

The Ohio State University Faculty Resolution to Support Educators' Rights to Teach About Racism

Ratified by majority vote of the Faculty Council on November 4, 2021

This accompanies a Resolution to the University Senate on December 2, 2021

Since 1870, The Ohio State University has enriched society with its founding principle of “Education for Citizenship,” as literally inscribed on our official seal “*Disciplina in civitatem.*” The faculty of Ohio State continue to maintain this time-tested core value. To this end, Ohio State engages in a Shared Values Initiative that aims to “reinforce our ethical culture and live our shared values to better advance the university’s core work of teaching, learning, research, and service.” Most recently (2021), these included five core values of our land-grant institution: (1) Excellence and Impact; (2) Diversity and Innovation; (3) Inclusion and Equity; (4) Care and Compassion; and (5) Integrity and Respect. These core values echo the commitments asserted by President Kristina M. Johnson in her February 2021 State of the University address and her November 2021 Investiture address, which included intentional efforts to build an anti-racist community.

These core values and commitments have come under attack with congressional representatives proposing legislation to cut federal funding for schools that use lessons or curricula based on the *New York Times* “1619 Project” ([Ujifusa, 2021](#)). Additionally, 27 states have proposed or passed legislation to severely limit K-12 and university educators’ ability to teach historical facts, culture, and race. These measures ostensibly target critical race theory (CRT), a legal theory of race and society, yet they misunderstand that body of scholarship and falsely identify it as widespread. In short, “CRT” has become a short-hand for all anti-racist pedagogy and an easy, misapplied way to vilify it ([Education Week, 2021](#)).

Not only does this legislation undermine the core values of OSU, but it also puts faculty members, graduate students, contingent instructors, and K-12 educators at risk. For faculty in higher education, these amorphous mandates against “divisive teaching” ([Ohio House Bill 322](#); [Ohio House Bill 327](#)) are antithetical to and contradict the dual principles of academic freedom and academic responsibility. Current movements across the country related to these issues are alarming. In [Texas](#), educators were directed to teach “both sides” of the Holocaust, in compliance with a bill curbing the teaching of history. In [Georgia](#), the university system enacted new moves to remove the protections of tenure. In [Ohio](#), the state board of education repealed its earlier anti-racism resolution. For K-12 educators, these mandates can have a chilling effect,

and may lead to harassment from the misinformed or antisocial elements, and questionable loss of employment. We stand in strong support of these teachers, who are preparing our future students with the breadth of knowledge to succeed at our university. In short, given the national focus on these issues, clarity from this faculty is critical.

The Ohio State Senate consists of faculty, administrators, staff, and students who represent the views and mission of their respective constituencies. Elected faculty senators offer this resolution in support of Ohio educator's rights to discuss and ["teach truth"](#) about systemic racism in their K-12 and higher education classrooms independent of those who wish to rewrite history or to ignore the realities of our present. There are no "two sides" to racism any more than there are two sides to the Holocaust or the roundness of the earth; there are only facts that must be taught well so that we might ensure better futures for all citizens.

Given the founding principles of Ohio State, our Shared Values, and our commitment to anti-racism articulated by colleagues and our president, which this faculty endorses, we urge the University Senate to resolve:

- To advocate for and support faculty members, graduate students, contingent instructors, and K-12 educators in teaching about racism--including the systemic and ideological racism that is foundational to institutions in the United States--and to defend educational institutions against the assault on facts or established truth that "anti-divisive" teaching bills, resolutions, and policies represent.
- To encourage the Ohio State community to commit to and actively follow the recommendations put forth by the Shared Values Initiative and by President Johnson in the face of legislation that would obstruct university initiatives to create a more just and equitable society.
- To actively educate and mentor faculty members, graduate students, and contingent instructors on the principles of academic freedom and their rights to teach about systemic, structural, and ideological racism (see, e.g., [1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#)).
- To provide guidance to college and K-12 administrators on how to create support structures within their institutions to enable all university and K-12 educators to engage in anti-racist teaching and pedagogies for social justice without fear of repercussions from within or outside their places of work (see, e.g., [Understanding the Attacks on Critical Race Theory](#)).

- To respond with integrity to arguments, proposed bills, and other efforts designed to curb the rights of K-12 and university educators to teach about systemic, structural, and ideological racism. These responses are foundational to the free society valued by the citizens of the United States.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,

That the elected faculty senators of the University Senate endorse this resolution as evidenced by its (resulting) vote in favor on November 4, 2021 and respectfully request a vote of endorsement by the University Senate at its December 2, 2021 meeting.

Respectfully submitted by the Faculty Council Ad-hoc Committee on Teaching About Racism

- Dr. Caroline T. Clark, University Senator, Professor, Department of Teaching and Learning, College of Education and Human Ecology
- Dr. Ken Lee, Chair of the University Senate Faculty Council, Professor, Dept of Food Science and Technology, FAES.
- Dr. Sara Watson, University Senator, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, College of Arts and Sciences
- Dr. Harpreet Singh, University Senator, Associate Professor, Department of Physiology and Cell Biology, College of Medicine
- Dr. Jared Gardner, University Senator, Professor, Department of English & Director of the Humanities Collaboratory, College of Arts and Sciences
- Dr. C. Alexander Grieco, University Senate and Faculty Council Alternate Member, Assistant Professor, Department of Biomedical Education and Anatomy
- Dr. Elizabeth Hewitt, University Senator, Professor, Director of Undergraduate Studies, Department of English, College of Arts and Sciences
- Dr. Melvin Pascall, University Senate and Faculty Council, Professor, Dept of Food Science and Technology, FAES.
- Dr. Jill Galvan, University Senator, Associate Professor, Department of English, College of Arts and Sciences
- Prof. Gladys Mitchell, University Senator - Alternate, Associate Professor, College of Optometry
- Dr. Donna Y. Ford, University Senator, Distinguished Professor of Education and Human Ecology, Kirwan Institute Faculty Affiliate, Center for Latin American Studies Faculty Affiliate, Department of Educational Studies
- Dr. Subbu Kumarappan, University Senator, Ohio State ATI, CFAES

References

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