

What the Executive Order Weaponizing DEI Means for Your Campus

Title of EO	Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing (January 20, 2025)
What is the policy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and Attorney General must end “DEI and ‘diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility’ (DEIA) mandates, policies, programs, preferences, and activities in the Federal Government.” • Instructs these agencies to modify “Federal employment practices, union contracts, and training policies or programs to comply.” • Instructs them to eliminate DEI or DEIA from federal employment practices, contractor agreements, and performance reviews, and to eliminate DEI, DEIA, and “environmental justice” offices and positions. • OMB creates a list of all DEI, DEIA, and environmental justice “positions, committees, programs, services, activities, budgets, and expenditures,” including contractors providing DEI services and grantees who received funding. • OMB reports the “prevalence” of “DEI, DEIA, and ‘environmental justice’ in agency or department programs, activities, policies, regulations, guidance, employment practices, enforcement activities, contracts (including set-asides), grants, consent orders, and litigating positions.”
How does it affect campus and other communities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The executive order directly affects federal offices, employees, and contractors. • OMB is tasked with documenting all grantees and contractors who engage in DEI work—this likely includes academic faculty, programs, and institutions. • Sows confusions: chaos is the purpose • Directs faculty and administrative time away from their core missions to address intrusive federal mandates.
Who else is under attack?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students denied support as universities overcomply to protect federal grants/contracts. • Researchers forced to avoid certain topics to secure funding. • Differently-abled students and campus employees who benefit from accessibility efforts. • Defenders of free speech, the First Amendment, and academic freedom.
Who benefits?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those who traffic in distorted understandings of DEI. • Those who promote ideological rather than scholarly understandings of American history, race, and gender.
What can you do / How do we fight back?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AAUP and others have filed a lawsuit to block unlawful and unconstitutional DEI EOs • Work with organizations protecting the rights of underrepresented groups. • Avoid anticipatory obedience in teaching and research. • Join your campus union. If there is no union on your campus, join the AAUP as an active or associate member. • If you or someone you know is adversely impacted by the EOs, share your story with lawyers at Democracy 2025, LDF, or Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. • Personalize the stories of students, faculty, researchers, and campus workers for whom DEI work helped make higher education accessible and who are villainized by this EO. • Write an op-ed for your local paper or a blog to share how students, staff, and administrators are being targeted by this EO. Share it with CDAF@aaup.org!
Additional resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Criteria for Faculty Evaluation, AAUP • African American Policy Forum's Executive Disorder Project • Education Council's analysis