, Zinn's work continues to be taught in elementary and secondary schools as well as college courses.

When Daniels's emails expressing his reservations about *A People's History* become public, Daniels came under intense fire from high-profile publications like *The Atlantic*, the *Huffington Post*, and the *Washington Post*. His request to keep the book from serving as the textbook for history classes in Indiana's public schools was denounced as censorship.³⁹ In 2013, after he became president of Purdue, Daniels made it clear that when he sent the emails about *A People's History*, he had no desire to suppress Zinn's viewpoint or silence others who agree with him. As governor of Indiana, he was interested in ensuring that K-12 students in his state learned American history from a credible source. Daniels said, "If Howard Zinn had been a tenured professor on this campus, I would have defended anything he would have wanted to write, but not to be immune from criticism."⁴⁰

This neatly summarizes the delicate balance inherent in a culture of free speech: people must be free to express their ideas, but other people must also be free to express their disagreement. Campuses are supposed to be places where young people see this balance modelled for them, and where they are expected to learn how to walk the fine line between expression and tolerance for themselves. Daniels's strong leadership in preserving a culture of free speech at Purdue stands out as other administrators abandon their responsibility to walk that line and instead allow vocal student groups to suppress opposing viewpoints on campus.

University attitudes towards free speech and how to interact with differing opinions have ramifications far beyond the campus. The widespread culture of catering to students may well be having a detrimental effect on graduates' future prospects. A 2014 study by Bentley University found that recent college graduates may struggle to succeed in professional life because of lacking "soft skills" of relating to others and being respectful. The study said, "While most non-millennials have positive attitudes towards millennials . . . many find them difficult to manage (67 percent) and feel they lack respect for others (51 percent)."⁴¹ Though the study does not examine it explicitly, it is not difficult to draw a connection between a generational lack of respect for others and a university culture that encourages students to resist ideas they disagree with.

³⁹Valerie Strauss, "Emails reveal censorship effort by Mitch Daniels as Indiana governor," *The Washington Post*, July 13, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2013/07/17/e-mails-reveal-censorship-efforts-by-mitch-daniels-as-indiana-governor/?noredirect=on>

⁴⁰Scott Jaschik, "The Governor's Bad List," *Inside Higher Ed*, July 17, 2013, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/07/17/e-mails-reveal-mitch-daniels-governor-tried-ban-howard-zinn-book>

⁴¹"The PreparedU Project," Bentley University, January 29, 2013, https://www.bentley.edu/files/prepared/1.29.2013_BentleyU_Whitepaper_Shareable.pdf

Daniels's decision to resist the tide of radicalism and uphold the ideals of free speech and academic discourse at Purdue has not, contrary to the popular narrative, created an environment where students are anxious, insecure, and ill prepared for life after college. Quite the opposite: Purdue has a 98 percent job placement rate.⁴² In a world where many graduates are underprepared, Purdue has received nods for how well its students transition to professional life.⁴³

Tho' Much is Taken

The words of Tennyson's *Ulysses*, "Tho' much is taken, much abides . . ." could well be applied to American higher education. Amidst predictions of the impending collapse of the American university, Purdue's success shows that there may be a straightforward path through the mire: presidents and other administrators who model the concept of personal responsibility and who work to integrate that value into their campus cultures. With strong leadership, America's public higher education can indeed retain its position in society of equipping young people to thrive as well-rounded adults.

⁴²Alex Chediak, "Mitch Daniels: Higher Education's Reformer-In-Chief," *The Stream*, February 7, 2018, <https://stream.org/mitch-daniels-higher-education/>

⁴³John Hyde, Amy Bravo.