



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on March 7, 2023

Iowa Legislature Takes Significant Step Toward Defunding DEI at State Universities

Iowa's House Education Committee passed a bill Friday that would ban public universities from spending money on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs or personnel, sending the bill to the full chamber for consideration.

[House File \(HF\) 616](#) prohibits the three schools overseen by the state Board of Regents — the University of Iowa (UI), Iowa State University (ISU), and the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) — from spending any further monies “to establish, sustain, support, or staff a diversity, equity, and inclusion office, or to contract, employ, engage, or hire an individual to serve as a diversity, equity, and inclusion officer.”



Dzmitry Dzemidovich/iStock/Getty Images Plus

“For too long, the DEI bureaucracies at our institutions of higher education have been used to impose ideological conformity and promote far-left political activism ... all while spending literally millions in the process,” said Republican Representative Taylor Collins, who led a subcommittee hearing on the bill Wednesday. “They push this woke agenda on faculty. They push it on staff. But most importantly, they push it on the students.”

HF 616 goes to great lengths to define “diversity, equity, and inclusion,” giving wily administrators little opportunity to evade its clear intent. DEI, it says, includes efforts:

“to manipulate ... the composition of the faculty or student body” or “to promote differential treatment of ... individuals” on the basis of race, color, or ethnicity;

to institute policies, procedures, training, or other activities “designed or implemented with reference to race, color, or ethnicity” (and, in some cases, “gender identity” and “sexual orientation”); and

“to promote, as the official position of the [university], a particular, widely contested opinion referencing unconscious or implicit bias, cultural appropriation, allyship, transgender ideology, microaggressions, group marginalization, anti-racism, systemic oppression, social justice, intersectionality, neo-pronouns, heteronormativity, disparate impact, gender theory, racial privilege, sexual privilege, or any related formulation of these concepts.”

The bill allows anyone to notify the state attorney general of potential violations, after which the attorney general may take action to compel the offending school to comply. It also permits any current student, faculty member, or alumnus of a state university to file a civil suit against that school if it is suspected of violating the bill's terms.



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In addition, it requires universities to “reallocate” all unspent funds for the current fiscal year that would have gone to DEI initiatives and offices “to merit scholarships for lower-income and middle-income students and to reduce tuition and mandatory fees for resident students.”

During a February 13 grilling of university presidents, it emerged that the three schools spend roughly \$9.7 million per year on DEI efforts and have 128.5 full-time DEI employees — yet the Board of Regents had the audacity to seek a \$35-million appropriations hike, “its highest funding increase request in nearly a decade,” reported the Cedar Rapids [Gazette](#).

According to the paper:

Collins noted during that hearing that the University of Iowa’s executive officer of diversity, equity and inclusion earns \$255,000 a year; an Iowa State University’s vice president earns \$247,131; and the University of Northern Iowa’s chief diversity officer and director of diversity, inclusion and social justice make a combined \$200,000-plus.

“If my math is correct, that’s about \$750,000 for four people,” Collins said. “Do you believe that’s a good use of taxpayer money?”

Naturally, the prexies all said yes, citing “the need to compete for top faculty and leadership.” Of course, if they weren’t investing in divisive DEI practices, they would have no need to compete for DEI employees, freeing those funds for more constructive uses. UI undergraduate student senator Kyle Clare, for example, told the subcommittee during last week’s hearing that if his school were to “fire” its DEI officer, who makes good money “so she can vilify and make white, male, straight, and other students feel like oppressors,” it could fund at least 27 scholarships and scrap extensive training “which implicitly teaches white students that they are wrong if they question the teachings of critical race theory, and they must atone for their privileged identity and become an anti-racist.”

“Iowa taxpayers,” he said, “are footing the bill for that.”

But if the GOP, which controls the legislature and the governor’s mansion, has enough backbone to pass HF 616, they won’t be paying for it much longer.



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