

Opening Statement of Rep. Burgess Owens (R-UT), Chairman
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development
“Restoring Excellence: The Case Against DEI”
May 21, 2025

(As prepared for delivery)

Whitewashing history. Creating a conservative boogeyman. Using a racist dog-whistle.

These are the Left’s accusations whenever Americans call out the toxic ideology known as “diversity, equity, and inclusion,” or D-E-I. DEI supporters promise it will break barriers, promote opportunity, and right our historical wrongs. It is an ideology that takes its inspiration from Karl Marx, who was honest in his vision of historical theft – “the first battleground is the rewriting of history.”

With its historical and philosophical roots nourished in the seedbed of Marxism, DEI states that our surrounding social construct determines our destiny. Not effort, tenacity, grit, dreams, or character but instead our ancestry, history, and color. Demeaning and racist to its core, DEI claims that based on your color, you are either an evil oppressor or a hopeless, hapless, weak and oppressed victim. It teaches that all societal ills can be traced to an oppressor – a segment of people to which prejudice and hate is always justified. We see the results of this teaching on our college campuses throughout our country where Jews are placed, by Marxist professors, at the very top of its “oppressor” spectrum. Antisemitism therefore runs rampant and unashamed.

The vision of our educational institutions, from our country's founding, has been to prepare every succeeding generation to be wise stewards of our nation's commitment to become a more perfect union.

Despite the Supreme Court ruling against affirmative action, it appears universities are still playing semantic word games with their admissions processes. They are continuing to discriminate against students based on their race but under different names. DEI adherence in these institutions continues to be a large factor in staff promotion and tenure and continues to feed the lack of ideological diversity among faculty. Students are forced to participate in DEI programming in order to graduate. Accreditors, instead of holding institutions accountable for student outcomes, are imposing on them DEI requirements.

The most disastrous outcome of this divisive ideology is the impact it's had on the low-income, "underrepresented" populations that Democrats claim to care about. As college costs remain sky high, self-confidence drops to a new low, and students often leave worse off than if they had never attended in the first place. In the strongholds of DEI, students are left to doubt whether their personal accomplishments are due to their merit or to their skin color.

There is no worse area for DEI than in medical education. Instead of a focus on the best medical care for each patient, health care disparities are quickly blamed on "oppression." The DEI "solution" therefore to discrimination is more discrimination resulting in racist health care policies that in the real world have life and death consequences. From day one the Trump administration has taken a strong stance against DEI, recognizing that it is contrary to the American ideals of hard work, merit, and equality. This administration has undone countless discriminatory Biden-Harris executive orders and worked to ensure DEI has no place in our universities.

I'm excited to see states across the country, including my home state of Utah, work to end this evil presence.

To the institutions who believe you can simply change the name of your DEI offices and continue to teach hatred and discrimination – as a heads up – this Committee will not be silent.

We owe it to the next generation to teach them that due to our American DNA based on faith, family, the free market, and education, there are always reasons to be hopeful and never hopeless. I look forward to our discussion today, and with that I yield to the Ranking Member.