



Written by [James Murphy](#) on April 27, 2023

Idaho Board of Education Looks to Prohibit Colleges From Requiring “Diversity Statements” of Applicants

On Tuesday, the Idaho State Board of Education unanimously passed a resolution that would ban colleges and four-year universities from requiring applicants submit so-called diversity statements as a condition of employment.

More or less, a diversity statement is a personal essay written by prospective employees providing their own history regarding diversity and how their experiences and unique qualities will help to distinguish their employment. In these statements, some schools require applicants to define diversity, explain how they themselves might embody diversity, and describe how they might contribute to the diversity of the school.



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But the Idaho State Board of Education will no longer tolerate such statements as a prerequisite for employment for universities in the Gem State.

“The Idaho State Board of Education today unanimously approves a Board resolution prohibiting either requesting or requiring written diversity statements from candidates applying for employment at Idaho’s four-year public institutions,” reads a [statement](#) from the board.

The Board of Education found that the inclusion of diversity statements was antithetical to their goal of creating “a welcoming and dynamic environment of belonging by administrators, faculty, and staff who are invested in the success of every student,” and is afraid that requiring such statements could “result in employment decisions based on factors other than one’s own merit.”

In other words, the board is afraid that employees might be awarded positions based on the fact that they checked off certain DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) points rather than on their ability to accomplish the work assigned to them.

The new resolution is effective immediately.

“Hiring decisions should be made based on merit and the qualifications of the candidates who apply for positions at our institutions,” said State Board President Kurt Liebich. “Requiring written statements can complicate matters and take the focus off qualifications of individual candidates. We want to hire highly qualified people invested in the success of every student at our institutions.”

The resolution only covers written statements. Presumably, a job interviewer could still broach the subject of diversity if desired.

The board members were also concerned that such statements might run afoul of any academic freedom and, possibly, even violate an applicant’s First Amendment rights.



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The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), a free speech advocacy group, is worried that such diversity statements would become a de facto litmus test in the hiring of instructors, to see if a prospective teacher or professor meets certain left-wing criteria.

“In many cases, these policies threaten to restrict employment or advancement opportunities for faculty who dissent from the prevailing consensus on DEI-related issues of public and academic interest. These policies may even negatively impact faculty who broadly agree with their institution’s DEI values but disagree on some of the specifics, or who simply cherish the right to speak without compulsion,” says a [statement](#) from FIRE.

“The First Amendment prohibits public universities from compelling faculty to assent to specific ideological views or to embed those views in academic activities,” the statement adds.

Indeed, depending upon how such a requirement is judged by whoever is making the hiring decision, a written “diversity statement” could be more of a loyalty oath than a simple hiring tool.

In August of last year, the Academic Freedom Alliance, another group seeking to uphold the idea of academic freedom, urged all universities to stop demanding “diversity statements” as a condition of hiring or promotion.

“The growing regime of DEI testing through forced pledges of conformity threatens to impose a suffocating orthodoxy, penalizing expressions of DEI skepticism though such skepticism exists across a wide ideological range that includes not only right-leaning scholars but left-leaning scholars as well,” a [treatise](#) from the AFA states.

The only reason that so many universities have begun requiring “diversity statements” is, of course, a surrender to “wokeness.” Kudos to the Idaho State Board of Education for standing against that destructive and anti-American ideology.



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