GOING WOKE IN DIXIE?:
THE PROGRESS OF DEI AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA & AUBURN UNIVERSITY

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"IT'S AN UNIVERSAL LAW—INTOLERANCE IS THE FIRST SIGN OF AN INADEQUATE EDUCATION. AN ILL-EDUCATED PERSON BEHAVES WITH ARROGANT IMPATIENCE, WHEREAS TRULY PROFOUND EDUCATION BREEDS HUMILITY."

– Alexander Solzhenitsyn

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

All across the country, administrators are transforming universities into institutions dedicated to political activism and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). This report concerns how this DEI transformation is coming to Alabama's two main campuses, University of Alabama and Auburn University. The report has several sections.

Section 1 uncovers how DEI proponents generally pursue radical policies under cover of seemingly inviting aspirations. The real DEI policies are grave and gathering dangers that undermine the advancement of knowledge, the diversity of ideas, meritocracy, societal and campus unity, and the achievement of the common good. DEI policies are based on the following assumptions:

• America harbors unconscious racism (implicit racism) against blacks.

• Equal rights, free speech, meritocracy, and the law itself reinforce a regime of white supremacy as old as the United States itself.

• Only through tearing down the regime of meritocracy, equal rights, and free speech can "underrepresented minorities" become free.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are really cover words for transforming higher education institutions into activist arms for the American progressive Left.

Sections 2 and 3 document how the DEI revolution has come to Alabama higher education. While Alabama's two major universities are not yet among the nation's most extreme, they will hardly resemble the universities that Alabamans have long respected if current trends continue. Alabama

and Auburn have adopted extensive plans for the recruitment of minority students, faculty, and staff, and for transforming the campus culture to represent the DEI ideology. The combined cost of DEI programming and personnel at Alabama and Auburn exceeds $5 million annually, according to our estimates.

As we show in section 2, Alabama unveiled the *Advancing the Flagship* strategic plan, emphasizing DEI in recruitment and trainings, in 2016. It hired an associate provost for DEI in 2017. The *Advancing the Flagship* plan was radicalized further after 2020, when President Stuart Bell convened "a presidential advisory committee" on DEI. President Bell's DEI committee issued the *Path Forward Diversity Report*, which serves as a DEI strategic plan. What followed was a bevy of programs to recruit more minorities to Alabama and a radical plan to oversee the hiring of faculty designed to bring in more minorities. The culture would also be transformed. Sororities and fraternities would be overseen by diversity bureaucrats. Athletics would be made to show pride in all things LGBTQ+. Task forces would revisit the names of buildings and the presence of campus monuments. The work, still underway, has coincided a watering down of the University of Alabama's academic commitments. It has slipped in the *U.S. News and World Report* rankings from no. 31 among public universities to no. 64 in Fall 2022. Its Honors College no longer requires SAT or ACT scores. As a measure of the University of Alabama's transformation, it boasted in 2019 that "over one-third of UA's undergraduate curriculum (36%, 1083 courses) is diversity-related."[1] Numbers are probably higher today.

Auburn, as we document in section 3, has

had a similar trajectory. Auburn's DEI build-out started with a *Climate Survey* that led to more than a dozen DEI-related policy recommendations in 2015. Since then, Auburn has named Taffye Benson Clayton first associate provost and vice president for inclusion and diversity and it has integrated the *Climate Survey* policy recommendations into its working strategic plan. In 2020, the Presidential Task Force for Opportunity and Equity recommended initiatives focused on DEI education and minority recruitment/retention. Auburn adopts faculty recruitment policies like implicit bias training and diversity certifications for candidate pools; it skirts the law on racial recruitment for students.

These diversity programs have been failures in one respect. Both Alabama and Auburn have fewer black students after their efforts to recruit minority students than before. However, DEI programs require that all believe universities are plagued by "systemic racism" and other unconscious pathologies. The search-committee trainings, the job-search manipulations and the oversight provided by diversity officers acclimate the faculty and students to submission to DEI ideology. Faculty who embrace meritocratic ideas are chased off. Hate speech regulation, the DEI oversight of Greek life and athletics, and the prevalence of DEI in student orientations teach students to suffer silently through the DEI madness.

For DEI advocates, the state of Alabama will always be the land of segregation. Without state action, the DEI regime will become further entrenched as the official ideology of the higher education system. It is high time to identify the DEI offices paid for through Alabama's higher education's bill and to defund them so as to prevent the scurrilous DEI lie from being perpetuated.

THE DEI REVOLUTION IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

America's colleges and universities generally have become more radical over the past fifty years.[2] Academics and administrators are no longer merely pushing progressive politics but are transforming universities into institutions dedicated to political activism and indoctrinating students into DEI ideology.

DEI starts with sweet-sounding, civically engaging words that seem unobjectionable and uncontroversial. Everyone wants to *include* and to be *equitable*, after all. Nobody celebrates *uniformity*. The real meaning of DEI emerges from its implementation—where DEI reflects a very controversial and objectionable view of the world. DEI reflects a very dubious moral teaching. DEI ideology holds that institutions like universities are irredeemably racist or sexist. DEI ideology calls for policies that make the former victims (and those who rule in their interest) the new rulers of

universities and the former oppressors the new victims. As famous critical race theorist Ibram X. Kendi writes, "The only remedy for past discrimination is present discrimination. The only remedy for present discrimination is future discrimination."[3] DEI is that present and future discrimination usually on behalf of blacks, women and other select minorities; it is the Left's transformational project.

To provide clarity, contrast what DEI advocates say that diversity, equity, and inclusion mean with what the Heritage Foundation and associated scholars have found that it means in practice. If DEI advocates actually said what they were really going to do, few people would embrace their goals. So they must make their goals seem acceptable and then import the controversial meanings and policy through gratifying or agreeable words.

	WHAT DEI ADVOCATES SAY ___ IS.[4]	**WHAT ___ REALLY MEANS.**[5]
DIVERSITY	Everyone and every group should be valued not from mere tolerance but embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of difference.	"An identity-based approach to society" and ever declining numbers from now-disfavored groups like whites and males through "political quotas."
EQUITY	Overcoming challenges and bias to achieve equal opportunity.	"Equality of outcomes plus reparations."
INCLUSION	Authentically bringing the formerly excluded into activities and decision-making so as to share power.	"Enforced segregation of people by race" and restrictions on speech by now-disfavored groups like whites and males.

It is easy to poke holes in the asserted definitions of DEI advocates. Every group, they say, is celebrated, but would they celebrate a proud culture like imperial Great Britain or czarist Russia or a conservative Republican from rural Arkansas? Equal opportunity means that every profession and every institution must have the exact same racial proportion as the population at large. Inclusion often means only supposedly underrepresented minorities can sit on committees. DEI advocates do not mean what they say. Conservatives have been pointing out the hypocrisy for decades. Concerns about hypocrisy, however, assume that DEI advocates are serious about their values in the first place. They are not. They pursue very different values under the cover of sweet-sounding words.

DIVERSITY

Diversity used to mean difference or plurality but no longer. Diversity now means more members of victim groups and fewer members of the supposedly oppressive groups (and fewer wrongthinkers among victim groups). When men make up 80 percent of engineering students, that is a lack of diversity that must be remedied. When women make up more than 80 percent of elementary education majors, that diversity is celebrated. When blacks and Hispanics make up 65 percent of President Biden's cabinet, he is said to have the most diverse cabinet in American history. The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports judged the National Basketball Association to be the most diverse league. Eighty-two percent of NBA players are people of color. It would be more diverse if it were 95 percent people of color![6] In curricula, diversity means replacing books written by white males with works written by authors from "historically underrepresented" groups. If Clarence Thomas, a black Supreme Court justice, is the example of the "historically underrepresented" group in question, however, the court lacks diversity

because he does not think like he is supposed to. The achievement of diversity often requires that aggrieved minorities be held to lower standards than those who are said to be privileged. The formerly marginalized get privilege, and the formerly privileged get marginalized.

EQUITY

Equity used to mean fairness before the law but not anymore. Equity stands for the idea that universities must aim at something like statistical group parity (e.g., since blacks make up 13 percent of the population, they should be 13 percent of engineers). Failure to achieve parity is sufficient evidence of systematic discrimination. Therefore, we are told, we must dismantle the old culture (no matter how well it seemed to work) and build a new one that will achieve parity. In short, equity means equal group outcomes and offering reparations for those who do not achieve those equal outcomes. Claims about equity are used to disrupt existing institutions that do not have equal outcomes; once equity is achieved, however, the goal becomes diversity, which aims for ever *more* minority representation.

INCLUSION

Inclusion used to mean everyone was welcome but no longer. Today's version of inclusion demands an institutional climate that elevates and supports the well-being of aggrieved minorities instead of or at the expense of the supposedly privileged. Sometimes that means providing special treatment for their supposedly unique needs—like establishing a women's center or excluding ideas and symbols that some members of underrepresented groups find objectionable (like thin blue line flags). LGBTQ- or blacks-only graduations are organized in the name of inclusion. Speech codes and safe spaces arise in order to accomplish this new inclusion. In short, inclusion means excluding everything

that makes allegedly aggrieved minorities uncomfortable and including everything that makes them feel affirmed.

The ideas behind DEI require people to believe that America is on an endless treadmill of oppression and victimhood. Accordingly, all efforts to transcend group identity are thought to be lies that rationalize "privilege." Advocates for DEI demand ideological conformity—victims can only be seen as members of an oppressed class rather than as individuals, and nonvictims are stigmatized and blamed for the evils victims suffer.

DEI subverts freedom under equal laws; it also saps social harmony.[7] It is inconsistent with the idea that individual rights should help organize political life. It is inconsistent with a dedication to scientific inquiry. There is no way to get from DEI to a peaceful, unified, and happy nation or campus. It also compromises family life. It

promises to tarnish and alienate productive, law-abiding citizens who do not espouse DEI philosophy both in theory and in practice. It denies there is a standard beyond group identity to which groups can be held. It denies the reality that inequality and privilege are complex social phenomena that come about in many different ways, not just from oppression. It is every bit as deadly to the American way of life as selling state secrets to a public enemy. DEI is false and pernicious.

This report is based on the idea that DEI undermines the advancement of knowledge and the achievement of a common good, something I will try to prove in the next section. The report as whole, however, centers on the more urgent public policy question: **How far has the DEI agenda advanced in Alabama's premier universities, the University of Alabama and Auburn University?**

HOW THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IS GOING WOKE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2016, Alabama unveiled the *Advancing the Flagship* strategic plan, emphasizing DEI in recruitment and training. The university hired G. Christine Taylor to be Vice President and Associate Provost for DEI in 2017. The *Advancing the Flagship* plan was radicalized further after 2020 when President Stuart Bell convened "a presidential advisory committee" on DEI. President Bell's DEI committee issued the *Path Forward Diversity Report,* which serves as a DEI strategic plan. What followed was a bevy of programs to recruit more minorities to Alabama and a radical plan to oversee the hiring of faculty designed to bring in more minorities. Half of Alabama's colleges have DEI deans or DEI committees. All of the colleges are undertaking DEI reform. Sororities and fraternities would be overseen by diversity bureaucrats. Athletics would be made to show pride in all things LGBTQ+. Task forces would consider renaming buildings and streets and removing monuments around campus. The work is continuing.

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA: THE MODERN DEI TIMELINE

2008. Alabama publishes its first Strategic Diversity Plan, requiring annual updates.

2015. Stuart Bell becomes Alabama president.

2016. Alabama unveils the *Advancing the Flagship* strategic plan, emphasizing DEI in recruitment and trainings.

2017. Alabama hires G. Christine Taylor to be Vice President and Associate Provost for DEI.

2019. President Bell convenes "a presidential advisory committee" on DEI.

2020. President Bell's DEI committee issues the *Path Forward Diversity Report*, which serves as a DEI strategic plan. "The report provides detailed measurable objectives that expanded upon those in *Advancing the Flagship*."

October 2020. Alabama opens Intercultural Diversity Center.

2022: Alabama unveils *Advancing the Flagship: The Next Phase Strategic Plan (2021–26)*.

THE FLAGSHIP OF DEI IN ALABAMA: THE DEI REGIME IN TUSCALOOSA

The University of Alabama has the state's most extensive DEI apparatus. The University of Alabama embraced the modern idea of DEI at the strategic, central administrative level sooner than most universities. In 2008, it released a *Strategic Diversity Plan*, establishing the following DEI goals:

• Commit the university to better communicate its commitment to diversity as part of its educational mission;

• Create and sustain an inviting, respectful and inclusive campus environment;

• Increase diversity within the faculty and senior level administration and the student body; and

• Annually review goals and assess effectiveness of the action steps and initiatives in enhancing diversity within the university's educational mission.

The need to recruit and retain minority students, faculty and staff and to create an "inclusive" campus environment would form the spine of all subsequent DEI efforts at the University of Alabama. Subsequent plans echo the need for more recruitment and for a more inclusive environment.

The 2016 *Advancing the Flagship* strategic plan aims to get the University of Alabama to adopt "a comprehensive view of equity, inclusion and diversity." It set a goal of enriching "our learning and work environment by providing an accepting, inclusive community that attracts and supports a diverse faculty, staff and student body." *Advancing the Flagship* directs the university to establish a position for "an equity, inclusion and diversity officer that is responsible for the organizational oversight and assessment of plans, programs and activities that enhance equity, inclusion and

diversity." G. Christine Taylor was hired to that position in 2017, when the university established the Division for DEI.

The modern DEI regime at the University of Alabama kicked into higher gear with *The Path Forward Diversity Report* (2020), which serves, in effect, as a DEI strategic plan for the university. The report acknowledges "the university's role and responsibility in addressing the ongoing national crisis regarding the impact of systemic racism on the lives of all American citizens." On one hand, *Path Forward* does little to expand beyond the previous goals of recruiting and retaining minority students, faculty and staff and creating an inclusive campus, though it does hope also to "develop cultural competencies."[8] On the other hand, for the first time, these goals are connected to a litany of specific policy recommendations. Its many policy recommendations fall generally under four rubrics of (1) recruitment and retention; (2) "creating a more welcoming campus community"; (3) "developing cultural competency for faculty, staff and students"; and (4) expanding DEI infrastructure.[9] Let us look at the policies in these four areas.

Recruitment

The goal of **student recruitment** is equity—as elements within the university look for a way to ensure "an undergraduate population that reflects the racial and economic demographics of the State of Alabama by employing high-impact diversity practices." Among those practices are more campus visits, college prep workshops for minorities in grades 7–9, targeted marketing, and minority mentorship programs. **Faculty recruitment** is trickier. *Path Forward* imagines that faculty hiring can achieve equity with campus-wide inclusive hiring workshops that provide implicit bias training, advanced pool analysis of job searches. The

initiate hopes to make DEI competencies like mentoring underrepresentative minorities and other DEI activities central to annual employee performance reviews for the sake of faculty retention. Social activism in previously underrepresented communities now helps faculty earn tenure at the University of Alabama, as opposed to a solid teaching and research record.

Inclusive Campus

Significant changes to student orientations, welcome week, and general education requirements are part of creating a more inclusive campus. So are the creation of new programs like DEI student ambassadors, diversity certificates, diversity lecture series, and the establishment of a "Presidential Commission on Truth, Racial Healing & Reconciliation." The renaming of buildings is also supposed to create a more inclusive culture through recognizing heroes among underrepresented minorities while dishonoring those who are not.

Cultural Competency

Learning to do makes it easier to do. Between DEI workshops, establishing a center for DEI education and a DEI division for fraternities and sororities, the hope is that students and faculty will just be better at DEI throughout all that they do.

DEI Infrastructure

The main recommendation regarding infrastructure is the establishment of an "Inclusive Scholarship Grant" for institutional research on issues related to DEI and racial justice.

Many changes followed from *The Path Forward Diversity Report*. The DEI Division provides "Path Forward Progress Updates" annually. As of May 2021, several of the thirty student recruitment efforts had been completed (23 percent were done while 47 percent in progress), including a Multicultural Visitation Program (MVP) for prospective minority students, more diversity in university video and images, and the building out of a retention team. The renaming of buildings was accomplished, as well as the establishment of a Task force on the Study of Slavery, Race and Civil Rights. None of the faculty recruitment, inclusive campus or infrastructure objectives were yet completed.[10] Alabama's latest strategic plan, *Advancing the Flagship: The Next Phase* Strategic Plan (2021–26), reiterates these previous goals and previous policy recommendations without expanding on them.

Measuring The University Of Alabama's DEI Efforts

First, the costs. As of 2021 (the last year for which good data is available), the University of Alabama had thirty-one dedicated DEI personnel. Seventeen were full time employees, while fourteen are graduate assistants or student employees.[11] G. Christine Taylor, the Vice President and Associate Provost for DEI, earns nearly $300,000, by far the highest paid diversity executive at the University of Alabama. Other staff include the Assistant Vice President for DEI (LaToya M. Scott), earning nearly $154,000; Executive Director of the Intercultural Diversity Center (Cassandra Williams Smothers), earning more than $133,000; the Assistant Director of the Intercultural Diversity Center (Shemaiah Kenon), earning $61,443. Utz L. McKnight, the DEI Dean for the College of Arts and Sciences earns in excess of $215,000, while Suzanna Horsley, Assistant Dean of Accreditation, Assessment and Diversity in the College of Communication earns nearly $115,000). Assuming an average of $100,000 per full-time employee, full-timers earn $1.7 million.

Assuming that graduate assistants and student workers earn substantially less but get tuition benefits, the student workers cost nearly $300,000. This brings the **total cost for personnel at the University of Alabama to $2 million.** None of this includes the costs of the actual programs for recruitment or the stipends that personnel get for serving on committees. Costs surely exceed this number.

The goals of the University of Alabama's DEI regime have been basically unchanged since 2008. They center on minority student recruitment, minority faculty recruitment, and building an inclusive campus culture. Are DEI efforts achieving their goals? We can compare the percentage of the University of Alabama's black, white, and Hispanic students over time. One of the great ironies of DEI "Progress Reports" is the unwillingness to actually see if student recruitment efforts have led to changes in minority student attendance. Bureaucrats count the number of programs they have established. They never consider the effects of their programs on student recruitment. For DEI bureaucrats, effort counts, not the actual results.

DEI efforts on **student recruitment** have not led to increases in the percentages of black students. In 2011, 12.43 percent of Alabama students were black; 78.07 percent white; and 2.49 percent Hispanic. In 2016, 10.77 percent were black; 76.54 percent were white; and 4.2 percent were Hispanic. In 2021 (the last year where there are good numbers), those percentages were 11.16, 74.37, and 5.32 respectively.[12] DEI efforts on **faculty recruitment and retention** have been slightly less unavailing. In 2011, 5.18 percent of Alabama faculty were black; 85.06 percent white; and 1.81 percent Hispanic. In 2016, 6.32 percent were black; 77.44 percent were white; and 2.12 percent were Hispanic. In 2021, those percentages were 7.60, 77.09, and 2.47 respectively.[13] From one perspective, black faculty increased more than two percentage points in a decade. From another perspective, a great deal of effort was made to increase the numbers by a lot more over that course of time.

By the publicly-stated standards of DEI ideology, Alabama is less "diverse" now than it was before its DEI efforts began. Nonetheless, proponents of DEI at Alabama continue to celebrate their "success," report on their "progress," and call for more DEI measures. DEI at Alabama is not really about achieving equality or giving opportunities to underrepresented groups. It is actually just the perpetual project of persuading Alabama faculty, staff, and students to see themselves as nothing other than a member of an oppressor or victim group and making DEI the official ideology of the university. They are increasingly successful at that.

DEI IN UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA COLLEGES

Unlike Auburn (as we shall see), the University of Alabama has not delegated its DEI efforts to college-level diversity action plans. The University of Alabama has a more centralized DEI system. Each college is supposed to have a college-level DEI committee (variously named). Their tasks change from year to year, but they are all focused on recruitment and retention of students, faculty and staff, on-campus climate, and on DEI education and training. Colleges are not required to have diversity action plans, but they all have objectives and personnel and authority to make such plans. The result looks to be much the same as at universities that are required to construct action plans. The actions of the College of Education are representative of DEI efforts across Alabama's nine colleges.

College Of Education

At first glance, it might seem like the College of Education is less committed to DEI than other colleges at Alabama. After all, unlike most colleges, the College of Education does not have an administrative position dedicated to DEI: There is no chief diversity officer or associate dean for inclusion. The College of Education DEI committee lacks its own website, which could make one think it does not do much. A closer look at the College of Education reveals a policy commitment to DEI that is just as strong as any unit at Alabama, as well as some of the strongest administrative statements in support of the new understanding of "diversity."

It is almost impossible to overstate the College of Education's glorification of DEI. Dean Peter Hlebowitsh declares that diversity stands "at the very center of the educational experience" and is "deeply embedded in

the *telos of the university*." DEI is more than just the whole purpose of the university, according to Hlebowitsh. "In the context of a university community," he says, "diversity is better expressed as the *essence of life*."[14] Evidently, the most important thing we should know about the College of Education is not the quality education a student might receive or its success in helping Alabama citizens become gainfully employed teachers, but its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. In fact, the "Dean's Message," from which his words are drawn, focuses almost exclusively on diversity. The word "education" appears four times; "diverse" and "diversity" appear eight times.

The College's 2015–20 strategic plan explicates this DEI commitment. In accordance with the university plan as such, the plan says the College will "attract a diverse student population," "support diversification efforts in the College's graduate enrollment," and "diversify the faculty and staff of the College."[15] The College's DEI committee wants to change the College's values toward an inclusive environment, not just transform its racial makeup. The Committee's "measurable outcomes" include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Increasing visibility, awareness of the committee and commitment to DEI;

2. Increasing diversity and retention of student, faculty, staff; and

3. Increasing perceptions of belonging, inclusion, support.[16]

Two of these goals are about changing perceptions or increasing publicity—one of which is to increase "awareness" of the committee itself. Only one goal concerns having more minorities in the College. Here,

as everywhere, DEI is more about awareness than treatment of the disease it imagines. It is "cancer awareness," not cancer research.

The College's DEI commitment is also expressed in its curriculum. Officially, there is no DEI course requirement, but an emphasis on "diverse perspectives" is so prevalent in course descriptions that it is unlikely any student leaves the College of Education without being inundated with DEI ideology. Students already sold on DEI can take CSE 493: Diversity Block Seminar, which is dedicated to "differences in race, class, gender, and academic achievement" in the classroom. Or they can take EDU 402: Honors Education Diversity and Advocacy, which "examines . . . the diversity of students in education through the exploration of ethnicity, disability, gender and class," and encourages students to use their "tools for advocacy" in the real world through a course service component. Students can also find DEI ideology in BEF 362: School, Culture, and Society, which teaches students about "the critical project of promoting social justice through schooling." Even a course like Teaching Secondary School Science, which has little to do with social justice, includes a module on "teaching for diversity."[17]

Along with "student leaders" at the University of Alabama, the College's DEI committee spearheaded efforts to rename two buildings affiliated with the College as part of its effort to increase perceptions of belonging, inclusion, and support. A. B. Moore Hall, named for a history professor and the first dean of the University of Alabama's graduate school, was renamed in honor of Archie Wade, the first black faculty member at the University of Alabama; and Bibb Graves Hall, named for the thirty-eighth governor of Alabama, was renamed in honor of Autherine Lucy Foster, the University of Alabama's first black student. Renaming campus buildings without the approval of the state legislature is illegal under the 2017 Alabama Memorial Preservation Act, but the College renamed the buildings anyway.[18]

Alabama College Overview

The University of Alabama has nine colleges. Six colleges have designated DEI deans. Six of the nine colleges advertise their college-level DEI committees, although all colleges seem to be required to have such committees. Most importantly, though, every college is executing on the University of Alabama's commitment to DEI. From renaming buildings in the College of Education to implementing summer programs for underrepresented minorities in the College of Business to the School of Social Work's summit on anti-racism, colleges are infusing DEI ideology into the normal execution of their duties. The College of Communication & Information Sciences hopes to "integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout curricula, programming, and recruiting."[18] Below are the administrative features related to DEI in Alabama's nine colleges and schools.

COLLEGE OR SCHOOL	DEI DEAN	DEI COMMITTEE / STAFF	DEI POLICIES & STATEMENTS
College of Arts & Sciences	Dr. Utz. McKnight, Associate Dean, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion[20]	Diversity Committee[21]	A&S Diversity Initiative[22]
Culverhouse College of Business	James E. King, Jr., Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Miles-Rose Professor of Leadership[23]	Diversity, equity, and inclusion at Culverhouse. Four on staff: Associate Dean, Director, Manager, and Coordinator of Summer Programs[24]	Diversity in Business Bridge Program (DBBP). Summer college prep for high school seniors "from historically marginalized groups who are underrepresented in business."[25]
College of Communication & Information Sciences	Dr. Suzanna Horsley, Assistant Dean of Accreditation, Assessment and Diversity[26]	No DEI committee. College-level executive council performs DEI functions,[27] pursuant to the College's commitment to DEI[28]	College Strategic Plan: "Provide a Learning Environment that Promotes Diversity, Equity, Leadership, and Service."
College of Education	N/A	DEI committee[30]	Official Dean's Message: "In the context of a university community, the idea of diversity is . . . the essence of life. [Diversity is] deeply embedded in the telos of the university."[31]
College of Engineering	N/A	Not found, although university-level DEI requires all colleges to have DEI committees	Engineering Positive and Intentional Change (EPIC) Scholars Program[32]
College of Human Environmental Sciences	Erin Sanders, M.S., Director of Diversity and Inclusivity[33]	CHES Committee on Diversity and Inclusivity (CDI)[34]	Official "Key Concepts" page includes definitions of "structural racism," "microaggression," and a "Genderbread Person" infographic[35]
School of Law	Anil Mujumdar, Director of Diversity & Inclusion[36]	Not found	Diversity and Inclusion Book Club reads *The New Jim Crow*;[37] Diverse Experts Directory[38]
Capstone College of Nursing	N/A	CCN Committee on Inclusivity[39]	BAMA-L Nursing Workforce Diversity Grant ($1,764,575)[40]
School of Social Work	Shayla Smith, MSW, Chief Diversity Officer[41]	Diversity Committee[42]	Anti-Racist Virtual Summit[43]

EXAMPLES OF HOW DEI ARISES IN STUDENT LIFE

Athletics: "Crimson Pride"

The University of Alabama's Department of Intercollegiate Athletics dedicates the Crimson Tide to DEI. It seeks to use the university's athletics programs to change the values of Alabama citizens. In its diversity mission statement, the department promises "to advance and foster diversity and inclusion . . . for all student-athletes and staff, with a community engagement focus." The department's "Inclusive Excellence" goals include creating a "culture of inclusion," recruiting "diverse and culturally competent" staff, and partnering with "the Tuscaloosa community to educate and celebrate diversity."[44]

These efforts are spearheaded by the department's Team for Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (T.I.D.E.), whose members include several athletics directors, the athletics department's chief diversity officer, and Patrick Murphy, the head coach of the softball team.

The athletics department also promotes "LBGTQIA+" resources and events, such as "Cinnamon Rolls, Not Gender Roles," a weekly LGBT discussion group, as well as an LGBT support group. The department is a proud member of the national "Safe to Pee" initiative to combat "discrimination against gender variant people in public restrooms."[45] Athletics boasts of ten gender-neutral restrooms on their facilities, and invites all people identifying as all varieties of genders to find them through the University of Alabama's interactive restroom locator.[46]

Woke Greek Life

The University of Alabama's Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life has undertaken a sustained and systematic effort to infuse the University of Alabama's Greek chapters with DEI ideology. In fall 2013, allegations of racial discrimination in sorority recruitment prompted the US Department of Justice to contact the University of Alabama "to inquire about the allegations and the university's response."[47] The University of Alabama responded to the Obama administration's queries by ramping up oversight of Greek organizations, eventually issuing an action plan that addressed discrimination by "clarifying expectations for students and student organizations, establishing clear and consistent procedures for reporting . . . discriminatory conduct, and providing all students a . . . campus climate free from racial hostility or exclusion."[48]

The office's goal is to provide DEI-focused "training and outreach events" in the hope that this will make the chapters less racist and therefore more likely to attract minority students. Whatever success the office has had in this endeavor has been, according to its own statistics, marginal at best.[49] Minority membership is trending slightly upward, but it is just as likely to increase as it is to decrease with each following year. It is difficult to tell what effect, if any, the University of Alabama's trainings have had on minority recruitment to Greek organizations. All the same, the University of Alabama remains committed to "Greek Integration," as the office calls it.

Bias Reporting / Hate & Bias Hotline

University of Alabama students, faculty, and staff "who feel they have been the targets of, or who have been witness to, a hate or bias incident are strongly encouraged to contact the university's "Hate & Bias Hotline"

. . . to make the university aware of such incidents.[50] Anyone who wishes to report an incident can, anonymously, call the University of Alabama's official hate and bias reporting hotline or file a report online through its "UAct" website.[51] Generally, such hotlines lead to false accusations that are hardly resolved through traditional due process. Accusers are unaccountable, as is the process as a whole— and this invites abuses and cancellations. The University of Alabama's broad definitions of harassment have led it to receive a yellow ranking from the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE). FIRE judges that these policies encourage administrative abuse and arbitrary application.[52]

Women and Gender Resource Center

The Women's Resource Center began in 1993 in order to assist and advocate for the women attending the University of Alabama. In 2015, it changed its name to the Women and Gender Resource Center (WGRC) in order to include transgender and gender nonconforming individuals in its mission,[53] which is now to "address gender inequity and foster a community that values social justice."[54] The WGRC "offers a variety of programming designed to promote social justice and address gender disparities in academia, government . . . and the workforce."[55] This programming includes "gender specific mentoring programs," faculty trainings,[56] book clubs, and events. WGRC also provides scholarships to students "who have demonstrated leadership potential through their . . . pursuit of social justice and gender equity."[57] WGRC offers work studies and student employment, alongside its eleven staff members.

THE PROGRESS OF DEI AT AUBURN UNIVERSITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Auburn's modern DEI build-out started in 2015 with a *Climate Survey* that led to more than a dozen policy recommendations. In 2016, Auburn named Taffye Benson Clayton first associate provost and vice president for inclusion and diversity. Auburn has also integrated the *Climate Survey* policy recommendations into its working strategic plan. In 2020, the Presidential Task Force for Opportunity and Equity recommended initiatives focused on DEI education and minority recruitment/retention. Not only does Auburn adopt faculty recruitment policies like implicit bias training and diversity certifications for candidate pools; it skirts federal law on racial recruitment for students. All colleges send representatives to the Chief Diversity Leaders Roundtable. Three colleges—the College of Liberal Arts, the Harrison College of Pharmacy, and the College of Science and Mathematics—have administrators specially dedicated to DEI. At least five colleges have active DEI committees, variously named. These include the College of Education, the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering, the College of Liberal Arts, the Harrison College of Pharmacy, and the College of Science and Mathematics.

AUBURN UNIVERSITY'S DEI TIMELINE

2003. First Campus Climate survey conducted.

2015. Second Campus Climate Survey yields seventeen recommendations for transforming Auburn.

2016. Taffye Benson Clayton named first associate provost and vice president for inclusion and diversity.

2018–19. *Auburn University Strategic Plan: Leading and Shaping the Future of Higher Education* includes DEI themes and goals.

June–September 2020. Presidential Task Force for Opportunity and Equity recommends initiatives focused on DEI education and minority recruitment/retention.

2020–2021. Buildings renamed around campus.

2023. President Christopher B. Roberts forms a DEI advisory committee.

AUBURN'S DEI BUILD-OUT

Auburn's modern DEI build-out began with the 2016 *Climate Study.* President Jay Gouge and Provost Timothy Boosinger established the committee in December 2015, with the aim of expanding "the tent of inclusion," calibrating "the scales of equity," and embracing "wonderful diversity."[58] The study starts with three questions seeking to discern the institution's readiness for change; the study fits on one page. Then it catalogs myriad recommendations for nearly twenty pages. The study itself does not try to show there is a problem at Auburn. It seeks to show that people are ready to solve the diversity problem at Auburn. According to the study, there was more agreement among Auburn faculty, staff, and students that Auburn should actively promote diversity in 2016 than in 2003. There was less agreement with the idea that Auburn was placing too much emphasis on diversity and that Auburn has a climate that fosters more diversity in 2016 than in 2003. Therefore, as the *Climate Study* concludes, "you told us that diversity is important to you and that we shouldn't stop working at" it.[59]

The study is very odd. It assumes the problem. It does not pretend to be based on a representative sample. It asks very strange questions in a very strange way. It reports the results in order to sow confusion. Its results are not very robust, even assuming that the study itself was legitimate. It is just a fig leaf for integrating a host of recommendations about the cultural transformation Auburn apparently needed at that particular time.[60]

Among the recommendations were the development of unit-level diversity action plans; the implementation of professional development in diversity, inclusion, and equity; a renewed emphasis on minority student, faculty, and staff recruitment; a curricular emphasis on "diversity history" for orientations and onboarding; and putting resources and grants behind professional development in diversity matters. It is not clear how deeply these recommendations affected actual university practice. They did lead to the hiring of Taffye Benson Clayton as the first associate provost and vice president for inclusion and diversity in fall 2016.

The *Auburn University Strategic Plan: Leading and Shaping the Future of Higher Education* develops and implements DEI goals and themes from the 2016 *Climate Survey*. The plan integrates, elevates, and specifies the measures and offices created in the 2016 *Climate Survey* into long-term university plans. More specifically, it spreads the spirit of the Climate Survey recommendations throughout the university. "Each academic and administrative unit of the university is charged with executing a diversity action plan informed by, and laddering up to the" goals of the Strategic Plan.[61] In 2020, each college and administrative unit designed a planning team to develop diversity action plans (DAPs) with the help of the Office of Inclusion and Diversity (OID). Each plan includes "benchmarks, deliverables, timetables for completion, and identified clear owners and individuals responsible for implementation." Unit DAPs form little three- to five-year strategic plans for translating the university's strategic plans into the lower levels of the university. These DAPs are mostly not made public. Legislators and auditors might seek to get them through approved channels.

After the strategic plan was in place, President Gouge organized a Presidential Task Force for Opportunity and Equity to emphasize two sets of recommendations for new initiatives. The Task Force (TF) was organized in June

2020, at the height of the hysteria over the death of George Floyd. It aimed to make recommendations about (1) DEI education and (2) recruitment of minority students, faculty, and staff. Concerning education, the TF recommended the development of educational modules on DEI and Title IX "for all faculty, staff, administrator and professional employees," the creation of a "foundational EEO/DEI education module for students," and an official Auburn microcredential in diversity, equity, and inclusion. The TF also recommended the expansion and standardization of "evidence-based" bias education procedures for search committees in all faculty hirings.[62]

When it came to recruitment, TF efforts emphasized aspects of search committee training and accountability for making minority hires. Each member of faculty search committees was to receive "robust and intentional training relative to implicit or unconscious bias" and to adhere to advanced, diversity-driven, candidate pool analysis at each stage of a job search. Pool analysis includes ongoing oversight of job searches, where committees are asked if they received enough applications from minority candidates, then whether enough minority candidates made long lists or short lists or interview lists, and then whether the right candidate was hired. Similar processes would be put in place for staff hiring. Interestingly, sometimes TF talks about "minority recruitment," but at other times they drop the mask and talk directly about "Black [*sic*] faculty recruitment" or "Black [*sic*] student recruitment." Student recruitment efforts like the "Together We Will Scholarship" and the "Tiger Excellence Scholars Program" provide money and experiences to encourage underrepresented minority students to attend Auburn.[63]

Central administration put modest funds behind cultivating success among faculty who are underrepresented minorities. The Inclusive Excellence Programming grant, run out of the Office of Inclusion, offers modest $2,000 grants for diversity initiatives.[64] Inclusive excellence is not excellent in the traditional sense: it is excellent at the "I" in DEI. The Faculty Success program is aimed at helping underrepresented minority faculty increase the skills to maintain a healthy work-life balance.[65]

Measuring the Progress of Auburn's DEI Efforts

First, the costs. Auburn has more full-time staff dedicated to DEI than does the University of Alabama—a total of twenty. However, the official university report did not include student workers or graduate assistants in its plan, so its number of DEI employees appears considerably lower than the University of Alabama. Again, however, with twenty staff members earning an average of $100,000, Auburn is spending at least $2 million on DEI personnel. Its highest paid official vice president and associate provost for inclusion and diversity, Taffye Benson Clayton, earns over $275,000 annually. Others, like Deputy Chief Diversity Officer JuWan Robinson earn nearly $119,000; Assistant VP for Access and Inclusive Excellence Ada Wilson earns over $215,000; and Director of Inclusion and Diversity Education Jocelyn Vickers makes over $92,000. Several other analysts like Senior DEI Analyst Rizwan Hussain earn in the $85,000 range.

Second, the effects of the programming. Auburn has consistently emphasized recruiting black students in its recruiting efforts since its modern DEI regime was announced in the

2015 *Climate Survey*. Over this period, white enrollment increased in absolute numbers but decreased as a percentage of the student body as the university grew by ten thousand students. Asian and Hispanic enrollment has also increased in both absolute and relative terms.

The percentage of Auburn student body by race/ethnicity

	1998	2002	2006	vv	2014	2018	2022
White	88.78%	85.61%	82.76%	81.85%	80.48%	75.93%	78.73%
Black	6.25%	7.05%	8.17%	7.89%	7.28%	5.85%	4.91%
Asian	1.08%	1.34%	1.72%	2.00%	2.32%	2.33%	2.81%
Hispanic	0.77%	1.03%	1.71%	2.36%	2.31%	3.38%	3.86%

Source: Auburn University Office of Institutional Research[66]

Since these intensified DEI efforts, the percentage of black students at Auburn University has declined from a high point of 8.17 percent in 2006 to under 5 percent in 2022. Black enrollment has actually *shrunk* since at least 2010, both as a percentage of the student body and in absolute numbers. DEI efforts may, it appears, have deterred prospective black students from applying to Auburn. Although the decline in absolute numbers of black students was first visible between 2010 and 2014, the decrease between 2014 and 2018 was more rapid; it was steeper still between 2018 and 2022. The more aggressive Auburn's DEI recruitment efforts have been, the fewer black students attend.

Less is known about Auburn's efforts to recruit minority and black faculty. No time-series data is available on the Office of Institutional Research website. While Auburn trails the University of Alabama in the number of black faculty, the percentage of black faculty at Auburn, 4.5 percent, is similar to the percentage at places like the University of Texas, Austin or Texas A&M, where around 3 to 3.5 percent of faculty are black.[67] It is difficult to know whether this number is higher or lower owing to the DEI efforts.

Faculty / student body by race / ethnicity, fall 2022

	FACULTY	% STUDENT BODY
White	1,023 (71.29%)	78.73%
Black	65 (4.53%)	4.91%
Asian	181 (12.61%)	2.81%
Hispanic	59 (4.11%)	3.86%
Total	1,435 (100%)	

DEI IN AUBURN UNIVERSITY'S COLLEGES

Unit-level DAPs must support the Strategic Plan and the TF recommendations. Auburn has specific colleges spearhead DEI efforts to implement the goals of the central administration as outlined in these fundamental documents. The college-level DEI efforts therefore reveal the underlying reality of the central administration's DEI ambitions. This means that colleges seek to attract minorities to the majors within their colleges and that colleges, through individual departments, seek to recruit "diverse" staff and faculty. Colleges generally try to leverage their diversity action plans to create an inclusive environment through curriculum changes, changes in student orientation, and other methods.

College of Liberal Arts

The College of Liberal Arts (CLA) is the largest college at Auburn, and its efforts give a taste of what happens in the colleges. CLA is dedicated to DEI. One of CLA's three "core values" is "Inclusion and Equity," which includes making the college an "environment for belongingness [*sic*]."[68] Dean Jason Hicks, hired in July 2022, aims to "build upon" and "enhance" the CLA's commitment to inclusion and equity. He has named "Inclusive Excellence" one of his four "Strategic Priorities" for the college.[69]

CLA's 2019–25 Strategic Plan puts these values and priorities into action.[70] The plan includes the expansion of college funding for scholarships targeted at racial minorities (2.3.b), the recruitment of "diverse personnel from historically underrepresented groups through strategic hires" (4.2.c), the promotion of an "inclusive culture" (4.1), and the hiring

of a diversity officer (4.1.b). Equally, if not more important, is 4.1.c: "Use the college's communications and marketing office to highlight [DEI] recruitment efforts [and] programming."

The plan includes concrete performance indicators like increasing the recipients of the CLA's full-ride diversity scholarship "from 3 in 2013 to 8 in 2025," and using the "diversity . . . of the state of Alabama" as a benchmark for faculty and staff hires. Ostensibly, this would mean that the percentage of minorities in student body and faculty and staff must exactly represent their percentage in the Alabama population. The College also followed through on its strategic plan by hiring Joan R. Harrell as "Director of Inclusive Excellence" in June of 2022. Harrell, a former journalist and a lecturer at Auburn's school of journalism since August 2018, is also an ordained minister of the American Baptist Church who has done work on public theology and racial justice. Harrell's "scholarship explores the intersectionality of narrative ethics, racism, media stereotypes, religion, social change, vulnerable populations, xenophobia, theology, religion, alterity, and public health injustices."[71] Harrell heads the CLA Inclusive Excellence Cabinet, the college's diversity committee, which has members representing all departments and units at the college.[72] The Inclusive Excellence Cabinet holds DEI trainings and workshops for faculty, staff, and students, as well as supporting CLA's diversity goals in other ways.

CLA sponsors many DEI initiatives. It holds an annual "Inclusive Excellence Conference," where "faculty and students present research projects related to diversity issues and awareness."[73] Possible presentation topics include "history of diversity," "history of racism," "gender issues initiatives," and

"coded bias" in artificial intelligence.[74] There is the College of Liberal Arts Diversity (CLAD) scholarship, a full ride for high school students from "Black Belt" or "Urban Core" areas—that is, minority students. There is also a scholarship available to a student studying abroad who "demonstrates diversity as determined by the . . . Strategic Diversity Plan."[75] Beyond scholarships, "History professors from Auburn are working with Tuskegee [University] faculty to create a center for racial reconciliation."[76] CLA also has a social justice political outreach program ("Living Democracy");[77] it produces plays about "issues of diversity" (Mosaic Theatre Company);[78] and it has a center for "intensive" DEI training sessions (BraveHeart Center for Place and Purpose).[79]

Dean Hicks envisions a CLA that "can be seen as an exemplar of what a liberal arts college should be." What a liberal arts college should be, it turns out, is an instrument for social justice and the redress of racial grievances, not an institution of higher learning.

Auburn College Overview

Measuring the DEI presence in Auburn's colleges proves challenging, since DEI administrative categories are often blurry. Many colleges have self-standing DEI deans. Some send representatives from the college to participate in the Chief Diversity Leaders Roundtable. Some have committees. For other colleges, we could not find committees. All have some DEI policies and statements. For the purposes of measuring the presence of DEI administration in Auburn's colleges, we count DEI deans and representatives to the roundtable as administrators, on the assumption that such representatives are bringing back and executing the central administration's DEI ambitions.

All colleges send representatives to the Roundtable. In addition, three of the twelve colleges—the College of Liberal Arts, the Harrison College of Pharmacy, and the College of Science and Mathematics—have administrators specially dedicated to DEI. Five additional colleges have DEI committees. These include the College of Education, the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering, the College of Liberal Arts, the Harrison College of Pharmacy, and the College of Science and Mathematics. All colleges have some DEI efforts underway, seeking to put into place the central administration's dictates.

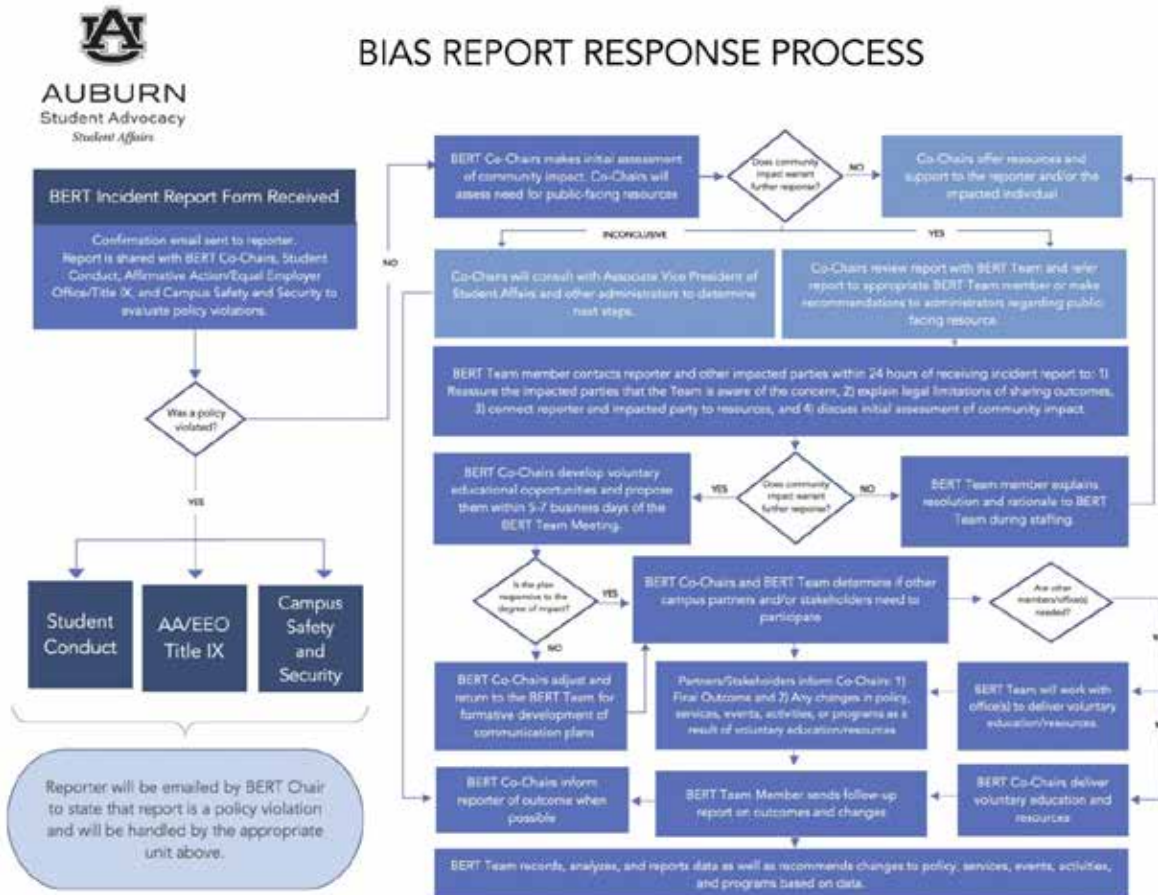| COLLEGE	DEI DEAN / REPRESENTATIVE TO CDO'S DIVERSITY LEADERS ROUNDTABLE	DEI COMMITTEE	DEI POLICIES & STATEMENTS
College of Agriculture	Dr. Alan Wilson, representative to Diversity Leaders Roundtable[80]	Not found	Diversity & Inclusion Plan includes DEI in recruitment, intro-level courses, HR training, a DEI speaker series, & more[81]
College of Architecture, Design & Construction	Shuwen Tzeng & Dr. Jennifer Pindyck, representatives to Diversity Leaders Roundtable	Not found	DEI recruitment of faculty, staff, & students, as well as in administrative promotions[82]
Raymond J. Harbert College of Business	Dr. Renee Pratt, representative to Diversity Leaders Roundtable[83]	Not found	Diversity Action Plan includes the creation of a Herbert College of Business Office of Diversity & Inclusion[84]
College of Education	Dr. Jared Russel, representative to Diversity Leaders Roundtable[85]	Diversity Committee[86]	College strategic plan has the following goal: "Develop and enhance curriculum & training focused on diversity & inclusion for the college & broader community"[87]
Samuel Ginn College of Engineering	Jeff Fergus, Chair of Inclusion & Diversity Committee, Representative to Diversity Cabinet[88]	Inclusion & Diversity Committee[89]	Center for Inclusive Engineering Excellence[90]
College of Foresty, Wildlife, & Environment	Dr. Soledad Peresin, representative to Diversity Leaders Roundtable[91]	Not found	"Integrate leader-driven DEI into all aspects of CFWS instruction, research, outreach & administration."[92]
College of Human Sciences	Dr. Kate Thornton, representative to Diversity Leaders Roundtable[93]	Not found	Diversity Action Plan: Increase student diversity, offer DEI training, undertake DEI-motivated scholarship[94]
College of Liberal Arts	Joan R. Harrell, Director of Inclusive Excellence[95]	Inclusive Excellence Cabinet[96]	College of Liberal Arts Diversity Scholarship[97]
College of Nursing	Dr. Christopher Martin, representative to Diversity Leaders Roundtable[98]	Not found	Diversity statement: "It is with great intent that content, materials, & activities presented are respectful of diversity to include gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, political & religious views, ethnicity, race, & culture."[99]
Harrison College of Pharmacy	Jingjing Qian, Director of Diversity[100]	DEI Council[101]	HSOP Inclusion & Diversity Plan. Includes DEI recruitment, training, & the like[102]
College of Sciences & Mathematics	Kimberly X. Mulligan, Assistant Dean[103]	Office of Inclusion, Equity, & Diversity (OIED) Advisory Board[104]	College Office of Inclusion, Equity & Diversity;[105] DEI recruitment of "historically excluded students in STEM, which reflect the demographics of the state, at all levels"[106]
College of Veterinary Medicine	Dr. Melinda Camus, Representative to Diversity Leaders Roundtable[107]	Not found	College strategic plan aims to "Achieve a robust and diverse student body"; Support student chapter of VOICE[109]

DEI IN STUDENT LIFE

Bias Education & Response Team

The "Bias Education Response Team's" website says, "Auburn University values freedom of expression and the open exchange of ideas." However, "there are times" when speech deserves punishment, even if it's not criminal speech. Auburn encourages students to report "bias incidents." Such incidents "may involve behavior which does not rise to the level of a violation of Auburn University policy, including legally protected free speech."

"Bias incidents" can be reported anonymously through Auburn's online Bias Incident Report Form[110] and given to the Bias Education and Response Team (BERT), a committee of staff and faculty co-chaired by the "Director of Diversity Education and Engagement."[111] Incidents that are illegal or in violation of university policies are reported to the appropriate authorities, as they would have been anyway. Incidents that are not in violation of law or policy trigger a labyrinthine process of "prevention and awareness programs" according to the flowchart below.[112] Auburn has a high ranking among universities for free speech (twenty-second in the country). Only its harassment policies earn it a yellow ranking from FIRE.[113]

BIAS REPORT RESPONSE PROCESS

Cross-Cultural Center for Excellence (CCCE)

The CCCE, formerly the Multicultural Center, is the student-facing arm of the office of inclusion and diversity. It offers programming and events to "support and celebrate specific affinity groups, including African American/ Black, Asian American, American Indian/ Indigenous, Hispanic/Latinx, International, LGBTQ+, and faith communities." There are twenty-two affinity groups under CCCE's umbrella.[114] CCCE also offers education and programming on behalf of LGBTQ+ students, including a "Campus Pride Index," advocacy for improving the ability of students to change their pronouns, and support for LGBTQ+ campus groups like Spectrum.[115] CCCE is a means for Auburn to co-opt, direct, and encourage the development of DEI ideology in student groups and on campus.

Diversity Education

The Office of Inclusion and Diversity offers a suite of educational services to student organizations and other campus groups. Among these "research-informed" services are diversity consultations, which help campus units and organizations "become more diversity [*sic*], equitable, and inclusive" and "to address diversity and inclusion in intentional and strategic ways." Groups can also request diversity education sessions intended to "increase the knowledge, skills, and awareness related to diversity, equity and inclusion for . . . students at Auburn University."[116] Finally, the

Office partners with Human Resources to provide DEI courses such as "Contemporary Issues in Workplace Diversity and Inclusion" and "Informing an Everyday Diversity and Inclusion Mindset."[117] These services are available to any academic department, administrative unit, or other organization—all they need to do is fill out the relevant request form, and the office will respond within ten business days.[118]

Inclusive Excellence Programming Grants

In order to encourage students, faculty, and staff "to explore, advance, and understand topics related to [DEI]," the Office of Inclusion and Diversity issues small grants to applicants who research DEI or promote it on campus. Grants can be awarded for lectures, workshops, outreach efforts, expansions of current DEI programs, or new DEI recruitment efforts.[119] During the 2021–22 academic year, nine grants of about $2,000 each were awarded.[120]

Pronoun Update

Auburn recently updated Banner, its internal finance and registration system, to make it easier for students, faculty, and staff, to change their preferred names and pronouns. Users may now add a "preferred name" in addition to their legal name, as well as list their "personal pronoun." These new fields will update students' information throughout all applications that use Banner.

CONCLUSION

We have conducted more than two dozen in-depth studies of how far DEI has conquered American universities, which gives us a great deal of perspective on how far gone things are at any particular campus. DEI has fully conquered universities like the University of Tennessee, the University of San Diego, the University of Texas, and Texas A&M. Staff dedicated to DEI number nearly fifty at each school. Central administrations have required DEI revolutions in the colleges. Diversity action plans are conceived at the department level. Speaking out against the DEI takeover brings terrible costs. Curricula have been transformed; every element of student life is infused with DEI ideology. In the cases we have mentioned here, the universities are so infused with DEI that reforming them would take herculean efforts and require major surgeries.

The University of Alabama and Auburn University are not yet at that stage. Both Alabama's top universities are more like Florida State University. In these cases, the aspirations for a radical transformation of the university have been laid down in official documents; hiring DEI officials has begun around the university; human resource departments have been engaged in rigging faculty searches; curricula are changed and hiring to execute the new curricula has begun. Buildings have been renamed. However, it would not require a major surgery to eliminate the nascent DEI infrastructure. The DEI plans are made and are being built out, but they are not fully built out nor are they deeply embedded in the university. The DEI plans are

radical but not yet transformative.

Alabama and Auburn can experience course correction through concerted political action on the model of Florida. Florida has undertaken serious reformist efforts to eliminate DEI offices across its university and college systems and to reform its general education curriculum to cultivate a reasonable patriotism and a serious professionalism. Florida has banned mandatory DEI trainings and the use of DEI statements in hiring. Alabama could undertake similar reforms to protect their universities from a top-down DEI takeover. The sooner, the better, of course, since the longer these bureaucracies linger, the more difficult it is to eliminate them.

There is also more than a little evidence that DEI efforts are coinciding with a decline in the quality of Alabama's top institutions of higher education. The University of Alabama has dropped requirements for SATs or ACTs in its honors college. Its overall ranking has fallen. Many of its courses are infused with DEI. This should concern lawmakers and citizens alike. Neither of these universities is too far gone. Both could be improved through intelligent oversight and management.

The DEI takeover is a gathering danger in Alabama. Its universities are unlikely to reform themselves. Concerted political action, followed by serious oversight, will be necessary to bring them back to their true educational missions. Such actions should start with a comprehensive audit of Alabama's

universities for their DEI activities along the lines conducted in Oklahoma and Missouri. Then a move toward defunding such offices, like Florida and Texas have done, should be made. Other reforms should also be tried. The time to act is now.

ENDNOTES

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58 See *Auburn University, Climate Study on Inclusion, Equity, and Diversity, Final Report*, 1 (henceforth: *Climate Study*, followed by page number). See https://auburn.edu/equitytaskforce/_assets/docs/climate-study.pdf.

59 *Climate Study*, 2.

60 For example, the study is framed in a five-point—strongly agree (5), neutral (3), and strongly disagree (1)—format. People are asked where they fit on the five-point scale on the three questions. For instance, people are asked whether Auburn "is placing too much emphasis on achieving diversity." In 2003, the results showed that on "average" people said 2.63, while in 2016 the "average" was 1.87. But these are not averages; they are points on a graph. More people might have felt strongly about it in 2016, but their feelings on this score may not have been as prevalent. Furthermore, the fact that this was not a random sample (or so it seems) makes this survey ipso facto illegitimate. Ultimately, it did not matter since the administration was going to implement its recommendations regardless of the findings.

61 https://www.auburn.edu/inclusion/_assets/pdf/dei-strategy-overview.pdf, p. 2.

62 https://www.auburn.edu/equitytaskforce/_assets/pdf/task-force-progress-20220929.pdf.

63 https://www.auburn.edu/inclusion/_assets/pdf/state-of-inclusion-2022.pdf , p. 22.

64 https://ocm.auburn.edu/newsroom/news_articles/2022/02/180903-vetmed-inclusive-excellence-grants.php?nlan.

65 https://www.auburn.edu/inclusion/_assets/pdf/state-of-inclusion-2022.pdf.

66 https://auburn.edu/administration/ir/factbook/enrollment-demographics/historical-summaries/enrollment-gender-ethnicity.html.

67 See Scott Yenor, "Perpetuating a Lie," *City Journal*, February 14, 2023, https://www.city-journal.org/article/perpetuating-a-lie.

68 https://www.cla.auburn.edu/dean-s-office/about-cla/.

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"JUSTICE IS THE FIRST VIRTUE OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS, AS TRUTH IS OF SYSTEMS OF THOUGHT..."

ABOUT
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Scott Yenor is the Senior Director of State Coalitions at the Claremont Institute, Washington Fellow at the Claremont Institute's Center for the American Way of Life, and a professor of Political Science at Boise State University. He writes extensively on marriage and family life in the contemporary world, including his most recent book *The Recovery of Family Life: Exposing the Limits of Modern Ideologies* (Baylor University Press, 2020). He also writes on higher education, including extensive reports on Texas A&M University, Boise State University, the University of North Carolina System, and others. He also writes on American Reconstruction, David Hume, and other topics for numerous websites including Law Liberty, City Journal, Newsweek, First Things, American Reformer, The Federalist, and The American Mind.