

Newsom blasts Trump's \$1 billion settlement proposal to UCLA as 'extortion'

The president's proposal targets one of the nation's largest public university systems.



California Gov. Gavin Newsom calls for a new way for California to redraw its voting districts during a news conference in Sacramento, California, on July 25, 2025. | Rich Pedroncelli/AP

By JULIANN VENTURA
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SACRAMENTO, California — California Gov. Gavin Newsom on Friday blasted Donald Trump's [demand for \\$1 billion](#) from UCLA over antisemitism allegations in return for millions of dollars in frozen federal research grants, describing the president's move as an attempt to "silence academic freedom."

"He has threatened us through extortion with a billion-dollar fine unless we do his bidding," Newsom said at a news conference, vowing to push back against the move as UCLA risks losing [more than half a billion dollars](#) in federal research funds.

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“We will not be complicit in this kind of attack on academic freedom on this extraordinary public institution. We are not like some of those other institutions that have followed a different path,” Newsom said, seemingly referencing other universities like Brown and Columbia, which both reached separate settlements with the Trump administration in recent weeks.

Trump’s proposal targets one of the nation’s largest public university systems — a major move in the Trump administration’s battle against higher education institutions. The \$1 billion settlement, which would be paid in installments over three years, would resolve alleged civil rights violations and force the school to adopt major changes to how it operates, according to a person familiar with the matter and a draft of the proposal viewed by POLITICO.

Newsom’s remarks come as Trump has been withholding funding from universities around the country over alleged antisemitism claims, and is currently in negotiations with some, including Cornell and Harvard.

Just over a week ago, [Brown University settled an agreement](#) with the administration to pay \$50 million in fines, among other things, in exchange for restoring millions in research grants and the school’s eligibility to compete for new federal grants and contracts. And a week before that, [Columbia University agreed to pay](#) a \$200 million fine in order to reinstate the vast majority of federal grants that had been paused or terminated over similar allegations from the administration.

Newsom, who has previously [expressed disapproval](#) for Trump’s freezing of funding to UCLA, on Thursday said that he believes the university will “do the right thing.”

“I’ll do everything in my power to encourage them to do the right thing and not to become another law firm that bends on their knees, another company that sells their soul, or another institution that takes a shortcut and takes the easy wrong versus the hard right,” said Newsom, who holds an ex-officio seat on the university system’s Board of Regents.