**Op Ed Template on Political Interference in Higher Ed**

Op eds are great for daily and college papers to spur debate or discuss issues missed by regular news. They are among the most read sections in the newspaper. Op eds are usually brief, typically 500-800 words in length, so arguments must be made concisely. A good op ed will be timely and tied to a bill or recent announcement.

Most op-eds follow a similar structure:

1. **A Strong Opener:** Establish the conversation with a compelling statement about the increasing political attacks on higher education in your state. For example: “Partisan attacks on higher education in \_\_\_ are occurring more frequently and threatening the very core of our higher education system.”
2. **Support Paragraphs:** Offer points based on evidence, experience, or research to back up your argument on why political interference in higher education must be opposed. Paragraphs building an argument should include a clear explanation of why the political interference will hurt higher education and are strongest when they include a personal connection:

* “As a professor/researcher of\_\_\_, I have witnessed…”
* “My experience in this field has taught me…”
* “I know that without tenure/DEI programs/academic freedom, I would not have been able to do this work/produce this research.”
* “I am a parent and I want my student to have the freedom to learn and explore.”

1. **Strong Take-Away Paragraph:** Clearly emphasize the damage that will be done if this bill passes.

* “These attacks in [my state] will have a devastating impact on public education because…”
* “X legislation pending in our state will…mandate or prohibit content in the classroom/empower partisan political appointees to determine campus policy/limit the freedom to learn, teach, and conduct research/censor classroom discussion, institute thought control…”
* Emphasize how the bill violates [academic freedom](https://www.aaup.org/programs/academic-freedom/faqs-academic-freedom) and what the long term impacts would be. For example, “Don’t let partisan politics ruin quality higher ed for all students in our state.” “This bill threatens our ability to have a well-informed populace and ultimately…our democracy.”

**Tips:**

* Read submission requirements carefully
* Try to call or discuss the opinion piece with the editor before submitting
* Clearly connect the piece with current news or controversy
* Keep the most important message at the top
* Include a strong personal or compelling story to hook readers
* Clearly explain issue for layman readers
* Frame: Idea, Argument, Evidence, Wind Back, Conclusion

If you need assistance pitching an op-ed to a news outlet, reach out to AAUP’s external relations department at [aaup-news@aaup.org](mailto:aaup-news@aaup.org).