

Wisconsin Legislative Black Caucus: Appalled Republicans and the UW System are exchanging DEI efforts for building projects

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MADISON, WI- Earlier this year, the UW System leadership removed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) efforts pertaining to how prospective job applicants would promote DEI in their roles. This action was in response to unreasonable pressures from Republican legislative leadership and the conservative far-right. Despite efforts to address these concerns with the UW System, we have been informed that there's a back door deal in progress between Republican legislative leaders and the UW System that would remove Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts in exchange for buildings and pay raises. This may prevent Democratic legislators, including members of the Wisconsin Legislative Black Caucus, from stopping the DEI provisions if it is brought before the UW Board of Regents. This is nothing more than Speaker Vos circumventing the Governor's Veto.

The Wisconsin Legislative Black Caucus is appalled and ashamed that our state is going to such measures to remove Diversity, Equity and Inclusion from our educational institutions. We ask the question, who was at the table making negotiations on behalf of our black and brown students on campus? Who decided to undervalue our students and staff of color by setting a price tag on their inclusion on our campuses? Were our students and students' interests even considered?

Our students continue to demand for diversity, equity, and inclusion because they know its value. Our students understand they will be working in a growing global economy and they must be prepared.

Our students should have institutions dedicated to ensuring our campuses are a space for free-thinking and learning free from racism and prejudice. And yet, here we are.

The true irony is that this deal includes the creation of a position dedicated to Conservative thought that is funded through philanthropic measures. This is a textbook example of how political agendas are pushed in our higher education system to silence others. The result of these provisions would create a hostile environment for non-White students and faculty on our campuses.

As history repeats itself, we all must respond to this moment. As a caucus, a line must be drawn and the line is this, DEI is non-negotiable. Point. Blank. Period.

We are calling on every student, educator, and Wisconsinite to reach out to our UW System leadership to share their concerns. We deserve a state that funds our higher education systems and releases the pay raises for our staff that does not rest on the backs of students, faculty, and staff of color.