



PROTECT *the* PUBLIC'S TRUST

Submitted via email

May 18, 2026

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U.S. Department of Justice
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Re: Title VI, VII, and IX Complaint Against Penn State Dickinson Law School

To Whom it May Concern,

I write to you to alert you of an ongoing effort by Penn State Dickinson Law School (Penn State) to continue their practice of imposing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in all levels – including admissions, hiring, and curriculum – of its law school. As seen in Dickinson Law’s “Strategic Plan Update” (Strategic Plan),¹ the school intends to continue to engrain DEI into the fabric of its culture – by design – for years to come.

DEI is inherently discriminatory and runs afoul of Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act. The Strategic Plan is quietly attempting to violate civil rights laws.

¹ Penn State Dickinson Law, *Strategic Plan Update (2025-2030)*, accessed May 9, 2026, <https://freebeacon.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/26.04.30-Deans-Strategic-Plan-for-PSDL-2025-30.pdf>.



Accordingly, we request that you promptly investigate Penn State’s potential violations.

I. Who We Are

Protect the Public’s Trust (PPT) is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to promoting ethics in government and restoring the public’s trust in government officials. It is imperative in light of severe social challenges America has suffered in the last several years that institutions, especially educational institutions, maintain their credibility with the American people. Educational institutions should be held accountable to ensure that their primary purpose, education, is maintained. There is no place in education for inherently discriminatory curriculum, decision-making, admissions, or campus access.

II. Background

DEI is an amorphous concept, but it generally focuses on prioritizing opportunities for specific classes of people. The Center for Racial Equity in Education, for example, defines it as “a set of principles and practices aimed at creating fair, respectful, and inclusive environments. DEI efforts seek to acknowledge and address systemic inequalities, promote equitable opportunities and representation, and create spaces where every individual can thrive and be reflected regardless of their age, race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and mental or physical ability.”²

The effort means that perceived unequal classes of people receive more opportunity and more access than those who are not perceived as unequal. In practice this means that minority students will receive opportunities that white students do not. The threshold for access is different for one race than it is for another. This effort is, by definition, discriminatory.

As President Trump’s 2025 executive order – “Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity” – puts it, “DEI and DEIA policies not only violate the text and spirit of our longstanding Federal civil-rights laws, they also undermine our national unity, as they deny, discredit, and undermine the traditional American values of hard work, excellence, and individual achievement

² “DEI in Education,” Center for Racial Equity in Education, accessed December 3, 2025, <https://www.creed-nc.org/unc-diversity-equity-inclusion>.



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in favor of unlawful, corrosive, and pernicious identity-based spoils system.”³ President Trump then ordered his agencies to take steps to deter DEI in many arenas – including higher education.⁴

Penn State did not heed the President’s charge to end DEI, however. Instead, it is leaning into it – openly. Second on the law school’s list of visions in its Strategic Plan is “Promoting diversity in legal education and the profession to achieve equity in society.”⁵

Equity, under DEI’s terms, “provides everyone with the unique resources and opportunities they need to reach an equal outcome.”⁶ Contrast that with equality, which means “the same resources, opportunities, and treatment for all people....”⁷ Thus, Penn State’s goal is to achieve a specific outcome – that is, having all races represented in programs – rather than providing all races with equal opportunity.

Next, it states a goal to “Engage with Institutional Antiracism in support of the Land-Grant Mission.”⁸ Anti-racism, under DEI’s terms, means “the practice of actively identifying and opposing racism. The goal of anti-racism is to actively change policies, behaviors, and beliefs that perpetuate racist ideas and actions.”⁹ While these goals may sound laudatory, the tactics of anti-racism involve the very beliefs and actions that the concept ostensibly opposes. In the words of one of the primary proponents of anti-racism, Ibram X. Kendi, “The only remedy to racist discrimination is antiracist discrimination. The only remedy to past discrimination is present discrimination. The only remedy to present discrimination is future discrimination.”¹⁰ Thus, even to its advocates, “anti-racism” is inherently discriminatory. The facts indicate that the approach at Penn State Dickinson Law School is no exception.

The Strategic Plan says, “Institutional antiracism is the work of acknowledgement, knowledge acquisition and iterative historicity, and constant action to promote

³ Trump, Donald J., “Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity,” *The White House*, January 21, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-illegal-discrimination-and-restoring-merit-based-opportunity/>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Strategic Plan, 1.

⁶ University of Virginia-Department of Psychology, “What are Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)?” accessed May 9, 2026, <https://psychology.as.virginia.edu/what-are-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-dei>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Strategic Plan, 1.

⁹ Boston University-Office of the Dean of Students, “What is Anti-Racism,” accessed May 9, 2026, <https://www.bu.edu/csc/edref-2/antiracism/>.

¹⁰ Ibram X. Kendi, “Ibram X. Kendi defines what it means to be an antiracist,” *Penguin*, June 9, 2020, <https://www.penguin.co.uk/discover/articles/ibram-x-kendi-definition-of-antiracist>.



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systemic equity.”¹¹ So this means that it is Penn State’s goal to upend and change the school’s policies and culture, including “behaviors and beliefs,” to a mindset in alignment with DEI.

This Land-Grant Mission appears to be a hallmark program at Penn State: “Law Schools have special duties and obligations to teach and learn about equality and justice for all.”¹² The “law school will play a pivotal role in producing scholarship, practicing teaching and learning pedagogy, and meaningful and justice-infused service to re-envision the role of land-grant universities.”¹³ As a part of this, it states that “law schools must recruit, retain, teach and research according to antiracist principles for the benefit of the students, staff, faculty and administrators as well as for the benefit of society.”¹⁴ Thus, Penn State’s programs are not designed to teach students to be lawyers. Rather, it is designed to ideologically shift students, staff, and faculty alike.

A part of its “institutional values” is to “foster diverse, inclusive, and safe community.”¹⁵ “Diversity” is specifically listed in the Strategic Plan, stating that “Dickinson Law fosters an environment that reflects, celebrates, and champions diversity.”¹⁶

Under teaching and learning, the school declares a value to “leverage critical pedagogy [and] antiracism.”¹⁷ Critical pedagogy, under DEI’s terms, is “an educational theory based on the idea that schools typically serve the interests of those who have power in society by, usually unintentionally, perpetually unquestioned norms for relations, expectations and behaviors.”¹⁸ It “makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for liberation.”¹⁹ In short, Penn State seeks to force the “oppressors” – code for white students, regardless of any individual’s background, history, or personal experiences – to confront accusations of systemic racism and leverage them to change themselves. The “oppressor/oppressed” framework in the context of anti-racism assigns individuals to either of the categories based entirely upon their race.

¹¹ Strategic Plan, 5.

¹² Ibid, 5-6.

¹³ Ibid, 6.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Strategic Plan, 1.

¹⁶ Ibid, 2.

¹⁷ Strategic Plan, 2.

¹⁸ Jamillah Gabriel, “Critical Pedagogy,” *Harvard Graduate School of Education*, accessed May 9, 2026, <https://guides.library.harvard.edu/criticalpedagogy>.

¹⁹ Ibid.



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In the Strategic Plan, Penn State has stated its intention to admit on the basis of race. It intends to prioritize “diverse” and “inclusive” admissions practices.²⁰ It intends to advance “an Expansive Understanding of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging and Leading on Antiracism in the legal academy.”²¹ In “Career Services,” it also intends to advance “Expansive Understanding of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging and Leading on Antiracism in the legal academy.”²²

The Strategic Plan also states its intention to hire on the basis of race. “Objective 2.2” is to “Increase Staff Diversity” and “Objective 2.3” is to “Increase Faculty Diversity.”²³ The school will “publicize” – presumably in job listings – its “commitment to leading on antiracism.”²⁴

Penn State proudly hired its “first woman and first African American Dean” recently, who was the one to articulated these “vision priorities.”²⁵ One must wonder if the school discriminated in making this hire, given its stated priorities.

A May 14, 2026, report demonstrated the real consequences of the discrimination occurring at Penn State.²⁶ First year law students are required to take a course called “Race and the Equal Protection of the Laws.” During the class, associate Dean Jeffrey Dodge introduced his colleague, Shaakirrah Sanders, as the “first associate Dean of anti-racism and critical pedagogy in the country.”²⁷ From there, the school conducted struggle sessions, demanding that students affirm activist talking points, including calling white people “privileged” and that they must “eradicate patriarchy.” They claimed that the justice system is about “keeping black people in their place.” The students were then required to write essays based upon this instruction.²⁸ Because of this, a white male student ended up feeling compelled to withdraw from Penn State Dickinson Law School.

²⁰ Strategic Plan, 4.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid, 5.

²³ Strategic Plan, 7.

²⁴ Strategic Plan, 7-8.

²⁵ Strategic Plan, 2.

²⁶ Aaron Sibarium, “A Texas Military Vet Dropped Out of Penn State Law School Rather Than Submit to its Mandatory Anti-Racism Course,” *The Washington Free Beacon*, May 14, 2026, <https://freebeacon.com/campus/a-texas-military-vet-dropped-out-of-penn-state-law-school-rather-than-submit-to-its-mandatory-anti-racism-course/>.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.



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III. Analysis

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964²⁹ states that “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”³⁰ Similarly, with regard to employment, it is illegal to “fail or refuse to hire or discharge any individual, or otherwise discriminate against any individual with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment because of such individual’s race, color, religion, sex, or national origin,” or to “limit, segregate, or classify his employees...in any way which would deprive or tend to deprive any individual of employment opportunities or otherwise adversely affect his status as an employee, because of such individual’s race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.”³¹ Thus, it violates federal statute when a law school extends priority to one race over another.

Consistent with Title VI, the Department of Education promulgated rules that also prevent race-based criteria in education. Education programs that “treat an individual differently from others in determining whether he satisfies any admission, enrollment, quota, eligibility, membership or other requirement or condition...in order to be provided...benefit provided under the program” constitute discrimination.³²

Indeed, in the context of race, the Supreme Court recently found that the University of North Carolina system’s practice of considering race when making admissions decisions violated the Equal Protection Clause and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.³³ The Opinion of the Court, as delivered by Chief Justice John Roberts, declared, “Eliminating racial discrimination means eliminating all of it.” Discrimination cannot be justified by a racial classification system “that imposes disadvantages upon persons...who bear no responsibility for whatever harm the beneficiaries of the [race-based] admissions program are thought to have suffered.”³⁴

The reasoning was broad, which means it applies to more than just admissions practices. Schools “may never” use a racial “stereotype or negative.”³⁵ Second, “distinctions between citizens solely because of their ancestry are by their very nature odious to a free people whose institutions are founded upon the doctrine of

²⁹ 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d et seq.

³⁰ 42 U.S.C. § 2000d.

³¹ 42 U.S.C. §2000e-2(a).

³² 34 C.F.R. 100.3(b)(v).

³³ *Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*, 143 S.Ct. 2141 (2023)(“*SFFA*”).

³⁴ *Id.* at 2174, quoting *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. 265, 362 (1978).

³⁵ *SFFA* 2166.



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equality.”³⁶ To do this invokes strict scrutiny, which the goal of “diversity” does not pass.³⁷

Finally, Title IX of the Education Amendments to the Civil Rights Act states that “No person...shall...be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance....”³⁸

Penn State could not more explicitly state its intentions to discriminate on the basis of race. Whether it be in admissions, hiring, or curriculum, racism – under the guise of “anti-racism” – appears to be a core tenet. Down to the “land grant mission,” meaning the school’s very foundations, it intends to completely reshape the law program into a place that is steeped in ideals that are inherently discriminatory against white people (and likely Asians). Based upon what was stated in the required first year class – that patriarchy must be eradicated – the forced curriculum also discriminates on the basis of sex.

It is discrimination to force white students to reflect on their perceived wrongs with a goal of them having to reshape their views and behaviors. Yet, the school’s goal is “critical pedagogy,” which will seek to do just that.

It is discrimination to admit students with an intended goal of “equity,” which really means admitting lower qualified students of certain races over higher qualified students of certain other races. Yet, that is the school’s stated intention.

It is discrimination to hire with a preference of having lower qualified teachers and staff of a certain race over higher qualified teachers and staff of certain other races. Yet, that is the school’s stated intention.

And, it is discrimination to require men to denigrate themselves as a part of their mandated curriculum.

This discrimination isn’t just theory. A white male reportedly was not given exemptions to this compelled speech, forcing him to choose between being actively discriminated against and losing his spot at the school. Thus, it appears he was “excluded from participation in” and “denied the benefits of” an education program due to the discrimination at Penn State.

Penn State’s curriculum, admissions, and hiring practices appear to discriminate on the basis of race. The class curriculum also appears to discriminate on the basis of sex. The mandatory nature of the curriculum suggests that not only does it involve

³⁶ *Id.* at 2150, quoting *Rice v. Cayetano*, 528 U.S. 495, 517 (2000).

³⁷ *Id.* at 2166.

³⁸ 20 U.S.C. § 1681(a).



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compelled speech, in violation of the First Amendment, it also involves violations of Titles VI, VII, and IX of the Civil Rights Act. Penn State should be investigated to determine the extent of its discrimination and appropriate action taken to discipline and/or correct discriminatory practices.

Sincerely,

Michael Chamberlain
Director
Protect the Public's Trust

