

# President of US University: Like a Tweet, Lose Your Job

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*The president of Thomas Jefferson University may lose his job for liking tweets from Alex Berenson on his personal account. The episode marks a warning against those in mainstream institutions that any deviation from prevailing orthodoxy – no matter how minor – will not be tolerated.*

Mark Tykocinski, a Yale trained molecular immunologist, became president of the university in 2022. Last week, a reporter from *The Philadelphia Inquirer* went through his personal Twitter account which had under 300 followers.

The *Inquirer* reported that Dr. Tykocinski had liked tweets from Berenson that criticized transgender surgeries for children and the efficacy of mRNA Covid vaccines.

"Two years after their introduction, the mRNAs Covid vaccines have proven to be what we all should have expected," one [tweet](#) from Berenson argued. "Another in a long line of overhyped, rushed, profit-driven Big Pharma flops with weak long-term efficacy and a lousy side effect profile."

This constituted a media and academic scandal. The reporter demanded an explanation, and Tykocinski's colleagues rebuked his transgression. Thomas Jefferson University CEO Joseph G. Cacchione [wrote](#) to faculty, employees, and students that Tykocinski "should have known better" than to like those tweets.

Even self-professed defenders of free speech joined the chorus of reprimands. Jonathan Zimmerman is a professor at the Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education and the author of [Free Speech: And Why You Should Give a Damn](#). In 2021, he defended Georgetown Law adjunct professor Sandra Sellers after [she was fired](#) for noticing that black students underperformed in her class.

“Georgetown’s official policy on speech says it is ‘committed to free and open inquiry, deliberation and debate in all matters.’ It has now carved out an exception for matters of race, which are essentially closed,” [he wrote](#). “The lesson [from Georgetown] is clear and unequivocal: Keep your big mouth shut, if you know what’s good for you.”

Now, Zimmerman has discovered his own carve-out – wrongthink related to Covid and juvenile transgender procedures.

“If he liked those tweets because he agrees with Alex Berenson, that is a dagger at the heart of the scientific enterprise,” Zimmerman told the *Inquirer*. “There’s no other way to describe it.”

“I have sworn upon the altar of god eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man,” then-Vice President Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1800. Now, the university that bears his name has declared hostility against its president for social media wrongthink.

But the attack is not directed at Dr. Tykocinski. It is a warning against anyone in institutions that they must conform to prevailing orthodoxy or risk their professional reputations. They must *keep their big mouths shut*, in the words of Professor Zimmerman. In this system, career advancement relies on obedience rather than ingenuity. It is no wonder that our ruling class is so banal.

By silencing critics, the powerful aim to achieve authority without accountability. Submission is central to their quest for power, and threatening the livelihoods of freethinkers is a powerful ploy.

Berenson’s reporting and support from public figures like [Jay Bhattacharya](#) and [Elon Musk](#) may save Dr. Tykocinski’s job for now; but going forward, he’ll know the price that he will bear if he deviates from groupthink. He didn’t have to say anything to learn this reality. He didn’t make a post or deliver a speech. All it took was liking a tweet from a journalist.

Free speech is more than a slogan. It must be an operational reality for everyone. It can be closed down by forces other than edicts from government. It can be suppressed also by arbitrary private actions that reflect regime priorities. Ever more workers and especially intellectuals today work in an environment of fear that leads to self-censorship.

There are many ways to skin a cat and many paths toward despotism. Canceling the capacity of competent professionals to dissent against the state-subsidized orthodoxy is one.

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