

MCO CONNECT



NEWS FROM THE MAGNA CHARTA OBSERVATORY



MCO Connect - Issue 8, May 2023

Magna Charta Observatory



Student Essay Competition

How might students exercise more influence in enabling their universities to make a more effective contribution to society?



Essay length: limit of 2000 words

Deadline: 12 June 2023

In partnership with:



During a MCO webinar on May 4th, 2023, we launched a Students Essay Competition open to registered students from any university and any country, with the theme How might students exercise more influence in enabling their universities to make a more effective?

The Magna Charta Universitatum, both in its 1988 and 2020 versions, recognizes the important role that students play in universities. As part of its effort to enhance student involvement in higher education, the Magna Charta Observatory (MCO) has included student representatives on its governing council.

To further this goal, the MCO is collaborating with the Global Students Forum and the European Students' Union in this essay competition for students. The competition aims to gather fresh insights from students on how they can exert greater influence in enabling their universities to make a more impactful contribution to society.

The MCO hopes to share the ideas and perspectives gained from the competition with universities to promote positive societal outcomes and enhance student involvement. The competition will offer five prizes in form of an all expenses paid participation in the MCO's 2023 Anniversary Conference, to be held from October 23-25 2023 in Lodz, Poland. Winners will have the opportunity to present their essays and participate in discussions with an international audience.

The essays can be submitted until June 12th, 2023, and the winners announced on July 28th, 2023.

More about the Essay Competition

Sign the MCU2020 at the MCO Anniversary in October – apply now!



More than 950 Universities in 94 different countries have already publicly embraced the fundamental principles and values set out in the Magna Charta Universitatum, which include the autonomy of academic institutions, the central importance of academic freedom and the responsibilities of universities to serve society.

If your university embraces these principles and values and is not yet a signatory, why not join this worldwide community to participate in our activities and share with and enable universities around the world?

Becoming a signatory is free of charge and there is no annual subscription to remain so. If your university has yet to sign the MCU 2020, we invite you to apply for signatory status and attend the annual signing ceremony. This year's ceremony will be held in-person at the University of Łódź on 25 October.

Please apply until June 15th, 2023 following the procedure on the MCO website, which you can find in the link below.

We are looking forward to your application! If the Rector of your University has already virtually signed the MCU2020, he/she can also make it in person at the MCU Anniversary in Lodz. Registration and information will be soon online.

Apply here to become a MCO member

Magna Charta Universitatum Anniversary

SAVE THE DATE:
Universities and Re-Construction of Cities: the Role of Research and Education

23-25.10.2023
University of Lodz, Poland



MCU!



Save the date for this year's MCO anniversary happening from 23-25th October at the University of Łódź, Poland, with the theme "Universities and the Re-Construction of Cities: the Role of Research and Education." The event will include talks and discussions by renowned international speakers, as well as opportunities for scholars to meet and develop partnerships with universities from around the world. The event will conclude with the signing of the Magna Charta by universities committed to its principles.

Stay tuned for more details on the programme.

More about the Anniversary

Webinar Students Leading University Community Engagement

The Magna Charta Universitatum 2020 highlights the responsibility of universities to engage with their communities and recognizes the central role of students as key stakeholders in universities. To discuss this in practice, the MCO conducted a webinar on May 4th in collaboration with the Global Student Forum (GSF) and the European Students' Union (ESU).

The webinar featured various perspectives from student leaders, and an university rector. These included presentations from Christina Williams, Head of Advocacy and Partnerships at the Commonwealth Students' Association, Bismark Amefianu Kudoafor, Programs Officer (Capacity Building) at the All-Africa Students Union (AASU), and Ahmet Öztaş, Rector of Epoka University, Albania

The discussions during the webinar centered on successful practices and innovative ways to improve student community engagement, with examples shared from different parts of the world. The aim was to identify ways in which students can contribute more significantly to their universities' fulfillment of their societal responsibilities.



[Read here the report and watch the recording](#)

Champions of Higher Education Group formed in the US

PEN America, in collaboration with Campus Compact, has brought together more than 180 former college and university presidents and system heads, representing institutions in 46 US states and Washington, D.C., to form the Champions of Higher Education.

Since 2021, PEN America has documented a concerted legislative assault on the independence and intellectual freedom of American higher education institutions. These laws seek to undermine free expression on campus, censor what can be taught and read in classrooms, and silence discussion of American history and our country's enduring challenges.

Laws constricting higher education curricula have gone into effect in eight states, while over 100 additional bills have either been proposed or are currently under consideration. At the same time, we have seen high-profile instances of students shouting down speakers on campus.

The former presidents in the Champions group understand from hard-earned experience the complexities and the necessity of maintaining the university's independence so that its multifarious, often clashing voices can nourish the lifeblood of a diverse democracy. They are committed to ensuring that American higher education is a place where all viewpoints, right, left, and center, get a fair hearing.

Freed from the immediate political pressures serving presidents often face, the former leaders will inform the public about the threats to higher education, amplifying the free expression framework developed by PEN America via op-eds and speaking engagements, both nationally and in their local

communities. By drawing on their relationships with other leaders across key sectors, they will rally the public to maintain academic independence on our college campuses and reclaim popular recognition of higher education as a democratic and societal good.

PEN America has begun exploring a partnership with the Magna Charta Observatory based on the similar missions and challenges of the Champions initiative and the MCO. Your planned conference in Washington, D.C. in 2024 could be a seminal occasion to promote the role of universities in 21st century democracy around the world.

Kevin P. Reilly, Ph.D.

President Emeritus and Regent Professor, University of Wisconsin System

Senior Fellow, Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges

To read more about it

Global repository of Academic Freedom (GOAF) launched a repository

Academic freedom has been a subject of scholarly debate for many years. It refers to the right of scholars and researchers to engage in free inquiry, express their opinions, and publish their findings without censorship or retaliation. However, the definition and scope of academic freedom are not universally agreed upon.

Given this context, the Global Observatory of Academic Freedom (GOAF) has created a repository of texts which deal with the topic of academic freedom. One of the main contributions of the repository is providing an insight into the diversity of scholarly thought on academic freedom. The repository showcases the wide array of contributions that clarify what academic freedom means and who it applies to from scholars from all over the world.

Dr. Milica Popovic is leading the research team that coordinates the repository, with Maryna Lakhno as a member of the team.

MCO congratulates GOAF for this valuable initiative and recognizes its significance in fostering academic research and discussions in the field. We believe that sharing this repository within our community can contribute to the advancement of knowledge and support the protection and promotion of academic freedom.

More about GOAF

Communication Specialist Wanted

The MCO is looking for a communication specialist to help us deliver our strategy and engage more closely with signatories through the production of external publications, managing our social media accounts, supporting the organisation of events and communication plans.



This provides an opportunity for a signatory university to second a capable member of their communications team to gain global experience from working with the MCO.

The role can be performed remotely and expenses will be paid for the post-holder to travel to MCO events. There can be flexibility in the percentage of time devoted to the role and how it is fulfilled. The international experience gained will be immense and the benefit to the seconding university could be considerable.

If you have a member of staff whom you think may benefit from such an opportunity, please email our Administrator on magnacharta@unibo.it

More about the Observatory

Magna Charta Observatory
magnacharta@unibo.it
www.magna-charta.org



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