



A Resolution Rejecting Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism

**February 28 2022**

**WHEREAS** Governor Youngkin issued Executive Order Number One, ENDING THE USE OF INHERENTLY DIVISIVE CONCEPTS, INCLUDING CRITICAL RACE THEORY, AND RESTORING EXCELLENCE IN K-12 PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE COMMONWEALTH, on his first day in office;

**WHEREAS** Superintendent of Public Instruction, Jillian Balow, in accordance with the Executive Order, has issued the VDOE Interim Report rescinding policies, programs, and resources for K-12 education that promote respect for diversity and equity in the Commonwealth;

**WHEREAS** state legislative proposals are being introduced across the United States and in the Commonwealth that target academic discussions of racism and related issues in American history in schools, colleges and universities;

**WHEREAS** the George Mason University advocacy chapter of the American Association of University Professors affirms the importance of academic freedom to the proper functioning of universities, citing the American Association of University Professors' [1940 statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#);

**WHEREAS** the *George Mason University Faculty Handbook* states, "One of the vital activities of a university is the critical examination of ideologies and institutions. It is essential that faculty members have the right to express their views and the University is committed to upholding the principles of academic freedom to protect the expression of faculty members without fear of censorship or retaliation;"

**WHEREAS** the *George Mason University Faculty Handbook* provides that faculty have "the right to unrestricted exposition of subjects (including controversial questions) within one's field and professional obligations, both on and off the campus, in a professionally responsible manner;

**WHEREAS** the *George Mason University Faculty Handbook* provides that faculty have "the right to unrestricted scholarly research and publication within one's field and professional obligations, in a professionally responsible manner within the limits imposed by the resources of the institution;"

**WHEREAS** faculty "have primary responsibility for such academic matters as unit reorganization, the design of programs, development and alteration of the curriculum, standards for admission to programs, and requirements in the major;"

**WHEREAS** the term "divisive" is indeterminate, subjective, and chills the capacity of educators to explore a wide variety of topics based on subjective criteria that are inapposite from the goals of education and the development of essential critical thinking skills;

**WHEREAS** educating about systemic barriers to realizing a multiracial democracy free of misogyny and racism should be understood as central to the active and engaged pursuit of knowledge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to produce engaged and informed citizens;

**WHEREAS** over seventy organizations, including the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU), issued the [Joint Statement on Legislative Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism and American History](#) (June 16, 2021) stating their "firm opposition to a spate of legislative proposals being introduced across the country that target academic lessons, presentations, and discussions of racism and related issues in American history in schools, colleges and universities . . . In higher education, under principles of academic freedom that have been widely endorsed, professors are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject. Educators, not politicians, should make decisions about teaching and learning;"

**WHEREAS** the George Mason University's mission is to serve as a "A public, comprehensive, research university established by the Commonwealth of Virginia in the National Capital Region, we are an innovative and inclusive academic community committed to creating a more just, free, and prosperous world;"

**WHEREAS** in a nation that has for centuries struggled with issues of racial inequity and social injustice, and many students do not have adequate knowledge of histories and policies of structural racism, misogyny, and homophobia, George Mason University has a scholarly responsibility to confront painful histories with directness and rigor, a moral obligation to help build equity and social justice;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the George Mason University chapter of AAUP resolutely rejects any attempts by bodies external to the faculty to restrict or dictate university curriculum on any matter, including matters related to histories of racism and the pursuit of social justice, and will stand firm against encroachment on faculty authority by the legislature or the Board of Visitors.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the George Mason University chapter of AAUP stands with our K-12 colleagues in the Commonwealth and across the country who may be affected by this order or other pernicious laws when they seek to teach the truth in U.S. history and civics education, engender respect for the diverse and multilingual students we serve, and prepare teachers of the future.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that George Mason University chapter of AAUP calls upon President Gregory Washington, Provost Mark Ginsberg, and the Board of Visitors to affirm that they reject any attempts by bodies external to the faculty to restrict or dictate university curriculum on any matter, including matters related to racial and social justice, and will stand firm against encroachment on faculty authority by the legislature.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that George Mason University chapter of AAUP affirms the [Joint Statement on Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism](#), authored by the AAUP, PEN America, the American Historical Association, and the Association of American Colleges & Universities, endorsed by over seventy organizations, and issued on June 16, 2021.

This resolution is based on a template provided by the African American Policy Forum