



## ESSAYS

# DIVERSITY OATHS: ANOTHER STEP AWAY FROM HONEST SCHOLARSHIP

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When I was nearing the end of my Ph.D. studies in politics at Princeton University in 2006, I was invited to interview for a job at the University of California at Santa Cruz. Midway through the interview process, I was asked by graduate students how I would change my curricula to “accommodate the needs of people of color.” My response, as best I can remember, was, “I would never do such a thing. It undermines the universalism of education and knowledge, demeans people of color with assumptions about their inability to master cutting-edge research, and permanently consigns them to second-rate status in society.” That answer did not go down well at the department hiring meeting, junior faculty there later told me.

The view was that my “incorrect” response to the question indicated that my presence would upset the solidly left-leaning harmony of the department: “I grew up in a dysfunctional family, and I will not work

in a dysfunctional department!” the very left-wing senior department member declared. The job went to another candidate who, as best I can tell, failed to make tenure.

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The experience of failing an ideological litmus test at UC Santa Cruz dwells with me still. Last month the Oregon chapter of the National Association of Scholars, of which I am president, issued a [report](#) on the subject: “The Imposition of Diversity Statements on Faculty Hiring and Promotion at Oregon Universities.” It looks at how four Oregon universities are slowly imposing declarations of support for the ideology of “diversity, equity, and inclusion” onto faculty hiring and promotion decisions.

It argues that this implicit ideological litmus test is both a betrayal of *public* funding for universities and an abandonment of the idea that scholars should be protected from ideological impositions from *any* part of the political spectrum. The report documents how universities are engaged in what we might call “diversity-baiting”: accusing, denouncing, attacking and persecuting current or potential faculty based on their lack of support for the “diversity, equity, and inclusion” dogma.

Statements at all four universities show that campus diversicrats believe fervently that this ideology must be enforced through university-level sanctions as well as department-level choices. I was discouraged to read my own university’s “Chief Diversity Officer” declare to one news site: “I’m one of those that deeply believes that compliance work is an important engine of the bigger diversity bus, because if you can’t change their hearts and their minds, you will govern their behavior and hold them accountable.” The “diversity bus” is an apt term: reeling down the road, crushing all beneath its tires, and hurling dissenters into the ditch.

To be sure, an acceptance of American pluralism is a core American value. But, as the report shows, “diversity, equity, and inclusion” are always defined on campus in rigidly left-wing terms: an emphasis on group (not individual or national) identities; a focus on group victimization (not on cultural norms or individual behavior); and an insistence on group entitlements (not individual responsibility or equality). It is also no surprise that much of the epicenter of this movement is California.

The report quotes Dr. Tanya Golash-Boza, an associate professor of sociology at the University of California at Merced and during 2016-17 the Vice Chair of the UC System-wide Committee on Affirmative Action, Diversity, & Equity, advising job candidates that their diversity statements should focus on “commonly accepted understandings of diversity and equity” such as “racial oppression, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism or some other commonly recognized form of oppression.” She then suggests that candidates who do not agree with this approach should not bother to apply for jobs: “Note that if you do not care about diversity and equity and do not want to be in a department that does, don’t waste your time crafting a strong diversity statement — and you need not read any further in this essay.”

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Two responses are typically given to criticisms of the diversity statements. One is that “our faculty support this.” But this begs the question of whether issues like this should be decided by majority rule. Even if university faculties were remotely balanced politically, I doubt those majority decisions on ideological conditions on employment would ever be appropriate.

But given the extreme imbalance of political viewpoints – roughly 15 Democrats for every one Republican or moderate on most campuses – the argument for majority rule is laughable. The argument for academic freedom, like the argument for religious freedom, is simply to protect minorities from the theocratic rule of the majority.

A second response is this: faculty can respond to the diversity statement in any way they please, including by not responding at all. But as my experience at the University of Santa Cruz demonstrates, and as several documents cited in our report show, this is disingenuous. Left-leaning senior mullahs will easily detect deviant behavior from current or prospective faculty and once the *fatwah* is issued, junior faculty waiting for tenure and promotion will quietly fall into line.

Why does all of this matter? Because at the heart of the crisis in higher education is a slow departure from the university as a pluralistic site of research and teaching excellence. Everything else – growing bureaucracies, rising tuition, union Bolshevism, falling state fiscal support, and declining learning outcomes – revolves around this. Diversity statements are the final, fatal blow that will institutionalize ideological discrimination and render the already-tenuous status of many departments and faculty members as “scholars” permanently on the side of political activism and ideological agitation. No one is safe from the diversity bus. It needs to be driven to the junkyard.



Bruce Gilley is Professor of Political Science and Director of the Ph.D. Program in Public Affairs and Policy at the Mark O. Hatfield School of Government at Portland State University, and President of the Oregon Association of Scholars. His research centers on comparative and international politics and public policy. His work covers issues as diverse as democracy, climate change, political legitimacy, and international conflict. He is a specialist on the politics of China and Asia.

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