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Lehigh University rejects calls to revoke an honorary degree awarded to Trump in 1988

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Lehigh University announced on Friday that it would not revoke the honorary degree awarded to President Donald Trump. Wagner College also recently decided that it would not rescind the honorary degree it awarded Trump in 2004, Inside Higher Ed reported.

Kelly McCoy, a 2017 Lehigh graduate, organized a petition signed by over 30,000 people calling on the university to revoke Trump's honorary degree, which was awarded in 1988.

"Our current values as a university stand against everything Donald Trump represents," the petition wrote. "He does not reflect Lehigh University's values. Therefore, he does not deserve to bear the distinction of an honorary degree from Lehigh. To suggest otherwise would ignore and minimize the work of Lehigh's community to promote diversity and inclusion on its campus."

In 2015, Lehigh revoked comedian Bill Cosby's honorary degree after dozens of women came forward alleging that he sexually assaulted them. In a statement, the university wrote that Cosby had "admitted under oath to behavior that is antithetical to the values of Lehigh University."

Students and alumni of the university have argued that Trump has also demonstrated behavior contradictory to the school's values. In the past few months, various women have spoken out against Trump with allegations of sexual harassment.

The petition from McCoy prompted Lehigh's Board of Trustees to discuss the honorary degree, but the board recently concluded that "no action will be taken."

Trump, who is a 1968 Wharton graduate, has repeatedly referred to his degree as evidence of his intelligence. Leading up to and following the election, Penn students and alumni have called for the University to disavow Trump, but with little success.

Despite various Penn alumni taking on prominent positions in the White House, the University has not released a public statement on the Trump campaign or administration. Penn Director of Media Relations Ron Ozio told Politico in 2016 that the University is blocked from taking an official stance on political figures.

While Penn President Amy Gutmann came under fire for not signing a letter with 130 other university presidents urging Trump to disavow the series of hate crimes that occurred after his election, she has since released individual statements on some of his policies. Gutmann has denounced Trump's executive order on immigration, criticized his budget, and urged him to protect DACA recipients.