



Hayes: College football must create playoff that looks like NFL

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The Bulletin

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A 2023 study found that 75% of college students feel free to report their professors if they say something objectionable. Self-identified liberal students were more likely than conservative students to report their professors to the administration. GETTY IMAGES

Student informants spur academic freedom debate

Classroom speech, rights of educators and pupils under scrutiny

Austin Sarat
Amherst College
THE CONVERSATION

Texas A&M University told philosophy professor Martin Peterson in early January that he could not teach some of Greek philosopher Plato's writings that touch on "race and gender ideology."

The university's local chapter of the American Association of University Professors, an organization of professors and academics in the United States, quickly denounced this requirement.

Peterson, in response to his university's direction, replaced the Plato read-

Silencing a professor from teaching a certain subject fits within what experts have long recognized as encroaching on academic freedom.

ings with material on free speech and academic freedom.

Silencing a professor from teaching a certain subject fits within what experts have long recognized as encroaching on academic freedom.

In another high-profile incident at Texas A&M in September, a student filmed an exchange with an English literature professor, Melissa McCoul, who was talking about gender identity.

The student said that McCoul was violating President Donald Trump's January 2025 executive order that recognized "women are biologically female, and men are biologically male." As a result, the student told her professor, as seen in her video, "I've already been in touch with the president of A&M, and I have a meeting with him in person to show all of my documentation tomorrow." Her video went viral.

This represents a growing threat to academic freedom: Students who act as informants and police their classes and professors for signs of political incorrectness.

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Killingly, Norwich to get funding for projects

Beth McDermott
AI-assisted reporter
Norwich Bulletin
USA TODAY NETWORK

Two towns in eastern Connecticut will receive more than \$1.5 million in federal funding for infrastructure projects, according to a community announcement.

The town of Killingly will receive \$1 million to upgrade its Water Pollution Control Facility, which also serves the town of Brooklyn. The facility is currently at maximum capacity, preventing new sanitary sewer connections for industrial, commercial or residential developments in both towns.

Norwich will receive \$600,000 to replace the public docks at Howard Brown Park. The docks have surpassed their 30-year expected lifespan, and while the city has already secured funding to replace a portion of the old docks, a section adjacent to the boat launch remains unstable and in need of repair.

The funding is part of a larger government package that includes over \$9.6 million for 10 community projects in Connecticut's Second District. In January, the House and Senate passed over \$2.6 million for four more projects in the district, and in November, they passed \$1 million for a project in North Stonington. Funding for all 15 projects has now been signed into law.

"In the 2026 federal budget process, my office and I worked alongside towns and non-profits in Connecticut's Second District to secure funding for 15 local projects across our region," Congressman Joe Courtney said in the announcement. "From public safety to new housing development, job training, and child care expansion, these projects are excellent examples of targeted federal funding coming back to eastern Connecticut that will have wide-reaching benefits for our towns."

Community projects are locally supported initiatives identified by Courtney, who pushed for funding as part of the annual federal funding process in Congress.

This story was created by reporter Beth McDermott, bmcdermottl@usatodayco.com, with the assistance of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Journalists were involved in every step of the information gathering, review, editing and publishing process. Learn more at cm.usatoday.com/ethical-conduct.

Program offers up to \$5K per year to help with student loans

Beth McDermott
AI-assisted reporter
Norwich Bulletin
USA TODAY NETWORK

Connecticut residents can now apply for grants to help pay off student loans.

The Connecticut Student Loan Reimbursement Program is accepting applications for student loan payments made during the 2025 calendar year, according to a community announcement. The program offers up to \$5,000 per year, with a maximum of \$20,000 over four years.

The program, established in 2024, aims to provide financial relief to residents burdened by student loan debt.

To qualify, applicants must be Connecticut residents who made qualifying student loan payments during 2025. They must have earned a degree from a Connecticut institution or completed a state-approved program required for professional licensure or certification. Income limits are set at \$125,000 for single filers and \$175,000 for married filers. Applicants



Lamont

must complete required community service or qualify for a hardship waiver in certain circumstances.

"The Connecticut Student Loan Reimbursement Program is about helping people who have worked hard, earned their education, and chosen to build their lives and careers here in our state," Gov. Ned Lamont said, according to the announcement. "As we transition into a new year of the program, we continue our commitment to easing financial pressure on residents while strengthening our workforce and economy."

The program has awarded more

than \$2.2 million in reimbursements since its first grant round in January 2025, with strong participation among younger residents and middle-income households. Legislative updates have expanded eligibility and clarified that reimbursements must apply to loan payments made during the preceding calendar year.

"Our focus at the Connecticut Office of Higher Education has been on administering this program in a way that is fair, transparent, and accessible," Connecticut Higher Education

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