



# PROTECT the PUBLIC'S TRUST

*Submitted via email*

July 31, 2025

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U.S. Department of Justice  
Civil Rights Division  
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## **Re: Titles VI and IX Complaint Against University of North Carolina System**

To Whom it May Concern,

We write to you to alert you of an effort by officials within the University of North Carolina system to continue their practice of imposing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) on their students, despite perceived steps to end that practice. Several of these officials were recorded speaking about these efforts, where they describe rebranding DEI work, DEI jobs, and DEI spending in order to work around bans on DEI. DEI is inherently racially discriminatory and runs afoul of Title VI and Title IX of the Civil Rights Act. Accordingly, we request that you promptly investigate the system's potential violations.

### **I. Who We Are**

Protect the Public's Trust (PPT) is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to promoting ethics in government and restoring the public's trust in government officials. It is imperative in light of severe social challenges America has suffered in the last several years that institutions, especially educational institutions, maintain their credibility with the American people. Educational institutions should be held to their obligations to ensure that their primary purpose, education, is maintained. There is no place in education for inherently discriminatory curriculum, decision-making, admissions, or campus access.



# PROTECT the PUBLIC'S TRUST

## II. Background

DEI is an amorphous term, but generally focuses on prioritizing opportunities for specific classes of people. The Center for Racial Equity in Education, for example, defines it as “a set of principles and practices aimed at creating fair, respectful, and inclusive environments. DEI efforts seek to acknowledge and address systemic inequalities, promote equitable opportunities and representation, and create spaces where every individual can thrive and be reflected regardless of their age, race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and mental or physical ability.”<sup>1</sup>

The effort, guised as “equity,” means that perceived unequal classes of people receive more opportunity and more access than those who are not perceived as unequal. Minority students will receive opportunities that white students do not. LGBT students will receive opportunities that the rest of the students do not receive, etc. This effort is, by definition, discriminatory.

On May 5, 2024, the University of North Carolina (UNC) Board of Governors voted to repeal its DEI policies, replacing them with a new policy that purports to focus on “Equality Within the University of North Carolina.”<sup>2</sup> Each school was to adhere to a reporting requirement by September 1, 2024.<sup>3</sup>

System President Peter Hans stated at the Board meeting that “Our public universities must take stance of principled neutrality on matters of political controversy...it is not the job of the university to decide all the complex and multi-dimensional questions of how to balance and interpret identity.” “This policy will preserve the university’s role as a trusted venue for that vital debate.”<sup>4</sup>

Outwardly the schools appeared to comply. UNC Wilmington, for example, announced in August 2024 that it would close its Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion (OIDI), eliminate its chief diversity officer position and move cultural centers currently under the OIDI umbrella to the office of Student Affairs.<sup>5</sup>

However, this effort looks to be merely for appearances. Chief Diversity Officer Donyell Roseboro remained a faculty member and OIDI staff were offered positions in Academic and

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<sup>1</sup> “DEI in Education,” Center for Racial Equity in Education, accessed July 23, 2025, <https://www.creed-nc.org/unc-diversity-equity-inclusion>.

<sup>2</sup> University of North Carolina System, “Equality Within the University of North Carolina,” May 23, 2024, <https://www.northcarolina.edu/apps/policy/doc.php?type=pdf&id=147>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Liam Knox, “UNC System Board Votes to Eliminate DEI Offices,” Inside Higher Ed, May 24, 2024, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/quick-takes/2024/05/24/unc-system-board-votes-eliminate-dei-policy-cut-spending>.

<sup>5</sup> Liam Knox, “UNC Wilmington Eliminates DEI Office,” Inside Higher Ed, Aug. 12, 2024, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/quick-takes/2024/08/12/university-north-carolina-wilmington-closes-dei-office>.



## PROTECT the PUBLIC'S TRUST

Student Affairs. The closure created no layoffs.<sup>6</sup> On September 19, 2024, an official going by the name of Asher Persin, whose title is Center Coordinator for the Mohin-Scholz LGBTQIA Resource Center, was recorded speaking about the efforts to subvert the ending of DEI at UNC Wilmington. “They’re trying to be a little sneaky, I feel like, with certain things in the plan.”<sup>7</sup> A university spokesperson responded to a reporter in June regarding the recordings,

“UNCW is aware of a video alleging regulatory noncompliance by university personnel. We take such matters seriously, the employees’ actions are under review, and the leadership team is taking immediate action to look into these matters further,” [UNCW’s media relations and communications specialist Sydney] Bouchelle said via email.<sup>8</sup>

However, there is as yet no indication of any action having been taken by UNC Wilmington. Further, Asher Persin and another employee in a video, Ashlee Renee Fleming, are currently listed on UNC Wilmington’s website as employees in the Multicultural Student Success & Resource Centers.<sup>9</sup>

Other officials within the UNC system were caught on tape making similar admissions. An official named Jacqueline Sanders at UNC Charlotte says she uses “finesse” to get around the DEI ban. They “renamed, we’ve reorganized, we’ve recalibrated, so to speak.” “Because language changes...but the people who have to be in the presence of, and in the space, don’t change.” While there are no “outward” DEI jobs, there are “covert” positions available.<sup>10</sup>

An official named Megan Pugh at UNC Asheville, admitted that she loves “breaking the rules.” She said she has to “keep it quiet” to do DEI work. “You know...until more or less, they get mad at us. But they haven’t done it yet, so.” Pugh said that the school would be open to keeping DEI work, such as implicit bias trainings.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Accuracy in Media, “UNC Wilmington Administrator Brags About Being ‘Sneaky’ to Evade DEI Ban in Accuracy in Media Investigation,” Accuracy in Media, June 19, 2025, <https://aim.org/2025/06/19/unc-wilmington-administrator-brags-about-being-sneaky-to-evade-dei-ban-in-accuracy-in-media-investigation/>.

<sup>8</sup> McKenli Myers, “In fourth undercover video, group highlights ‘sneaky’ DEI at UNC Wilmington,” The College Fix, June 25, 2025, <https://www.thecollegefix.com/in-fourth-undercover-video-group-highlights-sneaky-dei-at-unc-wilmington/>.

<sup>9</sup> University of North Carolina Wilmington, “Campus Life/Meet Our Team,” University of North Carolina Wilmington University Administration, <https://uncw.edu/about/university-administration/student-affairs/departments/campus-life/team> (last visited July 27, 2025).

<sup>10</sup> Accuracy in Media, “UNC Administrator Admits she Uses ‘Finesse’ to Evade DEI Ban,” Accuracy in Media, May 28, 2025, <https://aim.org/2025/05/28/unc-administrator-admits-she-uses-finesse-to-evade-dei-ban/>.

<sup>11</sup> Accuracy in Media, “UNC Asheville Dean Admits She Loves Breaking Anti-DEI Rules,” Accuracy in Media, June 3, 2025, <https://aim.org/2025/06/03/unc-asheville-dean-admits-she-loves-breaking-anti-dei-rules/>.



# PROTECT the PUBLIC'S TRUST

An official at Western Carolina University, which is a part of the UNC system, said that there is a “strategy” to “embed” DEI across the university so that lawmakers can’t remove it. Karen Price, Director of Institutional Assessment, said that the school is “still absolutely doing all of that work.”<sup>12</sup> “Like honestly, it’s more we’re trying to embed that kind of Diversity, Equity, Inclusiveness, Inclusive Excellence, really across, like, every area should have responsibility for that....Like, it shouldn’t just be like an office or a figurehead.”<sup>13</sup>

It appears that there is a pattern at UNC System schools to continue the status quo of imposing DEI values while creating an outward appearance of compliance.

### III. Analysis

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964<sup>14</sup> states that “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”<sup>15</sup> The Education Amendments of 1972, known as Title IX, states, “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” Thus, it violates federal statute when a university extends priority to one race over another or one sex over the other.

Indeed, in the context of race, the Supreme Court recently found that the North Carolina system’s practice of considering race when making admissions decisions violated the Equal Protection Clause and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.<sup>16</sup> “Eliminating racial discrimination means eliminating all of it.” Discrimination cannot be justified by a racial classification system “that imposes disadvantages upon persons...who bear no responsibility for whatever harm the beneficiaries of the [race-based] admissions program are thought to have suffered.”<sup>17</sup>

The reasoning was broad, which means it applies to more than just admissions practices. Schools “may never” use a racial “stereotype or negative.”<sup>18</sup> Second, “distinctions between citizens solely because of their ancestry are by their very nature odious to a free people whose institutions

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<sup>12</sup> Accuracy in Media, “We’re Trying to Embed’ DEI ‘Across Every Area,’ Western Carolina University Administrator Tells Accuracy in Media,” Accuracy in Media, June 10, 2025, <https://aim.org/2025/06/10/were-trying-to-embed-dei-across-every-area-western-carolina-university-administrator-tells-accuracy-in-media/>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d et seq.

<sup>15</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 2000d.

<sup>16</sup> *Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*, 143 S.Ct. 2141 (2023)(“SFFA”).

<sup>17</sup> *Id.* at 2174, quoting *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. 265, 362 (1978).

<sup>18</sup> *SFFA* 2166.



# PROTECT the PUBLIC'S TRUST

are founded upon the doctrine of equality.”<sup>19</sup> To do this invokes strict scrutiny, to which the goal of “diversity” does not pass.<sup>20</sup>

So-called gender diversity, a type of DEI, would also violate federal statutes. This could show itself in different ways. Some DEI efforts seek to “support women in the workplace” or education by giving preference to women to be placed in leadership roles.<sup>21</sup> In others, women are losing opportunities to males who wish to participate in women’s athletics. In these instances, DEI would also violate Title IX.

The UNC system is clearly continuing its practice of imposing DEI on its campuses. It is no matter whether the discriminatory practices are official and transparent or are done in the shadows and in secret. Discrimination is discrimination. Through any effort to provide access, resources, to teach students discriminatory worldviews, or in any way impose DEI on campus, the officials are promoting discrimination on the basis of race and sex.

Additionally, the fact that at least *four* separate universities are doing this in secret demonstrates that it is a systemic problem within the UNC system. The officials have not been let go, but reassigned, meaning that the universities themselves are giving implicit approval of the effort. Accordingly, the UNC System as a whole should be investigated to uncover the extent of discrimination. And, the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Justice should hold these universities accountable to the extent the Department deems appropriate.

For the record, I give OCR my consent to disclose my name and other personal information contained in this Title IX complaint to others for OCR’s investigation of, and enforcement activities related to, the complaint. I am not interested in participating in early mediation. I do not have an attorney representing me in this matter. I have not complained about these allegations to any school, the State of North Carolina or any other state or federal agency.

Sincerely,

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<sup>19</sup> *Id.* at 2150, quoting *Rice v. Cayetano*, 528 U.S. 495, 517 (2000).

<sup>20</sup> *Id.* at 2166.

<sup>21</sup> See e.g. “Women and Workplace Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion,” Glen Guyton, accessed July 23, 2025, <https://www.glenguyton.com/blog/women-and-workplace-diversity-equity-and-inclusion/>.