

Magna Charta Observatory
in association with PEN America
at the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg Center

Invites you to a conference entitled:

Universities, Governments, and Democracy: International Challenges, Lessons Learned and Future Strategy

Which will take place at the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg Center at 555 Pennsylvania Avenue Washington, D.C. **on 23 October between 10:00 and 12:00 ET** (16:00- 18:00 CEST).

The event will focus on the challenges facing universities in North, Latin and Central America along with views on what needs to be done to enable them to function fully effectively. This will also include perspectives from Europe.

The conference is for:

- university and college presidents, rectors, principals, vice-chancellors and members of their senior teams
- students, particularly those in leadership positions in student organisations
- leaders of tertiary education associations
- members of governing bodies of tertiary institutions
- policy makers, state legislators and civil servants.

1. Introduction

'Universities acknowledge that they have a responsibility to engage with and respond to the aspirations and challenges of the world and to the communities they serve, to benefit humanity and contribute to sustainability.'

'Intellectual and moral autonomy is the hallmark of any university and a precondition for the fulfilment of its responsibilities to society. That independence needs to be recognised and protected by governments and society at large, and defended vigorously by institutions themselves.'

'To fulfil their potential, universities require a reliable social contract with civil society, one which supports pursuit of the highest possible quality of academic work, with full respect for institutional autonomy.' So says the Magna Charta Universitatum 2020.

University and college autonomy, which is vital to preserving, supporting, and advancing inter alia democracy, is coming under threat in various ways in various countries. So are the economic and national security benefits that university research autonomy provides in a democracy. If those threats materialise, democracy will be diminished. Politically motivated government interventions, a lack of trust and limitations on academic freedom serve to restrict the impact of what universities are able to achieve for society.

An open meeting organised by the Magna Charta Observatory with the support of PEN America and hosted at the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg Center, Washington, D.C. looks at the current reality of the situation worldwide and in North, Latin and Central American countries in particular. It does so in the light of the globally agreed fundamental rights and responsibilities of universities and the experience of other countries. It dissects the issues, shares successful practice and through discussion helps participants to find ways of enabling their systems and universities to prosper.

It will focus on academic freedom, autonomy, governance, diversity, communications and the role of students and how they add value all in service to the common good.

2. Program

Wednesday 23 October

09:30 Registration

10:00 Welcome and introduction

Ron Daniels, *President, Johns Hopkins University*

Patrick Deane, *President of the Governing Council of the Magna Charta Observatory*

10:20 So what's the problem?

Speakers from North and South America set out the threats, limitations and challenges facing universities and the reasons behind them illustrated with examples:

Speaker North America

Jeremy C. Young, Programme Director – Freedom to Learn, PEN America

Speaker Latin and Central America

Marcelo Knobel, Former Rector – UNICAMP Brazil; Member, MCO Council;
Full Professor of Physics

Moderator

Emma Pettit, Chronicle of Higher Education

11:00 Why do autonomy and academic freedom matter?

Perspectives from:

North America

Lynn Pasquerella, President of the American Association of Colleges and Universities

Europe

Liviu Matei, Head of the King's School of Education, Communication & Society,
Kings College, London and MCO Council Member

Students

Martina Darmanin, formerly President of European Students' Union and
MCO Council Member

Moderator

Catharine Stimpson, Professor and Dean Emerita of the Graduate School of Arts and
Science, New York University, USA, MCO Council member

11:50 Closing remarks

Amy Binder, Interim Director, SNF Agora Institute, Johns Hopkins University

Patrick Deane, President of the Governing Council of the Magna Charta Observatory

12:00 Close of session

*All times are displayed according to Eastern Time (GMT-4)

3. Conference Organisers

Magna Charta Observatory

The **Magna Charta Observatory** was established in 2000 and exists to promote the fundamental values which have enabled universities world-wide to enrich their societies for generations. In summary these are that the university should be an autonomous institution; the research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power; teaching and research must be inseparable and there must be openness with freedom for staff and students with concomitant responsibility to society.

Over 970 universities from 94 countries have signed the Magna Charta Universitatum which can be found [here](#).

PEN America

PEN America stands at the intersection of literature and human rights to protect free expression in the United States and worldwide. They champion the freedom to write, recognizing the power of the word to transform the world. Its mission is to unite writers and their allies to celebrate creative expression and defend the liberties that make it possible.

Founded in 1922, PEN America is the largest of the more than 100 centres worldwide that make up the PEN International network. PEN America works to ensure that people everywhere have the freedom to create literature, to convey information and ideas, to express their views, and to access the views, ideas, and literatures of others. Its strength is its Membership—a nationwide community of more than 4,500 novelists, journalists, nonfiction writers, editors, poets, essayists, playwrights, publishers, translators, agents, and other writing professionals, as well as devoted readers and supporters who join with them to carry out PEN America's mission.

PEN America's programs defend writers, artists, and journalists and protect free expression worldwide. This work includes research and reports on topical issues; advocacy on free expression challenges; campaigns on policy issues and on behalf of individual writers and journalists under threat; year-round festivals and events; literary awards; fellowships; and more.

PEN America, a registered 501(c)(3) organization, is headquartered in New York City, with offices in Los Angeles, Miami and Washington, D.C. and chapters in 10 regions.

Johns Hopkins University

Founded in 1876, Johns Hopkins University developed the model for the American research university with the scholarly ambitions, norms, and cultures that still define the academy in the United States. To this day, it remains tenaciously committed to the highest standards of academic excellence. Comprised of nine academic divisions and the Applied Physics Laboratory, Johns Hopkins is a world leader in education, research, and patient care.

Building on Johns Hopkins' history as the nation's first research university, the Hopkins Bloomberg Center serves as a nexus for trusted academic experts, global leaders, policymakers, and students to provide multidisciplinary expertise and objectivity to decision-makers while educating future civic leaders. The Hopkins Bloomberg Center brings together the brightest minds in policy, business, academics, and non-profits to find solutions to global challenges and opportunities for human advancement. State-of-the-art facilities offer dynamic learning experiences and adapt to emerging disciplines.

4. How to participate?

There is no charge for attending the event but capacity at the venue is limited.

Applications for in-person places can be made at [Eventbrite here](#).

Places will be allocated in order of registration.

Those wishing to join the event on line are invited to register [here](#).

There is no charge for participating.

5. Why MCO is needed?

The MCO provides assistance for universities who want to be at the forefront of understanding and implementation of the fundamental values. It has developed the Living Values project which can be used by universities to enable them to put their values into practice more effectively.

The MCO reviews and reports when circumstances do not allow universities to operate autonomously. The organization helps Countries to enable their universities to be more aware of the significance of fundamental values for the development of their higher

education systems. Moreover, the MCO assists key stakeholders when fundamental values, especially academic freedom, are not being upheld. The MCO seeks to promote a deeper understanding of the importance of values and their operation in different contexts. Additionally, the institution helps universities learn from other situations that can enrich practice. As institutions operate more globally the importance of mutual understanding and shared values helps to build stronger partnerships through trust. Autonomy is a journey - not a destination. Journeys have different starting points, progress at different speeds and experience different operational constraints.

MCO Strategic plan

[Click here to read the MCO Strategy 2020-2025](#)

Magna Charta Universitatum 2020 (MCU 2020)

In 2020, the Observatory prepared a new version of the Magna Charta Universitatum: the MCU 2020. The text has been adopted by the MCO's Governing Council, and launched at the occasion of the XXXIII MCO anniversary on 16 June 2021. The new MCU retains all the original fundamental values to which universities are committed. It aims to address and resonate with contemporary challenges and concerns. Its tone recognizes that the pursuit of the fundamental values has worth along with their actual attainment, which, in practice, is a constant quest. Additionally, it recognizes the more global nature of what universities do and the wider range of local responsibilities which they have.

The document is available in 12 other languages. [To read the document, click here.](#)

6. How to become a signatory?

More than 950 Universities have already embraced the values in the Magna Charta Universitatum:

- autonomy of academic institutions;
- inseparable nature of teaching and research;
- freedom of teaching and research;
- constant care to universal knowledge;

If you too believe in the same university values, join this worldwide community!

In order to apply to become a signatory of the MCU2020, you are kindly asked to read the Admission Policy and follow the steps [available here](#). Becoming a signatory is easy, and there are no costs.

7. Supporters of the MCO 2024

The MCO thanks the 2024 supporters whose donations enable it to implement its strategy and serve universities:

