

## **Statement in Support of DEI Initiatives in Higher Education**

### **Florida State University Faculty Senate**

The Florida State University Faculty Senate resolves that diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives (DEI) are critical to the success of our university and to all institutions of higher learning. The Florida Board of Governors recognized the importance of DEI education in its 2020 memo on “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Strategic Priorities,” which states that “a university’s strategic plan, as well as its mission statement, should prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion and provide clear direction for the total integration of D.E.I. initiatives throughout the institution.” Florida State’s commitment to DEI has been celebrated nationwide, as demonstrated by our receipt of a Higher Education Excellence in Diversity award from *INSIGHT Into Diversity* nine years in a row.

Casting efforts to improve DEI as “indoctrination” misunderstands the purpose and impact of these initiatives. Education is designed to foster critical thinking skills, which requires the discussion and deliberation of diverse ideas. Inclusion ensures that these ideas are discussed in a space that is supportive of multiple viewpoints, teaching us to critically examine evidence and make thoughtful decisions about its accuracy. Equity enables all students, including those who might not be able to afford college without help, to participate in these deliberations. The announcement that the state of Florida would eliminate DEI programs threatens these foundational educational objectives. It also threatens to create a culture of fear that we must resist.

Public education enables students to be citizens in our pluralist society, a project that requires each of these elements. To deny students the opportunity to learn to critically evaluate viewpoints different from their own would leave them unable to cope with the challenges of the modern American workplace, where we are all confronted with complex, ethical issues that affect people of all walks of life. DEI initiatives in the academic setting prepare our graduates to excel as entrepreneurs, professionals, leaders, and within the marketplace of ideas. If the state denies us the opportunity to engage the voices of all students and fellow citizens, we as a university will struggle to produce the successful graduates and future members of the Florida workforce that we do now. Precluding us from engaging in these efforts would be a uniquely disempowering form of indoctrination by omission.

We stand proudly behind the efforts by our colleagues, students, and staff to make our campuses a vibrantly diverse and inclusive learning environment for everyone. We urge the Governor, the legislature, and the Board of Governors to join us in this ongoing celebration of what makes Florida the engine of creativity, innovation, and democracy that we are. Understanding the value of our DEI initiatives will enable us to align our shared goals of preparing students to be productive and contributing members of society throughout the state and the nation as a whole.