

# *University of California Will Stop Requiring Diversity Statements in Hiring*

The statements had risen in popularity as colleges sought to improve campus culture, but they drew criticism from conservatives who argued they were a political test.

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**By Vimal Patel**

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The University of California said on Wednesday that it would stop requiring the use of diversity statements in hiring, a practice praised by some who said it made campuses more inclusive but criticized by others who said it did the opposite.

Diversity statements typically ask job applicants to describe in a page or so how they would contribute to campus diversity. The move away from them, by one of the biggest higher education

systems in the United States, comes as the Trump administration escalates an attack on higher education over diversity programming.

For a decade, the 10-campus system was a national leader in using such statements, as universities increasingly came under pressure from those who wanted more diverse student bodies and faculties.

“Our values and commitment to our mission have not changed,” Janet Reilly, the chair of the system’s Board of Regents, said in a statement late Wednesday. “We will continue to embrace and celebrate Californians from a variety of life experiences, backgrounds and points of view.”

The announcement came as universities have faced a number of direct challenges from the new Trump administration.

Two weeks ago, the administration announced that it would end \$400 million in research grants with Columbia University over criticism that the institution had not done enough to crack down on antisemitism. The Education Department sent letters last week to 60 colleges warning of “potential enforcement actions” if they didn’t protect Jewish students. Four of the University of California system’s 10 campuses — Berkeley, Davis, San Diego and Santa Barbara — received the letters.

And last month, the Education Department issued guidance that interpreted the 2023 Supreme Court ruling striking down race-conscious admissions practices far more expansively to include any “race-based decision-making.”

The University of California system’s president, Michael Drake, did not address diversity statements during his opening remarks at a meeting of the Regents on Wednesday. But he painted a bleak picture about the university’s finances.

The system is bracing for a state budget cut of 8 percent and is concerned about threats from the federal government to curb funding. Like several other universities in recent days, Dr. Drake announced a systemwide hiring freeze.

In a letter to the system’s leaders on Wednesday, the university’s provost, Katherine S. Newman, said the Regents had directed Dr. Drake to eliminate diversity statements for all new hires.

“The requirement to submit a diversity statement may lead applicants to focus on an aspect of their candidacy that is outside their expertise or prior experience,” she wrote. She added, “We can continue to effectively serve our communities from a variety of life experiences, backgrounds and points of view without requiring diversity statements.”

Even before Mr. Trump took office, diversity statements had become a lightning rod.

Conservative critics describe them as “loyalty oaths” that limit diversity of thought in academia. Others saw them as another tool that savvy applicants could use to hit the right buzzwords and gain an edge in hiring.

Some states, including North Dakota, Florida and Texas, have barred requiring them or stopped them altogether. Amid the pressure, several colleges, including Harvard, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Michigan, recently said they would stop requiring them in faculty hiring.

“They encouraged a performativity,” said Steven Brint, a professor at the University of California, Riverside. “People knew the right thing to say.”

The University of California was sued over diversity statements, but the federal suit was ultimately tossed out because a judge said the plaintiffs lacked standing.

But to their supporters, the statements were a test of how comfortable applicants were navigating increasingly diverse student bodies. Diversity statements do not gauge beliefs, but actions, said Brian Soucek, a law professor at the University of California, Davis.

Professor Soucek said the university was backing away from one of its core values and capitulating to the Trump administration in a futile attempt to avoid the president’s wrath.

“Attempts to appease those who have been explicit about their intent to destroy higher education as we currently know it are politically naïve,” Professor Soucek wrote this week in a letter to faculty leaders.

In an interview, he added, “Show me how that worked out for Columbia.”

**Vimal Patel** writes about higher education with a focus on speech and campus culture.  
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