

# UNITED FACULTY

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**UNI's Faculty Union Opposes Board of Regent's Proposal to Censor Classroom Topics**  
*The BOR's anti-DEI and critical race theory proposal violates the First Amendment*

(CEDAR FALLS, Iowa) United Faculty, the faculty union at the University of Northern Iowa, strongly opposes a [proposed Iowa Board of Regents policy](#) that will censor university faculty and bend Iowa's public universities and their curricula to an agenda that undermines critical inquiry, free speech, and student choice.

The proposed policy is scheduled for a "[first and final reading](#)" and approval at the BOR's June 11 meeting in Iowa City. Public comments at the BOR meeting are scheduled [after](#) the BOR holds its session on the proposed policy. The policy is derivative of two DEI-censorship bills, HF 269 and HF 401, [that United Faculty opposed](#) and that were not approved by the legislature in the most recent session that ended last month.

The BOR proposal requires that "a student shall not be required to take a course that has substantial content that conveys DEI or CRT to satisfy the requirements of a major, minor or certificate unless the Board has approved it as an exception."

"The proposed DEI and CRT requirement explicitly violates the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, as it endorses viewpoint discrimination and makes a governmental body — the Iowa Board of Regents — the authority on deciding what kinds of speech topics are appropriate for the classroom," said Christopher R. Martin, a professor of communication and media at UNI and president of United Faculty.

"The content rules disrupt appropriate and relevant academic speech in major, minor and certificate programs, including those in nursing, public health, education, social work, sociology, media studies, women's & gender studies, political science, criminology, English literature, philosophy and world religions, and number of other disciplines," Martin said. "For example, it would be impossible to talk about the contemporary relevance of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, current health system disparities based on gender and race, or the inequities in the incarceration system without substantially engaging in topics for which the BOR would be the government censor."

The proposed policy defines diversity, equity and inclusion as "instruction that conveys the following concepts as primary principles: unconscious or implicit bias, cultural appropriation, allyship, transgender ideology, microaggressions, group marginalization, antiracism, systemic oppression, social justice, heteronormativity, gender theory, racial privilege or sexual privilege." Critical race theory is defined as "an academic and legal framework that denotes that systemic racism is part of American society and is embedded in laws, policies and institutions."

The BOR proposal comes after the legislature just established a Center for Intellectual Freedom at the University of Iowa. Similar civic education centers have been established at Iowa State and UNI.

“Ironically, the BOR’s proposed policy violates the Iowa Board of Regents’ own [Freedom of Expression Policy](#), Martin said. The BOR Freedom of Expression policy states “the universities must strive to ensure the fullest degree of intellectual freedom and free expression allowed under the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States,” and that “it is not the proper role of the Regent universities to shield individuals from speech protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which may include ideas and opinions the individual finds unwelcome, disagreeable, or even offensive.”

United Faculty, established in 1976 and representing more than 500 faculty members, is the chief negotiating agent for the University of Northern Iowa’s faculty, and is affiliated with the American Association of University Professors/American Federation of Teachers (AAUP/AFT).

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