

NACUA was founded when the nation resolved finally to redress the persistent indignities of racial discrimination and when it rolled back cold war intrusions upon the freedoms of thought and advocacy. Ironically, the efforts of civil rights activists and civil libertarians to free a people and to protect a free people diminished the autonomy of the university; made it more accountable to government officials for academic decisions than ever before; and subjected elements of its mission to the vagaries of jurisprudential fashion. This article describes the course of the judicial, legislative and regulatory developments during NACUA's first fifty years; and, looking forward, it predicts that the traditional university mission, enlarging the nation's human capital and facilitating social mobility, will keep universities at the center of efforts to remove judicially created limitations on government's ability to mitigate the generational social, economic and educational disadvantages that disproportionately affect the disfavored minority groups whose members now comprise close to half of the population under five years of age.