

To the Princeton Community:

When we were at Princeton, we were often reminded that Princeton's motto is 'In the nation's service and in the service of all nations.' Despite this ideal, we have discovered that to many outside the Orange Bubble, Princeton symbolizes something much less noble: greed, privilege, and elitism. We believe that part of this perception stems from Princeton's strong institutional support for careers in the financial services sector, an industry that includes firms like Goldman Sachs and J.P. Morgan, which have taken billions of dollars in public money and used it to pay excessive bonuses and manipulate our political system to their own advantage.

We applaud the students of Occupy Princeton for challenging Princeton's dominant culture of political disengagement. It takes a great deal of courage to stand up to your peers and speak uncomfortable truths. Princeton graduates are entitled to work in the industry of their choosing, but if they do choose to work in finance, they should know they are entering an industry with a condemning historical record of breaching public trust and engaging in practices that run directly counter to Princeton's motto. We believe that the Occupy Princeton protests send an important message to these financial institutions about the University's values and serve to educate students considering a career in finance.

The burden of showing that Princeton University is more than an elite playground should not fall on the shoulders of students alone. The administration should support—not discipline—those students who are attempting to bring Princeton into a much-needed national conversation about income inequality and economic justice. Moreover, we urge the administration to stop providing institutional support for recruiting on campus by the worst offenders of the financial industry, such as J.P. Morgan and Goldman Sachs, until they show that they meet basic standards of accountability and economic fair play.

Lastly, we call on fellow alumni to join us in making it clear to current undergraduates that there are better ways to use the immense privilege of a Princeton education. We say this not just to encourage students to look outside of finance, but also to suggest that they use the skills and connections they have developed at Princeton to achieve positive good from within financial careers.

It's time to decide whether 'the nation's service' refers to the entire nation, or just 1% of it.

Signed:

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