

3 March 2023

Dear members of United Faculty of Florida,

We as members of the faculty and administration at the University of Rhode Island are appalled by egregious political intervention into the academic programming at Florida's public universities based upon some misguided notions about the nature of freedom of inquiry, diversity of points of view, and the overall purpose of public colleges and universities. Public universities have as part of individual missions, our engagement in instruction, research, and other scholarship, as well as collaboratively interacting with industry and other members of the public to facilitate economic development, environmental stewardship, and meaningful progress in improving the social well-being of all. At the University of Rhode Island, we take very seriously our critical role to serve all the public in our state, and we reach out in the spirit of solidarity and support to our brother and sister faculty, administrators, students and all other members of Florida academic communities who yearn to conscientiously and continuously serve through their teaching, research and public engagement.

To show our support for the academic community in Florida, four members of our Political Science Department proposed in early February a draft resolution to the University of Rhode Island Faculty Senate in support of Florida Universities. This draft was first reviewed members of the URI Faculty Senate Service and Community Life Committee chaired by Senator Lenore Martin. Upon the unanimous approval of the committee, it was presented as a committee report at the February 23 full Senate meeting, where it was passed unanimously by all Senators that were present. As per usual legislative protocols, the approved resolution was sent to the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, Barbara Wolfe for her concurrence, and finally to the Office of the University President.

We hereby transmit to you the Approved URI Faculty Senate Resolution in support of public institutions of higher education in Florida, and we are eternally supportive of our colleagues at peer institutions both in Florida and elsewhere who may be facing similar challenges to our long-standing commitment to academic standards and good governance.

Sincerely,



Michael A. Rice, Ph.D.  
President, University of Rhode Island Faculty Senate



Marc B. Parlange, Ph.D.  
President, University of Rhode Island

THE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF RHODE ISLAND

COLLEGE OF  
ARTS AND SCIENCES

THINK BIG  WE DO™

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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TO: Service and Community Life Committee, URI Faculty Senate

FROM: Professors Marc Hutchison, Skip Mark, Karen Sweeting, Cheryl Foster  
Department of Political Science

DATE: February 20, 2023

RE: Resolution for statement of solidarity and support

We hereby submit the attached Resolution containing a statement of solidarity and support for our colleagues and associated communities in Florida.

In addition, we urge our Faculty Senate representatives to adopt such a statement as soon as possible given the escalating intrusion of Florida's state government into public education at all levels as well as that government's unwarranted attacks on both legitimate academic inquiry and the building of equitable communities that are inclusive of diverse identities and perspectives.

As the [United Faculty of Florida](http://uff@floridaea.org) (UFF) have indicated their desire for Faculty Senates and other affiliated members of the higher education community to offer statements of support, we hereby submit such a statement for your consideration and adoption. Statements may be emailed directly to: United Faculty of Florida at [uff@floridaea.org](mailto:uff@floridaea.org).

With thanks for your timely consideration,

Dr. Marc Hutchison, Chair of Political Science  
Director, John Hazen White Center for Ethics and Public Service

Dr. Skip Mark, Assistant Professor of Political Science  
Director, Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies

Dr. Karen Sweeting, Assistant Professor of Public Administration  
Board Member, John Hazen White Center for Ethics and Public Service  
Co-Chair, College of Arts and Sciences Equity and Anti-Racism Committee

Dr. Cheryl Foster, Professor of Philosophy and Political Science  
Board Member, John Hazen White Center for Ethics and Public Service

## University of Rhode Island Faculty Senate

**RESOLUTION:** *To offer a formal statement of solidarity and support to our fellow colleagues and associated communities in Florida*

### RATIONALE:

WHEREAS The [Manhattan Institute is now issuing templates for dismantling DEI](#) educational initiatives in every state across the country

WHEREAS [Florida is at the forefront of a nationwide campaign to silence Black voices](#) and erase the full and accurate history and contemporary experiences of Black people

WHEREAS [Florida College System presidents](#) issued a collective statement affirming their view that some diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives are harmful to higher education

WHEREAS Governor DeSantis has [explicitly stated his aim to defund and dismantle DEI initiatives](#) as well as the governing body and administrative leadership of The New College, a public institution

WHEREAS Governor [DeSantis](#) and the [Florida House of Representatives](#) made demands in January for information regarding the funding of programs related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and critical race theory at colleges and universities, now [intending to bar](#) funding for these programs across the higher education system

WHEREAS under Florida's Stop WOKE Act—which has been [temporarily enjoined](#) by a federal court from being enforced in higher education settings—endorsement of theories that criticize systemic racism is [forbidden](#), disparagement of these theories is openly allowed and transgressions can be penalized through revoking millions of dollars in state funding

WHEREAS public universities and colleges in Florida must nevertheless [administer ideological surveys](#) to all higher ed students, faculty and staff, the results of which may be used to drive budgetary decisions

WHEREAS students in Florida are nevertheless [permitted to seek permission for recording lectures](#), which may be used in disciplinary or legal actions against faculty

WHEREAS all [syllabi and reading lists must nevertheless be posted in publicly accessible locations](#) at least 45 days before the start of classes

WHEREAS faculty speech in Florida is nevertheless [unconstitutionally compelled](#) in some quarters to expose students to ideas they may find "[uncomfortable, unwelcome, disagreeable, or offensive](#)," through syllabi, reading selection and class discussion

WHEREAS Governor DeSantis [rejected the AP course in African American History](#), demanding that The College Board excise specific subject areas from the curriculum

WHEREAS [The College Board stripped down](#) and altered the AP exam for African American History, followed by a [statement of regret for failing to immediately denounce](#) the Florida Department of Education and Governor DeSantis's administration, the latter of which commented that African American Studies "lacks educational value."

WHEREAS Governor [DeSantis is considering barring all Advanced Placement Exams](#) in Florida

WHEREAS [investigations target trans students and employees](#) by demanding information that could potentially compromise patient privacy and discourage individuals from seeking medically appropriate care

WHEREAS [Black leaders, alarmed by Governor DeSantis, have begun to protest and prepare](#) for 2024

WHEREAS higher education workers are organizing around the country, through growing unions like [the United Faculty of Florida](#) (UFF) and new coalitions like [Higher Education Labor United](#), to defend our freedoms and throw a much-needed lifeline to the sinking discussions about higher education in Florida and elsewhere

WHEREAS the [United Faculty of Florida are welcoming statements of support](#) for their fellow colleagues and associated communities in Florida

WHEREAS it is [vital that students, faculty, staff, and administrators outside of Florida band together](#) in this moment of crisis to defend the public good of higher education

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**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Faculty Senate of URI extends this statement of solidarity and support to our fellow colleagues and associated communities in Florida.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this statement confirms URI's current [statement of Foundational Values](#) in espousing a commitment to freedom to learn, teach, create, and conduct research with integrity in the pursuit and dissemination of new knowledge aimed at contributing to the public good, as well as an inclusive, accessible, equitable and diverse community whereby we respect the rights and dignity of all.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that in issuing this statement of support, the University of Rhode Island [aspires to serve as a national model for the role a flagship public research university can play](#) in driving transformative change for the betterment of its state and the global human condition.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this statement applauds the URI [Board of Trustees' affirmation of the university's determination](#) to embrace Rhode Island 's heritage of independent thought, valuing creativity and scholarship, diversity, fairness, and respect, engaged learning and civic involvement, and intellectual and ethical leadership.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this statement affirms our commitment to the ideals of the URI Office of [Community, Equity and Diversity and its core values](#) of advancing equity, inclusion, and diversity in the global community and modeling honesty, integrity, and social justice.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this statement explicitly stands by the [URI Cornerstones](#), acknowledging the University of Rhode Island as a principled community guided by values, including the principles of independent choice, intellectual curiosity, open-mindedness, free expression, the rights and dignity of each individual and group, working to understand and respect differences, and the rejection of prejudice, discrimination, and intolerance.

*The New Conservative Playbook for DEI*

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2023/02/07/desantis-debuts-new-conservative-playbook-ending-dei>

*Abolish DEI Bureaucracies and Restore Colorblind Equality in Public Universities*

<https://www.manhattan-institute.org/model-dei-legislation>

*Florida Has a Right to Destroy Its Universities*

<https://www.theatlantic.com/newsletters/archive/2023/01/florida-desantis-universities/672898/>

*The Stop Woke Law - legislative draft*

<https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2022/7/BillText/er/PDF>

*Judge Nixes Higher Education Portions of Stop Woke Act*

<https://wapo.st/40ZVq8l>

*The DeSantis Takeover Begins*

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2023/02/01/desantis-puts-action-his-plan-end-woke-activism>

*What Happens in Florida...*

<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2023/02/07/floridas-public-universities-are-under-assault-opinion-.Y-56XUXz-jM.link>

*DeSantis Takes on the Education Establishment and Builds His Brand*

[https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/31/us/governor-desantis-higher-education-chris-rufo.html?unlocked\\_article\\_code=L2TeKo8lJmmwhQrdOMvcnJSri0kHSdbvzbUIWKC634SGcZxgZpaFGA3XoGLukBdB6aF2LguBuokVaf53lIC5RphiX3J70A36Sf248FRXkgFvWUV-21ysdjbLqVdT-JgcNyWTIESQEchCl0KA](https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/31/us/governor-desantis-higher-education-chris-rufo.html?unlocked_article_code=L2TeKo8lJmmwhQrdOMvcnJSri0kHSdbvzbUIWKC634SGcZxgZpaFGA3XoGLukBdB6aF2LguBuokVaf53lIC5RphiX3J70A36Sf248FRXkgFvWUV-21ysdjbLqVdT-JgcNyWTIESQEchCl0KA)

*Ron DeSantis Wants to Erase Black History. Why?*

[https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/31/opinion/ron-desantis-black-history.html?unlocked\\_article\\_code=TAVssQG1RVkWEs98GWA-yziNzn3b0va2MZrSSpJ17kt41icR\\_WNWkWXyhpqz3jec0sEiEZn6hyIsH6opHoeCcCbbdNf85NOQr-pOBj9ZWT1z7zVtaYClq8kx9nNwq0okYdoYMcn\\_XcebUSI898lqKc\\_uMsUs](https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/31/opinion/ron-desantis-black-history.html?unlocked_article_code=TAVssQG1RVkWEs98GWA-yziNzn3b0va2MZrSSpJ17kt41icR_WNWkWXyhpqz3jec0sEiEZn6hyIsH6opHoeCcCbbdNf85NOQr-pOBj9ZWT1z7zVtaYClq8kx9nNwq0okYdoYMcn_XcebUSI898lqKc_uMsUs)

*Alarmed by DeSantis, Black Leaders Protest and Prepare for 2024*

<https://wapo.st/3l3S37X>

*The College Board Strips Down Its AP Curriculum for African American Studies*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/01/us/college-board-advanced-placement-african-american-studies.html?searchResultPosition=4>

*College Board Statement of Regret*

<https://newsroom.collegeboard.org/our-commitment-ap-african-american-studies-scholars-and-field>

*Is Florida Wrecked?*

<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2023/02/13/whats-happening-florida-unprecedented-opinion>

*DeSantis Threatens to Bar All AP Exams in Florida*

<https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2023/02/16/desantis-threatens-bar-all-ap-classes-florida>

*Should The New College Lose Its Accreditation?*

<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2023/02/13/florida-colleges-have-no-right-accreditation-opinion>

United Faculty of Florida <https://myuff.org/>