

Sentiment Analysis

Spec has a long history of standing up to powerful actors and accurately covering University politics. As federal pressure intensified, this analysis shows a sharp shift toward less critical framing of Columbia administrators.

51 federal-pressure records	-0.380 2024 mean	-0.038 2026 mean
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The statistical result

Statistic	Estimate	Interpretation
Current minus baseline	+0.342	Less critical / more administration-favoring on the normalized scale
95% confidence interval	+0.022 to +0.661	Welch interval for the 2024-2026 mean difference
Two-sided p-value	0.0366	Below the conventional 0.05 threshold

Columbia capitulated under federal pressure. Did Spec follow?

The timing raises an accountability question: what explains the contemporaneous shift in Spectator's framing?

Data cutoff: August 13, 2026

Method

How the analysis was defined

The starting census contained 256 unique articles from Spectator's University News Administration archive, using the same January 1-August 13 window in 2024 and 2026. A record entered the analysis when its headline or public description matched at least one published federal-pressure term. Selection did not use the sentiment score.

Federal-pressure terms

Trump, Congress, House committee, federal, Title VI, Education Department, White House, ICE, funding cut

Why these terms?

These terms were selected to identify coverage where federal pressure on Columbia was explicit in the headline or public description rather than inferred. The list captures federal political actors and institutions (Trump, Congress, House committee, White House, Education Department), federal legal or enforcement references (Title VI, ICE), and direct pressure language (federal, funding cut).

ChatGPT scoring

One blinded ChatGPT pass scored only the supplied headline and public description or dek. It returned a raw score from -2 to +2, a confidence rating, and a short text-grounded rationale. The normalized score is the raw score divided by 2.

Scoring scale

Raw	Normalized	Anchor
-2	-1	strongly critical of administration or foregrounds a serious accountability challenge
-1	-0.5	mildly critical or skeptical toward administration
0	0	neutral, mixed, descriptive, or insufficient evidence of directional valence
1	0.5	mildly favorable or substantially centers an administration frame
2	1	strongly favorable, promotional, or largely uncontested institutional framing

Comparison: unweighted period means using Welch's two-sample t-test and a 95% confidence interval.

Audit trail

The companion Excel workbook contains all 51 analysis inputs, matched terms, scores, confidence ratings, rationales, and links to the original articles.

Representative scored records

Period / headline	Terms	Score	Rationale
2024 - House committee threatens to subpoena Columbia, citing 'continued failure' to produce documents	House committee	-2	A House committee alleges continued failure to produce records and threatens compulsory subpoenas by a fixed deadline.
2024 - The House committee tried to make Shafik trip over her own testimony. But it failed to fully corner her.	House committee	+1	The headline casts Shafik as successfully resisting a committee effort to trap and fully corner her.
2024 - CC, SEAS financial aid adapts to FAFSA changes	federal	+2	The aid office is presented as adapting successfully and guaranteeing students that estimated net costs will not increase after final calculations.
2026 - Following faculty pushback to Customs and Border Protection recruitment listing, SPS removes all external postings	Trump	-2	SPS is shown repeatedly posting recruitment for an agency tied to mass deportation, then removing all external listings after faculty criticism.
2026 - Appeals court dismisses AAUP, AFT effort challenging federal funding cuts to Columbia	federal	0	The text reports a court's mootness ruling based on Columbia's federal deal without assessing University leadership.
2026 - Melissa Begg steps down as dean of School of Social Work as school faces federal funding uncertainty	federal	+2	The departure is framed almost entirely through the dean's favorable account of collaboration, excellence, and rewarding leadership.

The Excel workbook is the complete audit file for this analysis. Full Spectator articles are not redistributed; source URLs are included.