



## **NACA Statement on Proposed Legislation Restricting Campus Activities and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives**

March 22, 2023 – As the Association with a vision *to create college communities where everyone belongs*, we know there is much work to be done for college communities to truly become environments where everyone belongs. As such, diversity, equity, and inclusion are core values of the Association. NACA recognizes the diversity of all its members and supports the development and implementation of programs and services that achieve this goal.

The Association is closely monitoring proposed legislation across the country that seeks to limit or prohibit diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, activities, and initiatives on college campuses. NACA has significant concerns about the impact these bills may have on actualizing our vision.

### ***We Are Campus Activities***

As the National Association for Campus Activities, legislation potentially restricting *Campus Activities* gives us great pause. This broad term can apply, as NACA defines, to many “beyond-the-classroom experiences that intentionally connect, engage, and develop a college community where everyone belongs.”

*Creating college communities where everyone belongs* does not mean advancing policies where everyone thinks alike, looks alike, or votes alike. Developing a sense of belonging, as NACA defines, means individuals feel their authentic self is personally accepted, respected, included, supported, and safe in the university environment. Creating college communities where everyone belongs means amplifying opportunities for inclusive learning and meaningful connections; moreover, it means advancing brave spaces for the free exchange of ideas, differing perspectives, challenging dialogue, empathy for others’ lived experiences, and acceptance.

Restrictions placed on student-led organizations, campus programming and activities, and the ability for campus-based professional staff to adequately advise and safely advocate for students and student organizations’ Constitutional rights to free speech and assembly, especially those students from historically marginalized communities, run counter to our mission, vision, and values.

Campus-based professionals work tirelessly to support student leaders and student organizations pursue students’ individual and collective goals, aims, and ambitions. These campus activities - the concert, the spoken word poet, the drag performance, the leadership symposium, the book author - come to be through the result of the hard work and intentionality of student leaders and student organizations working alongside campus administrators, faculty advisors, performers, and agents to connect and engage

a broad audience of current and future students, alumni, and campus community members. These programs often include diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and programs that advance a variety of viewpoints and perspectives, validate lived experiences, and allow campus communities members to be seen and heard. Collectively, these activities become experiences that transform college communities.

## **Looking Forward**

The Association feels strongly that decisions about what programs and activities are hosted on college campuses should be left to individual campus leaders and their students, as they are best suited to assess and address the needs of their unique campus community. Efforts to place restrictions on what programs or activities can be hosted on college campuses would not be supported by the Association, especially those deemed integral to holistic student development.

While the Association has not prescribed to specific theoretical frameworks or methods for diversity, equity, and inclusion education, we believe in the importance of supporting programs and campus activities that further understanding and constructive dialogue on these topics that advance a variety of viewpoints and perspectives. Efforts that attempt to limit specific theoretical frameworks or methods are having the impact of silencing all conversations and are hindering students, organizations, and administrators from creating college communities where everyone belongs.

The Association has adopted definitions and competencies for diversity & inclusion to provide a baseline and framework to guide our work, as well as to assist professionals as they seek to increase awareness and facilitate diverse and engaged college communities.

### *Defining DEI+ Terms*

- **Diversity** – the practice or quality of including, involving, understanding, and appreciating individuals within the context of, but not limited to, the social constructs of: race, gender identity, ethnicity, religion, nationality, documentation status, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, along with physical and mental abilities and disabilities.
- **Equity** – an intentional, design-centered approach and concept that promotes fair treatment, access, opportunities, resources, and advancement of all people while striving to eliminate barriers and disparities that may have prevented the full participation of a marginalized group.
- **Inclusion** – the implementation of accessible opportunities and resources and active, intentional, ongoing engagement and practice that empowers and

promotes individuals to create a sense of belonging, support, cultural competence, and humility, with diversity as the core.

- **Accessibility** – the premise of minimizing the disadvantages by creating intentional space, means, and opportunities where individuals can feel empowered to acquire information, engage in the same interactions, and complete tasks in an autonomous and independent manner.
- **Social Justice** - the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to create learning environments that foster equitable participation. Social Justice also functions as a process to the revision of injustices that encompass, but are not limited to, human rights, access, participation & equity.

### *Advancing Competencies for Diversity & Inclusion*

The Association's **Competencies for Diversity & Inclusion** are a guide to develop one's professional and personal growth. Some of our competencies speak to:

- Recognizing that individuals have multiple and intersecting identities, differing lived experiences, and varying perspectives and are not solely defined by any one of these;
- Understanding how we interact with systems of oppression, privilege, and power;
- Demonstrating awareness of inequitable and oppressive ways that laws and policies are enacted on vulnerable populations; and,
- Ensuring individuals have opportunities to engage in a variety of activities including and beyond those associated with their identities.

NACA is committed to using its mission, vision, core values, and competencies to create, with intention, environments and experiences where all people can thrive and be successful.