



DEI is Essential to the Educational Enterprise

A Position Statement Issued Jointly by TNG Consulting, ATIXA, and NABITA

Education institutions seeking to advance the goals of respect, understanding, and appreciation of differences are being targeted by adversaries, and institutional efforts are being twisted into attacks on “wokeness”^{1,2} and Critical Race Theory (CRT).³ State and federal politicians are advancing the idea that initiatives promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) at public institutions indoctrinate students and employees with hatred and trample academic freedom. These destructive ideas feed into a culture war that ignores the reality that marginalized students and employees face discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and inequities daily in America’s educational institutions. Decades of empirical data support these realities, as do lived experiences. Complacency, passivity, and silence will allow hate to triumph, so we must speak out.

As DEI practitioners and trainers of DEI professionals, TNG, ATIXA, and NABITA issue this position statement to forthrightly dispel these myths; recognize the need for and propriety of DEI positions, offices, and programs; and underscore the need for inclusive education. In fact, the impact of fearmongering and spreading falsehoods about DEI work only proves the necessity of DEI programs and education. In short, anti-DEI efforts are political grandstanding attempting to stir up a voter base with tactics that distort reality and create a fictitious antagonist. DEI efforts and CRT applications help America to become a better version of itself, and we are dedicated to advancing such efforts.

We are appalled at the unprecedented intrusion of legislatures into the pedagogy and subject matter of academic courses and institutions. A dangerous precedent is set when any party tries to shape education policy according to political ideology. Statehouse control could shift in the future, thus turning these issues into permanent political footballs, with changes coming on the heels of every election.

Research gathered by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) shows that in FY 2022, 19,927 race discrimination cases resulted in financial awards totaling \$77.7 million,

¹ [Cambridge Dictionary](#) defines wokeness as, “A state of being aware, especially of social problems such as racism and inequality.” The term has been politicized by some and used pejoratively depending on an individual’s political posture.

² Wokeness originated in Black communities and referred to being aware of racially motivated threats and inequality. The word has been co-opted by white liberals who use the term in a “performative way to appear progressive.” Conservatives pejoratively use the word “to describe anything deemed too liberal or progressive.” [“What Does ‘Woke’ Even Mean? How A Decades-Old Racial Justice Term Became Co-Opted By Politics.”](#)

³ According to the American Bar Association, “CRT is not a diversity and inclusion ‘training’ but a practice of interrogating the role of race and racism in society that emerged in the legal academy and spread to other fields of scholarship.” J. George, (2021) [“A Lesson on Critical Race Theory.”](#)

and 18,490 cases of sex-based discrimination resulted in financial awards totaling \$144.5 million.^{4,5}

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that “[b]ullying can result in physical injury, social and emotional distress, self-harm, and even death. It also increases the risk for depression, anxiety, sleep difficulties, lower academic achievement, and dropping out of school.”⁶ The effects of bullying aren’t limited to those who are targeted. “Youth who bully others are at increased risk for substance misuse, academic problems, and experiencing violence later in adolescence and adulthood.”⁷ Bullying is often based on targeting another person or group because of a difference, and it is not limited to peer interactions. Increasing tolerance decreases bullying. Why would any political party take issue with that?

Lawsuits like *Chen v. Albany*⁸ and *Wadley et al v. University of Iowa*⁹ are consistent reminders that American students of color regularly experience acts of racial discrimination and harassment in educational environments. DEI efforts are intended to prevent the exact kinds of discrimination that prompted these lawsuits. They are not intended to create “diversity bureaucracy” for the sake of bureaucracy, as journalist Adrienne Lu put it.¹⁰ Yet denying stark realities, legislators are advancing the misguided proposal of “colorblind equality.”¹¹

“Colorblindness is the racial ideology that posits the best way to end discrimination is by treating individuals as equally as possible, without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity,” explains Dr. Monnica T. Williams. “At its face value, colorblindness seems like a good thing... However, colorblindness alone is not sufficient to heal racial wounds on a national or personal level. It is only a half-measure that in the end operates as a form of racism.”¹² ATIXA, TNG, and NABITA believe that color, race, nationality, ethnicity, and national origin matter. Like most education professionals, we see and honor differences regardless of political beliefs. The states imposing restrictive laws are allowing a fringe to dictate the middle, and that is always dangerous.

Societal expectations for keeping students safe, including suicide prevention, are evidenced by numerous lawsuits against school districts and higher education institutions following nearly every tragedy resulting in serious student injury or death. Such incidents are often mistakenly attributed to mental health issues, when the individuals committing violence are often

⁴ [Race-Based Charges \(Charges filed with EEOC\) FY 1997 - FY 2022.](#)

⁵ [Sex-Based Charges \(Charges filed with EEOC\) FY 1997 - FY 2022.](#)

⁶ [Fast Facts: Preventing Bullying.](#)

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ 56 F.4th 708 (9th Cir. 2022).

⁹ 4:20-cv-00366 (S.D. Iowa, 2021).

¹⁰ [“Race on Campus: Diversity Efforts Under Fire.”](#)

¹¹ According to [Wikipedia](#), a colorblind racial ideology, such as colorblind equality, can be defined as holding the belief that an individual’s race or ethnicity should not and does not influence how that individual is treated in society.

¹² [“Colorblind Ideology Is a Form of Racism.”](#)

struggling with not fitting in or having meaningful connections to other human beings. Their humanity is being denied.

We're not excusing their decision to lash out but note that a "colorblind" approach diminishes awareness of individuals who may be in distress and undercuts professionals' ability to meet individual needs within the educational environment. Working toward safer institutions not only requires an understanding of the students we serve, but also a recognition of the biases each of us holds. It is crucial we understand our own biases so we can provide services that best meet the needs of each student. To do this effectively, teachers, staff, and students must also be cognizant of the issues that students and peers face based on their identity. Failure to do so places all of us in the position of overreacting to concerns, resulting in mistrust and hurt, or on the extreme, failing to react allows individuals in distress to slip through the cracks in the system. Either outcome hurts those we are commissioned to serve and places them at a disadvantage. At its worst, it places all of us at risk of harm.

We aren't arguing whether CRT is valid or invalid but are rather insisting that the debate over theory belongs in academia, not statehouses. In fact, one primary purpose of academia is to explore, accept, discount, modify, validate, and invalidate theories. Rejecting a body of knowledge without exploring its academic value is the worst kind of demagoguery. You know this issue is being weaponized when one side cherry-picks examples of DEI implementation that have the effect of overcorrecting inequities rather than seeking balance. At their core, DEI, CRT, and wokeness center on race and inclusion, and extreme examples of outlier practices are just that, outliers.

Coupling DEI and CRT together is another tactic of the demagogues. CRT exists without DEI, and DEI exists without CRT. They have independent premises that do not rely upon each other, but by linking them, opponents attempt to persuade voters into discrediting both, including in public discourse. Any reasonable human can accept the premise that historical discrimination in America still has an impact and legacy today. That's the animating concept behind DEI efforts and CRT. Anyone who denies that premise and believes that we have achieved a post-racial society of complete equity cannot prove that claim, whereas the evidence for ongoing inequity is robust.

DEI offices are designed to model what it means to value, respect, and embrace differences. This should not be controversial, anywhere. DEI professionals assist in addressing inequities within the learning and working environment, provide access and opportunity for all who desire to learn, foster an environment of non-discrimination and anti-harassment, and create spaces where critical discussions can occur. Colleges and schools that allow this to be taken away without protest are acquiescing to external control. Those who value programs and positions that are being stripped away must ensure our voices are heard, and that our votes tell state legislators that we did not elect them to be censors and dictators of curricular correctness.

Through their professional missions, DEI administrators work to ensure individual rights, social equity, and equality under federal and state civil rights laws. As author Bruce Maiman opined in



his Huffington Post editorial, “The arc of American history has always gravitated toward...expanding individual rights, social equity, and equality under the law.”¹³ That will only continue to be true if we make it so.

We firmly oppose any legislative action eliminating or limiting DEI programs in public education. We call on higher education institutions and K-12 schools and districts to preserve these programs, positions, and professionals and when necessary, to litigate to prove these restrictive laws are legally untenable.

TNG, ATIXA, and NABITA encourage legislators who share our appreciation for the value of DEI initiatives to work to provide financial support for DEI offices, dilute anti-DEI and anti-CRT bills, educate fellow legislators, and join in litigation-based efforts to overturn restrictive laws that invade the prerogative of our important public education institutions.

We call on college presidents and trustees to protect the vision of social equity, resist legislative overreach, and safeguard academic freedom. Those who opt for appeasement over resistance neglect the core demand for justice that America’s leaders must embody. History has shown that appeasement emboldens oppressors. Leaders in the education field must take a firm stand and recognize their impact on students’ lives and society. Loose resistance is not turning the tide; we must now coalesce and organize to ensure that the power of collective resistance is heard and felt.

This statement has been approved by the advisory boards of TNG Consulting, ATIXA, and NABITA.

About TNG Consulting

TNG Consulting, LLC, is the risk management touchstone for thousands of schools, colleges, universities, and workplaces across the country. Since 2000, TNG, along with membership organizations the National Association for Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment (NABITA) and the Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA), has been dedicated to empowering schools, colleges, workplaces, and organizations to create safer and healthier communities. We leverage hundreds of years of combined expertise in education-sector risk management to support thousands of clients in mitigating risk, advancing compliance, avoiding litigation, enhancing reputations, and preventing crises. For more information, visit www.tngconsulting.com.

About ATIXA

The Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA) provides a professional association for school and college Title IX coordinators, investigators, and administrators who are interested in serving their districts and campuses more effectively. ATIXA brings these campus and district professionals together to collaborate and explore best practices, establish industry standards, share resources, empower the profession, and advance the worthy goal of gender equity in

¹³ [“Gavin Newsom was right 19 years ago – and conservatives keep being wrong.”](#)



education. With more than 12,000 active members from colleges, universities, schools, and organizations, ATIXA is a repository for Title IX model policies, training, and other resources. For more information, visit www.atixa.org.

About NABITA

The National Association for Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment (NABITA) is a national multi-disciplinary membership organization that makes campuses, schools, and workplaces safer by fostering and encouraging development, education, and caring intervention. NABITA provides best practice recommendations, ongoing training and certification, insightful thought leadership, and assessment tools. With more than 6,000 active members, NABITA is a hub for BIT- and CARE-related model policies, training tools, templates, and other relevant materials. For more information, visit www.nabita.org.