



University of Florida students gather amid a statewide walkout to protest education-related efforts by Florida lawmakers. On Friday, UF eliminated all employee positions related to diversity, equity and inclusion. DOUG ENGLE/OCALA STAR-BANNER FILE

Florida's flagship university eliminates all DEI positions

Expenditures prohibited by Board of Governors

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GAINESVILLE, Fla. – The University of Florida announced Friday that it is eliminating all diversity, equity and inclusion employee positions.

This change, announced through an emailed administrative memo, comes after the Florida Board of Governors labeled expenditures related to DEI programs as prohibited expenditures.

The memo explains that “to comply with the Florida Board of Governor’s regulation 9.016 on prohibited expenditures, the University of Florida has closed the Office of the Chief Diversity Officer, eliminated DEI positions and administrative appointments, and halted DEI-focused contracts with outside vendors.”

The Board of Governors defines DEI as “any program, campus activity, or policy that classifies individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, gender identity, or sexual orientation and promotes differential or preferential treatment of individuals on the basis of such classification.”

The regulation says a state university “may not expend any state or federal funds to promote, support, or maintain any programs or campus activities” that violate section 1000.05 of Florida Statutes, advocate for what it defines as

diversity, equity, and inclusion, or promote or engage in what it defines as political or social activism.

Florida Statute Section 1000.05, named the Florida Educational Equity Act, requires equality of access and prohibits discrimination “on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, or marital status” against students and employees in the Florida K-20 public education system.

On Friday afternoon, Gov. Ron DeSantis commented on X (formerly Twitter): “DEI is toxic and has no place in our public universities. I’m glad that Florida was the first state to eliminate DEI and I hope more states follow suit.”

Employees who have been fired will receive the university’s standard 12 weeks of pay, under the direction of UF Human Resources. UF said these employees are encouraged to apply, between March 1 and April 19, for expedited consideration for different positions currently open at the university. UF also said it will work to speed up the interview process for these employees and provide an answer on all applications within 12 weeks.

Democratic state Reps. Dianne Hart and Yvonne Hinson voiced their disapproval of the firings.

“I am stunned but not surprised at the elimination of DEI staff at University of Florida, my Alma Mater,” Hinson said. “The culture wars engaged in the Republican dominated Florida House of Representatives will continue until Floridians have had enough and develop the will and determination to flip the majority in the Florida House.”

Hart called the series of firings “the most recent manifestation of the policies of an out of touch legislature, and a Governor’s failed Presidential bid.”

“When will we stop with these made up culture wars that are literally costing people their livelihoods... In an effort to prevent ‘indoctrination’ in our classrooms, we have in turn created an education system that is built off lies, falsehoods, and deceptive history. We can’t call ourselves the ‘free State of Florida’ when children aren’t free to learn the truth of their history, and see the diversity of humanity.”

The office of the chief financial officer will reallocate approximately \$5 million into a faculty recruitment fund to be administered by the Office of the Provost. These funds were previously reported to Tallahassee for DEI expenses, including employee salaries and expenditures.

UF’s Diversity Dashboard recorded that between fall 2012 and fall 2022, nearly half of students enrolled at the university have been white. In 2012, white students represented 56.11% out of 28,102 students and in 2022 they represented 49.80% out of 30,278 students.

In 2012 white faculty represented 73.61% of 3,341 employees and in 2022 they represented 64.46% of 3,700 employees. White staff in 2012 represented 69.96% of 6,113 employees and in 2022 they represented 63.32% of 6,709 employees.

The memo said UF is and always will be “unwavering in our commitment to universal human dignity.”