

# House File 437 - Reprinted

HOUSE FILE 437  
BY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER  
EDUCATION

(SUCCESSOR TO HSB 52)

(COMPANION TO SF 127 BY  
GRUENHAGEN)

(As Amended and Passed by the House March 18, 2025)

## A BILL FOR

1 An Act establishing a center for intellectual freedom at the  
2 university of Iowa.  
3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

1 Section 1. SHORT TITLE. This Act shall be known and may be  
2 cited as the "Center for Intellectual Freedom Act".

3 Sec. 2. NEW SECTION. 263C.1 Definitions.

4 As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise  
5 requires:

6 1. "*Board*" means the state board of regents.

7 2. "*Center*" means the center for intellectual freedom  
8 established by section 263C.2.

9 3. "*Regents institution*" means an institution specified in  
10 section 262.7, subsections 1 through 3.

11 4. "*University*" means the state university of Iowa.

12 Sec. 3. NEW SECTION. 263C.2 Center for intellectual  
13 freedom.

14 1. A center for intellectual freedom is established as an  
15 independent academic center under the board at the university.

16 2. The center shall conduct teaching and research in the  
17 historical ideas, traditions, and texts that have shaped the  
18 American constitutional order and society.

19 3. The board may name the center in accordance with any  
20 philanthropic naming policies or practices of the board or  
21 university.

22 Sec. 4. NEW SECTION. 263C.3 Functions of the center.

23 1. The center shall provide scholarship in all of the  
24 following subjects:

25 a. The texts and major debates that form the intellectual  
26 foundation of free societies, especially that of the United  
27 States.

28 b. The principles, ideals, and institutions of the American  
29 constitutional order.

30 c. The foundations of responsible leadership and informed  
31 citizenship.

32 2. The center shall offer university-wide programming  
33 related to the values of free speech and civil discourse.

34 3. The center shall work to do all of the following:

35 a. Expand the intellectual diversity of the university's

1 academic community.

2     *b.* Foster civic engagement among university students and  
3 faculty.

4     *c.* Coordinate with the center for cyclone civics at Iowa  
5 state university and the center for civic education at the  
6 university of northern Iowa to enable academic offerings that  
7 may be offered to students at any of the regents institutions  
8 either in person or online.

9     4. The center, in collaboration with any of the regents  
10 institutions, may offer courses; develop certificate, minor,  
11 and major programs as well as graduate programs; and offer  
12 degrees.

13     5. The center shall offer at least one three-semester  
14 credit hour course in American history and civil government.  
15 If a regents institution has established general education  
16 requirements for undergraduate students that include an  
17 American heritage course requirement, the center shall ensure  
18 that the course satisfies that requirement. The center shall  
19 coordinate with the center for cyclone civics at Iowa state  
20 university and the center for civic education at the university  
21 of northern Iowa to ensure that the course is offered to  
22 students at each regents institution either in person or  
23 online.

24     Sec. 5. NEW SECTION. 263C.4 Bylaws.

25     The center shall establish bylaws governing the center  
26 subject to the approval of the board. In addition to any  
27 other bylaws established, the bylaws must include all of the  
28 following requirements, which shall take precedence over any  
29 other requirements in the bylaws:

30     1. The center shall educate students by means of free, open,  
31 and rigorous intellectual inquiry to seek the truth.

32     2. The center affirms its duty to equip students with  
33 the skills, habits, and dispositions of mind they need to  
34 reach their own informed conclusions on matters of social and  
35 political importance.

1     3. The center affirms the value of intellectual diversity  
2 in higher education and aspires to enhance the intellectual  
3 diversity of the university.

4     4. The center affirms a commitment to create a community  
5 dedicated to an ethic of civil and free inquiry, which respects  
6 the intellectual freedom of each member, supports individual  
7 capacities for growth, and welcomes the differences of opinion  
8 that naturally exist in a public university community.

9     Sec. 6. NEW SECTION.   **263C.5 Funding — use.**

10    1. The center may accept and administer private and  
11 external donations and gifts. The university of Iowa center  
12 for advancement shall be the designated foundation for  
13 philanthropic gifts or funding for the center.

14    2. Any moneys appropriated to the center, and any private  
15 and external donations to the center, shall be used only for  
16 the direct operation of the center.

17    3. Any additional funding required to operate the center  
18 shall be proportionally provided by the regents institutions,  
19 subject to approval of the board.

20    Sec. 7. NEW SECTION.   **263C.6 Center faculty.**

21    The university shall employ tenure-eligible faculty members  
22 to provide instruction through the center. The university  
23 shall incrementally increase the number of such faculty to five  
24 based on market research and student demand. Faculty members  
25 appointed to the center may hold joint appointments to other  
26 academic units of the university. Faculty members who are not  
27 affiliated with the center shall have no authority to approve,  
28 deny, or modify the terms of appointment of faculty to the  
29 center.

30    Sec. 8. NEW SECTION.   **263C.7 Advisory council.**

31    1. No later than December 31, 2025, the board shall appoint  
32 an advisory council for the center.

33    2. The board shall appoint a minimum of nine members to the  
34 council. A majority of the members appointed to the council  
35 shall constitute a quorum. No more than one member of the

1 council may be an employee of the university.

2 3. The board shall determine the initial length of each  
3 member's term in accordance with this subsection. A majority  
4 of the members initially appointed to the council shall serve  
5 initial terms of four years. The remaining initially appointed  
6 members shall serve initial terms of two years. The board  
7 shall appoint new members to fill vacancies on the council in  
8 accordance with this section.

9 Sec. 9. NEW SECTION. 263C.8 Appointment of director.

10 1. The advisory council established under section 263C.7  
11 shall conduct a nationwide search for candidates for the  
12 director of the center. The council shall adhere to all  
13 relevant state and federal laws in conducting the search. The  
14 council shall submit finalists for the position to the board.  
15 The board, upon approval of a candidate, shall appoint the  
16 candidate as the director. All subsequent directors shall be  
17 chosen in the same manner.

18 2. The director shall have the academic standing to be  
19 eligible for tenure at a regents institution.

20 Sec. 10. NEW SECTION. 263C.9 Duties of director.

21 1. The director of the center shall have the sole and  
22 exclusive authority to manage the recruitment and hiring  
23 process, and to extend offers for employment, of the center  
24 and to terminate employment of all staff of the center in  
25 accordance with state and federal law.

26 2. The director shall conduct a market assessment to  
27 determine course demand and the number of faculty required to  
28 meet any unmet needs of the center and may conduct additional  
29 market assessments as needed. A market assessment shall  
30 include the subjects described in section 263C.3, subsections 1  
31 and 2.

32 3. The director shall have the authority to invite guest  
33 speakers to the university on behalf of the center.

34 4. The director shall report directly to the board.

35 Sec. 11. NEW SECTION. 263C.10 Annual report.

1     Beginning in 2026, the director of the center shall submit an  
2 annual report to the governor, the general assembly, and the  
3 board of regents by December 31. The report shall provide a  
4 full account of the center's achievements and shall identify  
5 any opportunities, challenges, and obstacles in the development  
6 of the center.