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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

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August 12, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Sandra D. Bruce
Inspector General
Office of Inspector General
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202

Inspector General Bruce:

I write to request the Office of the Inspector General open an investigation into the use of federal funds by colleges and universities to hire and retain employees and pay for programming to advance the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) ideology. The primary problem with DEI is that it does not actually promote inclusivity. It is the opposite of diversity of thought when all members of the campus community are forced into groups based on their race and heritage.¹ Concerningly, at the same time that colleges and universities are spending record amounts to bolster their DEI infrastructure, the DEI ideology is being used as cover to justify discrimination and acts of intimidation on college campuses, such as Jewish students and faculty being attacked because they are considered “oppressors” under the DEI system.²

The number of employees tasked with promoting DEI in higher education has ballooned since 2020. A 2021 study examining 65 universities concluded that the average institution was paying

¹ See Sen. Bill Cassidy, *How Congress can help rid higher education of DEI*, WASH. EXAM’R (Feb. 2, 2024, 6:00 AM), <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/restoring-america/opinion-restoring-america/2831335/how-congress-can-help-rid-higher-education-of-dei/>.

² Rabbi David J. Wolpe, a visiting scholar at the Harvard Divinity School and a former member of the school’s antisemitism advisory group, noted that the reactions of many on Harvard’s campus in the wake of the October 7 terrorist attacks considered Jews to be oppressors. He went on, “Much of Harvard is captured by an ideology that centers oppression, but dividing all of the world into oppressor and oppressed is dangerous. Once you divide humanity by race or creed or nation into two camps—the good and the evil—you have adopted the mentality of the despot.” David J. Wolpe, *On the Hatred of Jews*, THE HARVARD CRIMSON (Dec. 29, 2023), <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/12/29/wolpe-hatred-jews/>. See also Cassidy, *supra* note 1 (explaining that DEI is being used as a cover to justify discrimination, and since Jews are considered “oppressors” by the DEI system, the discrimination they face is somehow justified by its believers).

for 45 staff members to promote DEI policies.”³ In addition, membership at the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE) grew by 60 percent between 2020 and 2022, reflecting the sharp increase in DEI hiring.⁴

The examples of administrative bloat are plentiful. The University of Michigan expanded the number of paid employees dedicated to the advancement of DEI to 241 at a cost exceeding \$30 million annually.⁵ The University of Virginia is estimated to employ 235 staff members under the DEI framework, costing nearly \$20 million per year.⁶ The Ohio State University has 94 DEI employees⁷ and required prospective faculty members to be screened through “Diversity Faculty Recruitment Reports,” which prioritize racial quotas over academic merit.⁸ Increased scrutiny of DEI initiatives has not deterred schools like the University of Pittsburgh, where over the past several years “almost all of Pitt’s schools have added or elevated the role of chief diversity officers.”⁹

As recipients of federal grant funding and the beneficiaries of trillions of dollars in federal student loans, colleges and universities should prioritize the academic success of their students over advancing ideological activism. For example, at the University of Michigan, the \$30 million in spending on the DEI bureaucracy could be used to cover in-state tuition and fees for 1,781 undergraduate students.¹⁰ The \$20 million that the University of Virginia spends on DEI each year could be used to cover in-state tuition and fees for 1,030 undergraduate students.¹¹

This expansion of the DEI bureaucracy also comes at a time when higher education is becoming financially out of reach for more and more students, with the cost of public universities skyrocketing 109 percent in the last 30 years.¹² Meanwhile, total student debt nearly tripled in the

³ Jay P. Greene & James D. Paul, *Diversity University: DEI Bloat in the Academy*, THE HERITAGE FOUND. (July 27, 2021), https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/BG3641_0.pdf.

⁴ Liam Knox, *DEI as an ‘Act of Resistance’*, INSIDE HIGHER ED (June 13, 2023), <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/diversity/race-ethnicity/2023/06/13/dei-officers-gear-battle-red-states>.

⁵ Jennifer Kabbany, *UMich now has more than 500 jobs dedicated to DEI, payroll costs exceed \$30 million*, THE COLL. FIX (Jan. 9, 2024), <https://www.thecollegefix.com/umich-now-has-more-than-500-jobs-dedicated-to-dei-payroll-costs-exceed-30-million/>.

⁶ Adam Andrzejewski, *University of Virginia Spends \$20 Million On 235 DEI Employees, With Some Making \$587,340 Per Year*, OPENTHEBOOKS.COM (Mar. 5, 2024, 4:44 PM), <https://www.openthebooks.com/substack-university-of-virginia-spends-20-million-on-235-dei-employees-with-some-making-587340-per-year/>.

⁷ Greene & Paul, *supra* note 3.

⁸ John Sailer, *Inside Ohio State’s DEI Factory*, WALL ST. J. (Nov. 20, 2023, 4:52 PM), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/inside-ohio-states-dei-factory-faculty-report-diversity-hiring-cefd804d>.

⁹ Susan Jones, *Pitt leans on diversity as other universities deal with outside pressure to make cuts*, UNIV. OF PITTSBURGH UNIV. TIMES (Nov. 30, 2023), <https://www.utimes.pitt.edu/news/pitt-leans-diversity>.

¹⁰ Undergraduate Admissions, *Costs & Aid*, UNIV. OF MICH., <https://admissions.umich.edu/costs-aid/costs> (last visited Aug. 12, 2024).

¹¹ Student Financial Services, *Estimated Undergraduate Cost of Attendance 2024-2025*, UNIV. OF VA., <https://sfs.virginia.edu/financial-aid-new-applicants/financial-aid-basics/estimated-undergraduate-cost-attendance-2024-2025> (last visited Aug. 12, 2024).

¹² Jennifer Ma & Matea Pender, *Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid 2023*, COLLEGEBOARD (Nov. 2023), <https://research.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/Trends%20Report%202023%20Updated.pdf>.

last 15 years, from approximately \$619 million in 2008 to \$1.73 trillion in 2023.¹³ However, this increased revenue does not appear to be going to improving the education students receive. It is instead funding massive administrative costs, which increasingly includes more and more DEI employees. It is estimated that about \$600 out of every \$1,000 in graduate student loan increases have gone to funding administrative expenses—which includes DEI employees—and not towards education.¹⁴ This means that families paying higher tuition increasingly are doing so in part to subsidize the DEI bureaucracy.

Colleges and universities are not just spending exorbitant amounts of money on DEI hiring, but also increasingly mandating that students complete DEI-related courses in order to graduate. A recent study looking at 248 colleges and universities across the country found that more than two-thirds of these schools include DEI academic requirements.¹⁵ At American University, for example, undergraduate students must take a 3-credit “Diversity & Equity” course that focuses on “issues of power, privilege, and inequality that are embedded in social, cultural, or economic hierarchies, including (but not limited to) those around race, ethnicity, class, ability, gender, and sexuality.”¹⁶ At Columbia University, undergraduate students are required to take the year-long “Contemporary Civilization” course, which includes units on “anticolonialism,” and “race, gender, and sexuality.”¹⁷ Columbia students are also required to take the year-long “Literature Humanities” course, which assigns a book about “racial aggressions” and a work of “post-colonial” poetry.¹⁸ The faculty program chair for this course—who is currently reviewing its syllabus—was one of the most outspoken supporters of the antisemitic protestors at Columbia, and said in an April 26, 2024 interview with *Al Jazeera* that there was “no evidence” of antisemitism on Columbia’s campus and that claims to the contrary had been weaponized by the “hegemonic Zionist far right.”¹⁹ These comments were made after a week’s worth of widespread antisemitic chants, slogans, posters, and other repugnant activity originating from the anti-Israel encampment on Columbia’s campus.²⁰

Even among schools that do not require specific DEI-related courses for graduation, many are still weaving the DEI ideology into general education curricula requirements for all undergraduate

¹³ *Consumer Credit Outstanding (Levels)*, BD. OF GOVERNORS OF THE FED. RSRV. SYS., https://www.federalreserve.gov/releases/g19/HIST/cc_hist_memo_levels.html (last updated Aug. 7, 2024).

¹⁴ Sandra E. Black et al., *Plus or Minus? The Effect of Graduate School Loans on Access, Attainment, and Prices* (Nat’l Bureau of Econ. Rsch., Working Paper No. 31291), <https://www.nber.org/papers/w31291>.

¹⁵ *No Graduation Without Indoctrination: The DEI Course Mandate*, SPEECH FIRST 5 (Apr. 2024), https://speechfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Speech_First_DEI_Report.pdf.

¹⁶ *Id.* at 14.

¹⁷ The Core Curriculum, *Contemporary Civilization*, COLUMBIA COLLEGE, <https://www.college.columbia.edu/core-curriculum/classes/contemporary-civilization> (last visited Aug. 12, 2024).

¹⁸ The Core Curriculum, *Literature Humanities*, COLUMBIA COLLEGE, <https://www.college.columbia.edu/core-curriculum/classes/literature-humanities> (last visited Aug. 12, 2024).

¹⁹ Aaron Sibarium, *Encampment’s Faculty Cheerleader Oversees Columbia’s Core Curriculum in Humanities*, THE WASH. FREE BEACON (Apr. 29, 2024), <https://freebeacon.com/campus/encampments-faculty-cheerleader-oversees-columbias-core-curriculum-in-humanities/>.

²⁰ E.g. Cathryn J. Prince, *As Columbia anti-Israel encampment endures, Jewish students horrified by ‘Judenrein’ campus*, THE TIMES OF ISRAEL (Apr. 25, 2024, 7:03 AM), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/as-anti-israel-encampment-at-columbia-endures-jewish-students-lament-judenrein-campus/>.

students. The University of San Diego’s general education learning outcomes for undergraduates states that students will “[c]ritically reflect on and describe how [they] and others have experienced privilege and oppression.”²¹ One of Marquette University’s learning outcomes for its general education curriculum states that students “will be able to describe how racism, colonialism, classism, sexism, other forms of prejudice, and other oppressive forces have impacted and continue to impact the well-being of marginalized groups and to identify historical and structural barriers to equity and inclusiveness.”²² A 2022 study of 51 large universities found that a staggering 91 percent of freshman orientation programs included material that stressed DEI topics, with some schools even requiring students to take an implicit bias test.²³

As the cost of higher education continues to rise, it is important that Congress receives a full accounting of how much federal funding is spent by colleges and universities to advance the DEI agenda. Therefore, I request you open an investigation into the use of federal funds by colleges and universities to hire and retain DEI employees and pay for DEI-related programming. As part of this investigation, please provide an accounting of the following:

1. How much Title IV funding has been used to pay for DEI employees and/or operate DEI offices at colleges and universities in the last five years?
2. How much Title IV funding has been used to pay for DEI-related programming, including required classes and freshman orientation?
3. For each college and university that receives Title IV funding:
 - a. How many, and which, schools mandate “diversity statements” for employment and admissions applications?
 - b. How many, and which, schools mandate DEI training for students and/or employees, including through freshman orientation programming?
 - c. How many, and which, schools require students to take an implicit bias test as part of their freshman orientation?
 - d. How many, and which, schools require students to take at least one DEI-related class in order to graduate?
 - e. Provide any and all documents and materials used in staff training, freshman orientation programming, and classes required for graduation that refer to any racial, ethnic, shared ancestry, or national origin group as “oppressors” or a similar characterization.

²¹ SPEECH FIRST, *supra* note 15, at 16.

²² *Id.* at 17.

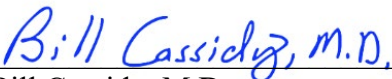
²³ *Freshman Disorientation: How Colleges and Universities Lay the Groundwork for Student Indoctrination*, SPEECH FIRST 2, 4 (Aug. 2022), https://speechfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/SF_Freshman-Disorientation-Report_FINAL.pdf.

4. For each college and university currently under investigation by the Department of Education Office for Civil Rights for antisemitism, provide any and all documents and materials used in staff training, freshman orientation programming, and classes required for graduation that refer to Jewish people or the state of Israel, including, but not limited to, labelling Jewish people as “oppressors” or a similar characterization.

5. For the colleges and universities that require at least one DEI-related class in order to graduate, what is the average length of time it takes a student to graduate over the past five years, on a year-by-year basis?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Bill Cassidy, M.D.
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor, and Pensions