







# Educating for Citizenship

*Utah Case Study*

A report by the

NATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION  
*of* SCHOLARS

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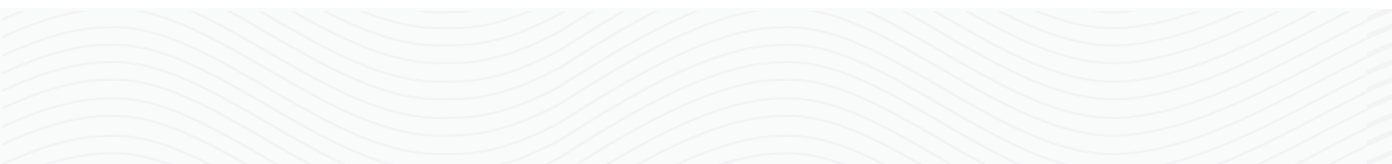
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# Introduction

Utah ensures that every primary and secondary student is given at least a preliminary civics education. This goal—an education for citizenship—extends to higher education too. Utah law establishes that all graduating students must “demonstrate a reasonable understanding of the history, principles, form of government, and economic system of the United States.”

Today, however, Americans debate what constitutes a “reasonable” understanding of American government, history, and principles. Should we train students for citizenship through an engagement with the past? Or should civics education seek to transform our country with an eye to the future? Is American history a story of noble ideals? Or is our country’s past a catalog of oppression, from which we must seek liberation? In our current political moment, no “civics education” goes uncontested.

In this report, we examine the way civics is taught at the six universities in the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE). Our goal is to evaluate the health of American civics and history education at Utah’s major public universities. In the first section of this report, we examine the application of the state’s American Institutions requirement. The state requires every student who attends a public university to study American history and government—to understand America’s “history, principles, form of government, and economic system.” Because of this law, many students in Utah are at least exposed to a conventional civics education, which lays the groundwork for our contentious political debates. That said, Utah’s “American Institutions” requirement ultimately sets a low bar, mandating only one course that can easily veer from the intent of the requirement.

Many universities in Utah, on the other hand, are committed to portraying American history in a certain light through initiatives under the broad umbrella of *diversity, equity, and inclusion* (DEI). Through training, mandatory course content, and campus programming,

DEI initiatives frequently offer a negative interpretation of American history and vision of American citizenship. These initiatives often portray American history through the watchwords of contemporary identity politics, such as intersectionality, systemic bias, oppression, and equity; emphasize the epistemological primacy of race and gender; and teach specific political positions as foregone conclusions. These initiatives, moreover, promote vast administrative growth, creating a vicious cycle whereby the conclusions of DEI initiatives become increasingly entrenched as institutional policy—and divert university resources from actual education to the salaries of the DEI bureaucrats who comprise an ever-larger portion of the university staff.

Thus, in the second section of this report, we show the ways in which DEI programming has taken hold throughout Utah's system of higher education, and how it has become a rival civics education—an anti-civics devoted to the transformation of the American republic.

# Civics Education in the Utah Curriculum

## Civics Statutes

**A**s with many states, Utah requires its students to demonstrate familiarity with American history and civics, and as with many states, these requirements primarily focus on K-12 education. Thus, students who come out of the K-12 system in Utah should have a decent, if minimal, civics education. The most pertinent statutes require students to pass a citizenship exam and study the pivotal documents of American history.

Statute	Title	Measure
Utah Code §53G-10-204 <sup>1</sup>	Civic and character education	Requires students to be taught “honesty, integrity, morality, civility, duty, honor, service, and obedience to law,” “respect for and an understanding of the Declaration of Independence and the constitutions of the United States and of the state of Utah,” “Utah history, including territorial and preterritorial development to the present,” and “other skills, habits, and qualities of character which will promote an upright and desirable citizenry and better prepare students to recognize and accept responsibility for preserving and defending the blessings of liberty inherited from prior generations and secured by the constitution.”

<sup>1</sup> Utah Code §53G-10-204, Civic and character education, <https://le.utah.gov/xcode/Title53G/Chapter10/53G-10-S204.html>.

Utah Code §53G-10-302 <sup>2</sup>	Instruction in American history and government	Requires students to be taught “(i) forms of government, such as a republic, a pure democracy, a monarchy, and an oligarchy; (ii) political philosophies and economic systems, such as socialism, individualism, and free market capitalism; and (iii) the United States’ form of government, a compound constitutional republic.”
Utah Code §53E-4-205 <sup>3</sup>	American civics education initiative	Requires students to study important documents such as “the Declaration of Independence,” “the United States Constitution,” “the Mayflower Compact,” “the writings, speeches, documents, and proclamations of the Founders and the Presidents of the United States,” and “documents from the pre-Colonial, Colonial, Revolutionary, Federalist, and post Federalist eras.”

One relevant statute focuses on higher education, mandating that students receive a general introduction to American history, government, and economics.

Statute	Title	Measure
Utah Code § 53B-16-103 <sup>4</sup>	Granting of degrees, diplomas, or certifications	“A student shall demonstrate a reasonable understanding of the history, principles, form of government, and economic system of the United States before receiving a bachelor’s degree or teaching credential.”

The law is well intended—but also vague. It does not explain what a “reasonable understanding” of American history might look like in practice. Thus, it ultimately leaves the details of the requirement to the Utah System of Higher Education.

## The USHE Civics Mandate

The Utah System of Higher Education mandates one required course in “American institutions,” “consistent with Code §53B-16-103.”<sup>5</sup> The USHE uses modest and general language in its American Institutions requirement.

<sup>2</sup> Utah Code §53G-10-302, Instruction in American history and government, <https://le.utah.gov/xcode/Title53G/Chapter10/53G-10-S302.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Utah Code 53E-4-205, American civics education initiative, <https://le.utah.gov/xcode/Title53E/Chapter4/53E-4-S205.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Utah Code 53B-16-103, Granting of degrees, diplomas, or certifications, <https://le.utah.gov/xcode/Title53B/Chapter16/53B-16-S103.html>.

<sup>5</sup> R470, General Education, Common Course Numbering, Lower-Division Pre-Major Requirements, Transfer of Credits, and Credit by Examination, Utah System of Higher Education, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://public.powerdms.com/Uta7295/tree/documents/1826311>.

### USHE American Institutions Course Requirements

- (1) Use of Primary Documents—analyze, contextualize, and use primary source documents to understand the history, principles, form of government, and economic system of the United States;
- (2) Interpretation—explain and use historically, politically, and economically relevant information;
- (3) Communication—communicate effectively about the history, principles, form of government, and economic system of the United States;
- (4) Diversity—engage a diversity of viewpoints in a constructive manner that contributes to a dialogue about the history, principles, form of government, and economic system of the United States; and
- (5) Integration—use historical, political, and economic methods to come to an understanding of the United States that integrates those viewpoints.

In practice, the requirement mandates a basic survey course in American history, government, or economics. According to the USHE, it is designed to be fulfilled by standard American government and history classes, such as ECON 1740 *Economic History of the United States*, HIST 1700 *American Civilization*, HIST 2700 *United States to 1877*, HIST 2710 *United States 1877 to Present*, and POLS 1100 *American/US National Government*.<sup>6</sup>

Again, however, the actual text of the requirement is vague. Unlike, for example, the four-course university history and government course requirements in Texas, the Utah requirement entails only one course.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, its general wording does not explicitly require students to engage with important constitutional debates in America’s history, key founding documents, or any specific historical events. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to believe that Utah’s students would receive a decent, if only basic, course of instruction in American history and government based on these guidelines.

## Fulfilling the Requirement

Given the general nature of these requirements, we have conducted a survey of how the six major universities within the USHE fulfill this requirement. By all appearances, these universities are following the requirements, at least nominally. They often directly cite both the USHE policy and Utah Code. This demonstrates the relative effectiveness of the mandate.

But Utah’s public universities can sidestep the mandate’s intent. Some universities fulfill the American Institutions requirement through courses that focus on idiosyncratic topics, that fail to provide a true overview of American history and government. Others satisfy the requirement with courses that invoke the theme of contemporary political debates, often to promulgate that ideology. At some universities, moreover, this class can be avoided by students who have received Advanced Placement credit in American history or government.

<sup>6</sup> R470, General Education, Common Course Numbering, Lower-Division Pre-Major Requirements, Transfer of Credits, and Credit by Examination, Utah System of Higher Education.

<sup>7</sup> Texas General Education Core Curriculum, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, <http://board.theccb.state.tx.us/apps/TCC/>. Accessed May 20, 2022.

The most obvious problem with Utah’s mandate, however, is that this requirement consists of only one class.

We find that:

- All of Utah’s four-year public universities at least nominally comply with the “American Institutions” requirement.
- Most of these universities offer some “American Institutions” courses that fail to live up to the spirit of the requirement. These courses are not primarily about the “history, principles, form of government, and economic system of the United States,” focusing instead on specific issues in American history and politics.
- Many courses under the “American Institutions” designation focus on narrow questions of identity. Weber State University provides the most glaring example, including among its American Institutions courses HIST 1600 *The Black Experience*, HIST 1610 *The Latinx Experience*, and HIST 1620 *The LGBTQ Experience*.
- Ultimately, emphasis on American civics and history as such is minimal. Students are likely, though not guaranteed, to take one true survey course in American history.

## The University of Utah

The University of Utah fulfills the USHE American Institutions requirement, even setting a high bar for the designation, specifying in greater detail what it takes for a course to qualify. At the same time, as some of its American Institutions courses demonstrate, the University of Utah also stretches the meaning of the requirement. While the requirement aims to establish a mandatory American history survey course, some courses with the designation at the University of Utah instead focus on narrow issues within American history.

According to the University of Utah’s degree worksheet, every student is required to take one American Institutions course.<sup>8</sup> In the Spring 2022 semester, that requirement could be satisfied through ECON 1740 *US Economic History*, HIST 1700 *American History*, HONOR 2212 *American Institutions*, or POLS 1100 *US National Govt.*<sup>9</sup> “The objective of the requirement,” notes the university’s website, “is to ensure that students have at least a minimal basis for responsible citizenship.”<sup>10</sup>

8 GE & Degree Worksheet, University of Utah, accessed May 20, 2022, [https://us.utah.edu/general-education/\\_resources/documents/ge-degree\\_worsheet\\_10-12.pdf](https://us.utah.edu/general-education/_resources/documents/ge-degree_worsheet_10-12.pdf).

9 Class Schedule, University of Utah, accessed May 13, 2022, [https://student.apps.utah.edu/uofu/stu/ClassSchedules/main/1228/class\\_list.html?req=AI](https://student.apps.utah.edu/uofu/stu/ClassSchedules/main/1228/class_list.html?req=AI).

10 American Institutions (AI) Criteria, University of Utah, accessed May 13, 2022, <https://us.utah.edu/general-education/requirements/ai.php>.

The University of Utah allows its history, economics, and political science departments to offer “interdisciplinary and integrated” American Institutions courses, but these courses must meet a robust set of criteria.

**Political Science, Benchmarks for an American Institutions Course<sup>11</sup>**

1. The American Revolution, the Declaration of Independence, and the US Constitution.
2. The responsibilities, powers, and the limits of power within the American national government, especially Congress, the Presidency, and the Federal Courts.
3. American federalism and the role of the states in the US system of governance.
4. The history of US citizenship and of the changes and processes of change in the definitions [of] American citizenship.
5. The central economic, social, and political actors in the US system, including but not limited to: political parties, interest groups, corporations, and the media.
6. The role and instruments of US policy in society, the economy, and foreign affairs.

The website even notes that the above content is “necessary but not sufficient for the [American Institutions] designation.”<sup>12</sup>

The American Institutions courses offered at the University of Utah, however, vary greatly in emphasis. Some function as standard survey courses, while others focus on specific issues in American politics. POLS 1100 *US National Govt*, for example, focuses on the content typically found in an American history or civics survey: “Constitutional basis of American government; public opinion, political participation, media, parties, interest groups; governmental decision makers (Congress, presidency, bureaucracy, courts).”<sup>13</sup> HONOR 2212 *American Institutions*, on the other hand, takes as its starting point the notion of “equality.”

This course focuses on the idea of equality as a lens to see American history from colonization to the present and explore the emergence and transformations of American democracy and social and political ideals. Equality emerged out of slavery and other harsh inequalities and has always meant different things to different Americans. If over time American civil rights have expanded dramatically, American rights talk tends to ignore fundamental human rights. That is, you have the right to vote or the right to a jury trial, but not the right to eat. Equality remains contested. How have debates over equality shaped American history? How does it stand with equality today?<sup>14</sup>

11 American Institutions (AI) Criteria, University of Utah.

12 American Institutions (AI) Criteria, University of Utah.

13 POLS 1100 - U.S. National Government, University of Utah, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://student.apps.utah.edu/uofu/stu/ClassSchedules/main/1228/description.html?subj=POLS&catno=1100&section=071>.

14 HONOR 2212 - American Institutions, University of Utah, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://student.apps.utah.edu/uofu/stu/ClassSchedules/main/1228/description.html?subj=HONOR&catno=2212&section=002>.



Thus, even with robust guidelines for implementing the American Institutions requirement, some courses at the University of Utah stretch the meaning of that requirement. While the concept of “equality” is a worthwhile subject of study, a course aimed at exploring this concept is unlikely to provide a straightforward survey of American government and history. Other ideals, such as liberty, are at least as important to the development of America’s institutions. In fact, such a course is more likely to encourage students to adopt specific political beliefs. The very description of the course makes this clear, tendentiously asserting that “American rights talk tends to ignore fundamental human rights.” If students have not first studied founding documents, key historical events, an exposition of the ideals and the material basis of Jeffersonian and Jacksonian democracy, and the core principles of American government (i.e., federalism), a course on inequality can easily produce a skewed understanding of our nation’s history.

## Utah State University

Utah State University applies the USHE mandate by requiring each student to take one American Institutions course. It also, however, provides some ways for students to avoid the intent of that requirement, either through loopholes that allow students to bypass the course or through listing courses that fail to fully live up to the spirit of the law.

Currently, Utah State’s available American Institutions courses are APEC 1600 *Natural Resources and American Economic Institutions*, ECN 1500 *Introduction to Economic Institutions, History, and Principles*, HIST 1700 *American History*, HIST 2700 *United States to 1877*, HIST 2710 *United States 1877-Present*, HONR 1300 *U.S. Institutions*, POLS 1100 *United States Government and Politics*, and USU 1300 *U.S. Institutions*.<sup>15</sup> The following descriptions provide a good sense of the themes of these courses.

Course	Description
APEC 1600 <i>Natural Resources and American Economic Institutions</i>	“This course explores how the American economy and quality of life is linked to the development of the nation’s resources. Focus is on the interaction of individual citizens, business, and government institutions from the Colonial Era to present. Topics explore the role of democracy, property rights, free markets, government, agencies, and financial institutions in the development of the United States.” <sup>16</sup>
ECN 1500 <i>Introduction to Economic Institutions, History, and Principles</i>	“Designed to build an understanding of economic institutions, history, and principles. Relationship between private and public sectors of U.S. economy. Analysis of major economic institutions, such as property rights, markets, business organizations, labor unions, money and banking, trade, and taxation.” <sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> General Education Requirements, Utah State University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://catalog.usu.edu/content.php?catid=35&navoid=26613>.

<sup>16</sup> APEC 1600 - Natural Resources and American Economic Institutions (BAI), Utah State University, accessed May 20, 2022, [https://catalog.usu.edu/preview\\_course\\_nopop.php?catid=35&coid=291469](https://catalog.usu.edu/preview_course_nopop.php?catid=35&coid=291469).

<sup>17</sup> ECN 1500 - Introduction to Economic Institutions, History, and Principles (BAI), Utah State University, accessed May 20, 2022, [https://catalog.usu.edu/preview\\_course\\_nopop.php?catid=35&coid=286814](https://catalog.usu.edu/preview_course_nopop.php?catid=35&coid=286814).

USU 1300 *U.S. Institutions*

"Provides basic understanding of the history, principles, form of government, and economic system of the United States. Emphasis on ideas and critical thinking, rather than dates, names, and places."<sup>18</sup>

These courses appear to be robust, but present two problems. First, one fourth of the courses focus on economics. While understanding economics is an important part of understanding history and civics, courses such as APEC 1600 *Natural Resources and American Economic Institutions* simply do not qualify as a complete civics education. Second, the university's website advertises that students can bypass these requirements through College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and Advanced Placement (AP) exams, including AP Macroeconomics, AP U.S. Government and Politics, AP U.S. History, CLEP American Government, CLEP History of the United States I, and CLEP Principles of Macroeconomics.<sup>19</sup>

## Utah Valley University

Utah Valley University carries out the American Institutions requirement, but, as with Utah State and the University of Utah, some of its courses are better than others. While some focus on key documents and historical events, others emphasize race, class, and gender. The website lists six courses that satisfy the American Institutions requirement: POLS 1000 *American Heritage*, HIST 2700 *US History to 1877*, HIST 2710 *US History since 1877*, HIST 1700/170H *American Civilization*, HIST 1740 *US Economic History*, and POLS 1100 *American National Government*.<sup>20</sup>

These courses, again, vary greatly depending on the section—with some focusing more explicitly on narrow group-identity categories.

Course	Description
HIST 2710 <i>US History Since 1877</i>	"Surveys the making of a modern United States, beginning with the promises and failures of Reconstruction and concluding with contemporary American issues. Emphasizes diverse American experiences at the intersections of race, gender, and class while tracing social, cultural, political and diplomatic developments during this period." <sup>21</sup>

18 USU 1300 - U.S. Institutions (BAI), Utah State University, accessed May 20, 2022, [https://catalog.usu.edu/preview\\_course\\_nopop.php?catoid=35&coid=290287](https://catalog.usu.edu/preview_course_nopop.php?catoid=35&coid=290287).

19 General Education Requirements, Utah State University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://catalog.usu.edu/content.php?catoid=35&navoid=26613>.

20 General Education, Utah Valley University, accessed June 12, 2022, <https://www.uvu.edu/catalog/current/policies-requirements/general-education.html>.

21 Course Descriptions | History, Utah Valley University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://www.uvu.edu/catalog/current/courses/history/>.

HIST 271H *US History Since 1877*

"Examines the second half of the American experience, beginning with the collapse of Post-Civil War Reconstruction and concluding with contemporary American issues. Surveys social, political, cultural, and diplomatic developments during this period. The honors section extends the course's historical inquiry with in-depth discussions and additional written and reading requirements, all of which allow the student a fuller participation in historical debates and the process of 'doing' history."<sup>22</sup>

These two courses will function very differently. A course that focuses narrowly on the "intersections" of race, gender, and class risks neglecting or distorting important features of American history.

## Weber State University

According to the Weber State University general education webpage, the university complies with the American Institutions requirement in a straightforward manner. In fact, many courses that the university offers to fulfill the requirement explicitly focus on race and sexual identity.

The webpage notes that students can satisfy the requirement with the following courses: POLS 1100 *American National Government*, HIST 1700 *American Civilization*, ECON 1740 *Economic History of the United States*, HIST 2700 *History of the United States to 1877*, and HIST 2710 *History of the United States since 1877*.<sup>23</sup> These courses align almost perfectly with the stated intent of the USHE's American Institutions requirement.

Other documents from Weber State, however, tell a different story. Weber State's 2020-2021 "GenEdSheet," which explains the general education requirements, includes the same American Institutions courses listed on the university's general education webpage.<sup>24</sup> Starting with the 2021-2022 "GenEdSheet," those requirements change, with the addition of three new courses focused on identity groups: HIST 1600 *The Black Experience*, HIST 1610 *The Latinx Experience*, and HIST 1620 *The LGBTQ Experience*.<sup>25</sup>

### Course

### Description

<sup>22</sup> Course Descriptions | History, Utah Valley University.

<sup>23</sup> General Education Requirements, Weber State University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://catalog.weber.edu/content.php?catoid=17&navoid=5669>.

<sup>24</sup> 2020-21 GenEdSheet, Weber State University, accessed May 20, 2022, [https://apps.weber.edu/wsuiimages/GenEd/2020-21%20GenEdSheet%20FINAL.pdf?\\_ga=2.8984433.577011279.1652713460-427084230.1652713460](https://apps.weber.edu/wsuiimages/GenEd/2020-21%20GenEdSheet%20FINAL.pdf?_ga=2.8984433.577011279.1652713460-427084230.1652713460).

<sup>25</sup> 2021-22 GenEdSheet, Weber State University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://www.weber.edu/wsuiimages/GenEd/Documents/2021-22%20GenEdSheet%20FINAL.pdf>.

HIST 1620 <i>The LGBTQ Experience</i>	"This course will be a survey of LGBTQ history in American history, from the colonial era to the present day. It will not only consider LGBTQ experiences, but also focus on changing views toward slavery, economics, race, gender, and nationality that inform American society. As a General Education American Institutions course, we will discuss the major principles of the United States, the operations of its institutions, and the consequences of its market economy, with a focus on the particular LGBTQ experience within that narrative." <sup>26</sup>
HIST 1600 <i>The Black Experience</i>	"HIST 1600 is the History of Black people in the United States. We will begin by tracing the origins of Blacks and Black Americans in the New World from their origins in Africa. We will then explore the history of Black people in the United States from the Atlantic Creoles to the present day. This course will also fulfill all the requirements for American Institutions (AI) credit." <sup>27</sup>
HIST 1610 <i>The Latinx Experience</i>	"This course provides a general introduction to the history of Latinx in the United States from the era of Contact to the present day. Even before this country existed as a republic, people from "Hispanic" and Indo-America had been incorporated into the culture, history, and occupational fabric of what would become the United States. Yet larger society and, oftentimes, the government, have frequently perceived Latinx as racially and culturally "alien." This course will examine how people of Latin American heritage have adjusted to, been integrated by, assimilated, resisted, and adapted to these forces in the United States over past centuries, creating new identities in the process." <sup>28</sup>

These courses constitute the most overt failure to follow the American Institutions requirement. It is unclear how these courses would, as Utah Code requires, provide students with a "reasonable understanding of the history, principles, form of government, and economic system of the United States." They certainly fail to comply with the spirit of the law, and they illustrate how other Utah universities may eventually attempt to bypass the requirement.

## Southern Utah University

Southern Utah University requires an American Institutions course, specifically citing the text of the USHE's requirement. To fulfill the requirement, students can take ECON 1740 *US Economic History*, HIST 1700 *American History*, POLS 1100 *American National Government*, or SUU 1776 *American Institutions*.<sup>29</sup> These courses, for the most part, satisfy the letter of the USHE requirement, though some do so better than others.

<sup>26</sup> HIST 1620 AI - The LGBTQ Experience, Weber State University, accessed May 20, 2022, [https://catalog.weber.edu/preview\\_course\\_nopop.php?catoid=21&coid=89146](https://catalog.weber.edu/preview_course_nopop.php?catoid=21&coid=89146).

<sup>27</sup> HIST 1600 AI - The Black Experience, Weber State University, accessed May 20, 2022, [https://catalog.weber.edu/preview\\_course\\_nopop.php?catoid=19&coid=84552](https://catalog.weber.edu/preview_course_nopop.php?catoid=19&coid=84552).

<sup>28</sup> HIST 1610 AI - The Latinx Experience, Weber State University, accessed May 20, 2022, [https://catalog.weber.edu/preview\\_course\\_nopop.php?catoid=19&coid=84554](https://catalog.weber.edu/preview_course_nopop.php?catoid=19&coid=84554).

<sup>29</sup> General Education Program at SUU, Southern Utah University, accessed June 12, 2022, <https://catalog.suu.edu/content.php?catoid=23&navoid=4036>.

Course	Description
ECON 1740 <i>US Economic History</i>	"History from colonial times to present. Coverage of U.S. Constitution; national economy; pluralism; ethnicity, race, gender; distribution of wealth and power; social conflict and reform; entrepreneurs, workers, workplace; cultural encounters; popular culture; and U.S. and global affairs." <sup>30</sup>
HIST 1700 <i>American History</i>	"The fundamentals of American history including political, economic, and social development of American institutions and ideas. Successful completion of this course meets the American Institutions requirement established by the state legislature." <sup>31</sup>
POLS 1100 <i>American National Government</i>	"Source of democratic ideas and principles of the constitutional system. Cultural, group, party, and governmental influences on the process of public policymaking. The administration and impact of public policy." <sup>32</sup>
SUU 1776 <i>American Institutions</i>	"This cross-disciplinary course synthesizes the history, principles, form of government, and economic system of the United States. The innovative hybrid pedagogy used in this course relies on a combination open-sourced online lectures, case studies, historic narratives, short documentaries, interviews, public speakers, news clips, and OER reading materials. Students will hone their oral communication skills in lively face-to-face discussions, debates, and media exercises, as well as sharpen their real-world problem-solving skills through the live application of course concepts to practical scenarios." <sup>33</sup>

Some of the Southern Utah University courses are clearly stronger than others. A class that "sharpens" students' "real-world problem-solving skills through the live application of course concepts to practical scenarios" can easily slip into overt political activism. Southern Utah University's fulfillment of the state requirement already has begun to drift away from the legislative intent.

## Utah Tech University

At Utah Tech University, previously Dixie State University, the American Institutions requirement can be fulfilled through ECON 1740 *Economic History of the U.S.[.]*, HIST 1700 *American History*, HIST 2700 *U.S. History to 1877*, HIST 2710 *U.S. History Since 1877*, or POLS 1100 *American Government*.<sup>34</sup>

A selection of courses reveals a more standard emphasis:

30 ECON 1740 - US Economic History, Southern Utah University, accessed May 20, 2022, [https://catalog.suu.edu/preview\\_course\\_nopop.php?catoid=23&coid=70296](https://catalog.suu.edu/preview_course_nopop.php?catoid=23&coid=70296).

31 HIST 1700 - American History, Southern Utah University, accessed May 20, 2022, [https://catalog.suu.edu/preview\\_course\\_nopop.php?catoid=23&coid=69975](https://catalog.suu.edu/preview_course_nopop.php?catoid=23&coid=69975).

32 POLS 1100 - American National Government, Southern Utah University, accessed May 20, 2022, [https://catalog.suu.edu/preview\\_course\\_nopop.php?catoid=23&coid=69196](https://catalog.suu.edu/preview_course_nopop.php?catoid=23&coid=69196).

33 Catalog Search, SUU 1776 - American Institutions, Southern Utah University, accessed May 20, 2022, [https://catalog.suu.edu/search\\_advanced.php?cur\\_cat\\_oid=23&search\\_database=Search&search\\_db=Search&cpage=1&ecpage=1&page=1&spage=1&tpage=1&location=33&filter%5Bkeyword%5D=SUU+1776+American+Institutions](https://catalog.suu.edu/search_advanced.php?cur_cat_oid=23&search_database=Search&search_db=Search&cpage=1&ecpage=1&page=1&spage=1&tpage=1&location=33&filter%5Bkeyword%5D=SUU+1776+American+Institutions).

34 General Education Course Requirements, Dixie State University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://catalog.dixie.edu/programs/generaleducation/requirements/>.

Course	Description or Selected Learning Outcomes
ECON 1740 <i>Economic History of the U.S.[.]</i>	<p>"Identify and understand the major chronological and topical divisions in American History.</p> <p>Demonstrate substantive knowledge of the economic history of America and describe and analyze major economic and historical themes and arguments found in primary and secondary source material.</p> <p>Argue and write analytically, cogently, and comparatively about significant issues and problems in American economic history."<sup>35</sup></p>
HIST 1700 <i>American History</i>	<p>"Identify and understand the major chronological and topical divisions in U.S. history.</p> <p>Demonstrate substantive knowledge of the social, cultural, economic, and political history of the United States.</p> <p>Develop historical thinking skills and use them to analyze major historical themes and arguments found in primary and secondary source materials.</p> <p>Argue and write analytically, cogently, and comparatively about significant issues in U.S. history."<sup>36</sup></p>
POLS 1100 <i>American Government</i>	<p>"Surveys the founding of the U.S. Government; the U.S. Constitution; and the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches of government. Also covers politics and elections, international relations, and national security. Helps students acquire a greater understanding of the federal system and of federalism."<sup>37</sup></p>

These courses—again, at least per their description—embody the intent of the American Institutions requirement.

## How, Then, Do Students Learn American History?

While many states do not require courses in American history or government, Utah establishes a clear and unequivocal mandate. For this, Utah should be commended. But Utah's lawmakers should also recognize that the intent of the mandate can easily be undercut.

Our survey shows that this mandate can—and should—be expanded and bolstered. As it stands, the American Institutions requirement is minimal. How much do students learn about American history and civics through their required courses? Ultimately, not all that much—one course worth, if they haven't passed the right AP exam, and that course might not function as a straightforward survey of American history. Though Utah's universities satisfy the USHE requirement—if not the spirit, at least the letter—they fall short of requiring a robust engagement with American history, government, and civics.

35 ECON 1740 - Economic History of the U.S (AI), Coursicle, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://www.coursicle.com/dixie/courses/ECON/1740/>.

36 HIST 1700 - American History (AI), Coursicle, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://www.coursicle.com/dixie/courses/HIST/1700/>.

37 POLS 1100 - American Government (AI), Coursicle, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://www.coursicle.com/dixie/courses/POLS/1100/>.

Students in Utah's universities, therefore, might easily come to understand American history and government through other avenues, not merely their formal requirements, which are not especially robust. And indeed, a new bureaucratic apparatus is being constructed at Utah's universities—as it is elsewhere—which seeks to instill an understanding of America's history and its political institutions founded on the concepts of *diversity, equity, and inclusion*.

# The New Civics: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

American history and civics play a small role in Utah’s public higher education system. Increasingly throughout American higher education, however, the formal curriculum is overshadowed by an informal one.

Nationwide, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) measures have grown considerably over the past decade. California Community Colleges, America’s largest system of higher education, has proposed mandatory diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility competencies as a requirement for all staff and faculty members.<sup>38</sup> The Diversity Strategic Plan at Northern Arizona University mandates that teaching and faculty evaluations include “diversity-centered work” and “diversity-centered learning outcomes.”<sup>39</sup> The University of Tennessee mandated that each of its academic units produce their own diversity action plan.<sup>40</sup> These efforts have become the norm in American higher education.

This development is of great significance for American civics and history education. DEI initiatives often explicitly reframe American history, encouraging students to view the world through the watchwords of identity politics such as *intersectionality*, *oppression*, and *systemic injustice*. They likewise tout a version of citizenship characterized by assent to progressive political priorities and a commitment to activism.

Utah is no exception—DEI is ascendent across the Utah System of Higher Education. Thus, while students’ civics and history education is minimal, DEI has begun to fill the vacuum.

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38 John D. Sailer, “America’s Largest System of Higher Education Proposes Political Litmus Tests,” National Association of Scholars, March 21, 2022, <https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/americas-largest-system-of-higher-education-proposes-political-litmus-tests>.

39 John D. Sailer, “A Bachelors in Diversity,” City Journal, May 24, 2022, <https://www.city-journal.org/northern-arizona-univ-ramps-up-diversity-requirements>.

40 2022 Campus Diversity Action Plans, Diversity and Engagement, University of Tennessee, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://diversity.utk.edu/2021-campus-diversity-action-plans/>.



Specifically, we have found:

- The Utah System of Higher Education has issued an “Equity Lens Framework,” which explicitly employs “Critical Race Theory as a cornerstone.”
- Each of Utah’s four-year public universities engage in DEI programming. Much of this programming employs explicitly political language, referencing “decolonization,” “intersectionality,” “oppression,” and “social justice.”
- Three universities—Weber State University, Southern Utah University, and Utah Valley University—have established DEI criteria for evaluating the work of university employees.

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Utah System of Higher Education

On June 11, 2020, the Utah System of Higher Education issued a “Statement on Racial & Social Injustice,” which decried the “educational equity gaps” throughout the system.<sup>41</sup> Like many other institutions in the wake of the George Floyd protests and riots, the USHE promised swift action, including efforts led by the system’s Chief Diversity Officers: “We value their expertise in co-leading equity and justice conversations with their institutional presidents and senior leadership to ensure inclusive campus learning environments for students.”<sup>42</sup> The Statement committed USHE to embed DEI as a policy priority throughout its component universities: “We have created a new position in the Commissioner’s office—the State Diversity and Inclusion Director—to ensure that elements of equity, diversity, and inclusion are embedded as imperative elements in the mission, vision, and strategic plan of the Utah Board of Higher Education.”<sup>43</sup> The document concluded: “As we move forward in this important work of equity and justice, we encourage our institutional communities to continue reviewing and revising all institutional policies and procedures that create structural barriers to student, faculty, and staff success.”<sup>44</sup>

The Statement set in motion a cascade of DEI policies that has affected all of Utah’s public universities. Many universities in the system had, indeed, already begun building a DEI bureaucracy. These efforts increased substantially in 2020, with the USHE setting the tone. Throughout the system, universities announced new plans and policies to increase the role of DEI on campus. These policies were initiated at all administrative levels, from academic

41 Statement from the Utah System of Higher Education on Racial & Social Injustice, Utah System of Higher Education, June 11, 2020, <https://ushe.edu/statement-from-the-utah-system-of-higher-education-on-racial-social-injustice/>.

42 Statement from the Utah System of Higher Education on Racial & Social Injustice.

43 Statement from the Utah System of Higher Education on Racial & Social Injustice.

44 Statement from the Utah System of Higher Education on Racial & Social Injustice.

departments to university presidents' offices to the USHE, making clear that the system is united in embracing the DEI bureaucracy as the carrier of its institutional values.

On December 19, 2020, the *Deseret News* reported that the USHE had announced its “equity lens framework,” which “encompasses critical equity questions, shared beliefs and common definitions that organizations can continually evaluate existing or new strategies, policies or initiatives.”<sup>45</sup> Per this framework, the notion of “equity” should guide the system’s decisions. In an op-ed in *The Salt Lake Tribune*, three USHE Board members articulated their reasoning, specifically citing concerns over *accessibility*. “Following the adoption of that resolution, the board approved using an Equity Lens Framework to be used when evaluating any existing or new strategy, policy or initiative, in order to identify what can be done to make higher education more accessible to students of all backgrounds.”<sup>46</sup>

That “Equity Lens”—designed as a guide to all decisions in the USHE—was explicitly informed by the tenets of critical race theory. As the framework states, “The USHE Equity Lens employs an anti-racist, equity-focused framework with Critical Race Theory as a cornerstone.”<sup>47</sup> The text of the framework makes clear that this must involve embedding the concepts of *equity*, *intersectionality*, and *culturally responsive pedagogy* as guiding principles throughout the entire system.

#### Utah System of Higher Education Equity Lens Framework, Selected Shared Beliefs

“We believe that every student has the ability to learn, and that the System has an ethical and moral responsibility to ensure optimal learning and workplace environments exist on USHE campuses for all students, faculty, and staff.”

“We celebrate those qualities and are committed to culturally responsive support and academic pathways for students.”

“We believe that all students should graduate from college having better cultural awareness and a greater understanding of why diversity, equity, and inclusion are important values that will help them be better workforce participants, community members, and global citizens.”

“Finally, we believe in the importance of instruction, processes, policies, goals, and strategies that adapt to the changing global society. An equitable education system requires we provide faculty and staff with the tools and support necessary to meet the needs of each student.”

The language of the framework is somewhat vague, but it clearly communicates the priorities associated with DEI.

45 Marjorie Cortez, “Higher ed board adopts guide to look at its decisions through an ‘equity lens,’” *Deseret News*, December 19, 2020, <https://www.deseret.com/utah/2020/12/19/22188996/utah-equity-higher-ed-board-lens-framework-anti-racism>.

46 Harris H. Simmons, Shawn Newell, and Lisa Michele Church, “Commentary: Strengthening Utah’s colleges and universities through equity, diversity and inclusion,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, May 27, 2021, <https://www.sltrib.com/opinion/commentary/2021/05/27/commentary-strengthening/>.

47 Utah System of Higher Education Equity Lens Framework, Utah System of Higher Education, December 18, 2020, [https://ushe.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf/edi/20201218\\_USHE\\_Equity\\_Lens\\_Framework.pdf](https://ushe.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf/edi/20201218_USHE_Equity_Lens_Framework.pdf).

### Utah System of Higher Education Equity Lens Framework, Selected Definitions

Culturally responsive: Recognizing the diverse cultural characteristics and knowledge of learners as assets. Culturally responsive teaching and advising empower students intellectually, socially, and emotionally by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Intersectionality: The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; a theoretical approach based on such a premise.

Marginalization: The process through which persons are peripheralized based on their identities, associations, experiences, and environment. (“LGBTQIA+, veterans, students with disabilities, previously incarcerated, and students facing food, housing, or technology insecurity are all examples of marginalized student groups. These students or student groups may be treated or feel as insignificant or unseen on a college campus.”)

Again, while these USHE guidelines set the tone, many of the universities within the system had already initiated their own extensive DEI reforms, further compounding the DEI revolution taking place throughout American higher education.

## The University of Utah

On March 22, 2022, the University of Utah held its first Day of Collective Action, sponsored by the university’s Presidential Commission on Equity and Belonging.<sup>48</sup> The event functioned as a small component of a larger effort at the university aimed at the vague but increasingly mandatory goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In the opening lecture, Christopher Whitt, vice chancellor for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the University of Denver, discussed the “Origins of Anti-Blackness.”<sup>49</sup> The take-away from that session could serve as a template for the rest of the day. Its main message was that the university must invest more in diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. The recommendations from the session included “Consider[ing] pedagogical development and training on EDI in classrooms,” “Updating admissions practices across the university to consider new ways to evaluate applicants (‘holistic admissions’),” and “Updat[ing] hiring, on-boarding and HR practices to increase faculty and staff sense of belonging.”

This was followed by a series of half-hour talks given by students, which included “The Struggles of an Undocumented Student Navigating Higher Ed” and “I am not your model minority.”<sup>50</sup> Each session concluded with recommendations, all of which included demands for more DEI measures at the university. One student called for “training in cultural competency and equity, diversity and inclusion.”<sup>51</sup> Another called on the university to “institutionalize

48 University of Utah Communications, “Day of Collective Action overview,” At The U, March 25, 2022, <https://attheu.utah.edu/facultystaff/day-of-collective-action-overview/>.

49 Andrew Thompson Landerghini and Rebecca Walsh, “Origins of U.S. anti-Blackness linger,” At The U, March 25, 2022, <https://attheu.utah.edu/equity-diversity/origins-of-u-s-anti-blackness-linger-throughout-society-and-higher-education/>.

50 University of Utah Communications, “Day of Collective Action overview,” At The U, March 25, 2022, <https://attheu.utah.edu/facultystaff/day-of-collective-action-overview/>.

51 “Day of Collective Action overview.”

diverse leadership and faculty through diversity statements in hiring processes, student feedback in hiring and mentorship for faculty who are diverse” and for faculty to “list affinity organizations in your syllabi along with your diversity statement.”<sup>52</sup>

Two 75-minute sessions explored the topic of “Indigenizing the U,” the second of which focused specifically on moving from theory to action, including “allyship strategies and best practices to create an inclusive campus community.”<sup>53</sup> The key takeaways, again, emphasized the primacy of identity (“Something non-Natives can do is amplify Native voices and follow their lead”), the omnipresence of oppression (“It is the responsibility of non-Native peoples who build the current systems of oppression to disrupt it”), and the importance of ongoing diversity recruitment (“The U must make assertive hires of Indigenous Peoples at all staff and faculty levels”).<sup>54</sup>

Another session highlighted a fast-emerging trend in higher education: mandatory “diversity statements.” In a lecture titled “Understanding and Developing Diversity Statements,” David Hawkins-Jacinto, a professor in the university’s Department of Writing and Rhetoric Studies, explained how other professors could master the trend. Hawkins-Jacinto cited increasing calls for diversity statements throughout academia, noted that the trend is especially clear at prestigious institutions, and encouraged faculty to “think of their diversity statements as a Diversity Action Plan and Practices.”<sup>55</sup> The article summarizing the talk put it ever more overtly: “You need a personal diversity statement.” The article makes clear that “diversity work” should be a central component of one’s vocation:

Your personal statement isn’t just about documenting the work though—it’s also about acknowledging that more needs to be done. Presenting a personal statement on diversity can open up dialogue among others and help those who need to develop greater competencies when it comes to diversity work. It also can serve as a reminder that diversity work cannot be an afterthought, but instead must be considered every day, with every action.<sup>56</sup>

Many other sessions, whether on “restorative justice” or “inclusive design and design justice,” made the same point—namely, that no aspect of the university should go untouched by the perpetual considerations of diversity, equity, and inclusion, however defined.

Thus, with the watchwords of identity politics always in the background, the University of Utah hosted an event that declared the ongoing need for DEI institutional measures. Such

52 “Day of Collective Action overview.”

53 Morgan Aguilar, “Indigenizing the U,” At The U, March 24, 2022, <https://attheu.utah.edu/facultystaff/indigenizing-the-u/>.

54 “Indigenizing the U.”

55 Libby Mitchell, “You need a personal diversity statement,” At The U, March 25, 2022, <https://attheu.utah.edu/facultystaff/you-need-a-personal-diversity-statement/>.

56 “You need a personal diversity statement.”

an event is notable not because of any unique content—indeed, many of the lectures repeated the mantra easily found at any other university. Rather, the event was notable because it represents one of the most enduring and coherent messages at Utah’s universities today.

## Call to Action

The Day of Collective Action was filled with calls for more DEI measures, and it was an offshoot of a broader trend at the University of Utah. In the summer of 2020, the University of Utah released a statement of solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. According to the statement, the university committed itself to collectively processing “the wounds that have been inflicted with the injustices and deaths of all the named and unnamed people over the past 400 years.”<sup>57</sup> This institutional self-reflection required institutional reform. “We must come to terms with our unpleasant realities,” the statement declared.

So while the University of Utah has not yet issued any formal diversity strategic plan, it nevertheless has listed several commitments that would expand the reach of DEI measures.

### University of Utah, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion Commitments

Revolutionizing practices that establish a culture of belonging and expand the university’s actions towards a diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus. We will start by examining our division’s policies and practices related to hiring, retention, staff wellness, and support.

Continuing to work with Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Pacific Islander, Asian/Asian American, and Queer scholars and practitioners, as well as scholars and practitioners with disabilities, who can help lead us in racial justice, social justice, and racial healing work.

Identifying required training to departments/schools/colleges throughout the university and the University Hospital focused on fostering a culture dedicated to equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism.

Establishing spaces for people to process racial injustices and hold the tough, uncomfortable conversations necessary in our collective journey toward racial healing.

Providing opportunities for all community members to educate themselves about anti-Black racism and the pervasive racism that impacts all our lives.<sup>58</sup>

These commitments establish an institutional theme. They are not only far-reaching—influencing scholarship, student and faculty training, and hiring practices—but they also initiate a cycle whereby more DEI measures can eventually be created. It is out of these commitments that the Collective Day of Action arose—which, as noted above, led to a chorus of calls for more DEI programming throughout the university. DEI is ascendent at the University of Utah—because of the deliberate policy choices made by the University of Utah administration.

<sup>57</sup> Diversity Call to Action, University of Utah, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://diversity.utah.edu/annual-events/call-2020/>

<sup>58</sup> “Call to Action.”

## Utah State University

In 2019, Utah State University hosted its “Inclusive Excellence Symposium,” which was introduced by President Noelle Cockett.<sup>59</sup> In her opening address, Cockett asserted that the values of “diversity, inclusion, and respect” are “the heart of our mission” and that the symposium’s theme—“disrupt”—could help the audience understand how to spread the message of diversity and inclusion.<sup>60</sup> Through a keynote address and dozens of breakout sessions, attendees were given ample opportunity to explore that theme, considering various forms of “disruption” in higher education.

Crystal Marie Fleming delivered the keynote address, titled “How to Be Less Stupid About Race.” “Drawing upon critical race theory,” the symposium website notes, “as well as her own experiences as a queer black millennial college professor and researcher, Fleming unveils how systemic racism exposes us all to racial ignorance.”<sup>61</sup> Fleming also encourages moving from theory to praxis, providing “a road map for transforming our knowledge into concrete social change.”<sup>62</sup>

While the keynote address made clear that embracing “inclusive excellence” means pursuing “concrete social change,” the breakout sessions provided examples of how to create such change. Sessions included “Disrupting Barriers to Inclusive Education Practices,” which “engaged students, staff, and faculty in an interdisciplinary training to break down barriers in inclusive education practices”; “LGBTQA+,” which reviewed the definitions of “sex-assigned-at-birth, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation”; and “All Lives Matter but Not All of Them Belong,” where attendees “participated in a discussion about creating and implementing strategies to combat exclusionary behavior with the goal of creating more inclusive environments.”<sup>63</sup>

The session titled “Decentering Whiteness: Radical Inclusion in Teaching and Research,” which was led by several scholars at Utah State University, provided some of the most concrete steps for university personnel to embrace. The session focused on teaching, research, and curricula, and it remained true to the theme of the symposium, “disrupt.”

Decolonial work must begin with an an [*sic*] enactment of value-laden beliefs that are based upon restoring and respecting the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples, lands, and knowledges, supporting community-developed aspirations, and supporting the changing and improving of unjust conditions.<sup>64</sup>

59 Inclusive Excellence Symposium - 2019, Utah State University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://www.usu.edu/think-care-act/events/inclusive-excellence-symposium/symposium-2019>.

60 Noelle Cockett, “2019 - Inclusive Excellence Symposium,” Utah State University, YouTube, September 17, 2021, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wRafcXK43s&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wRafcXK43s&feature=emb_title).

61 Inclusive Excellence Symposium - 2019, Utah State University.

62 Inclusive Excellence Symposium - 2019, Utah State University.

63 Inclusive Excellence Symposium - 2019, Utah State University.

64 “Decentering Whiteness: Radical Inclusion in Teaching and Research,” Utah State University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://www.usu.edu/think-care-act/files/inclusive-excellence-symposium/2019/decentering-whiteness.pdf>.

Another slide adds that “Calling something ‘decolonial’ when it isn’t about actively dismantling the effects of settler-colonialism and restoring and respecting Indigenous sovereignty colonizes decoloniality.”<sup>65</sup> Thus, decolonizing is not only vital, but as the session title suggests, it must be “radical,” demanding a wholesale transformation of scholarly practice. Another slide lists necessary, but not sufficient, steps toward decolonizing: “Diversify your syllabus and curriculum,” “Digress from the cannon [*sic*],” “Decenter knowledge and knowledge production,” “Devalue hierarchies,” “Disinvest from citational power structures,” and “Diminish some voices and opinions in the overall academic practice, while magnifying others.”<sup>66</sup>

The last slide concludes:

While I yearn for the day when my body won’t need to be distinguished as an Indigenous scholar—we are not there yet.

Until then, my non-dominant cultural identity (identifiable by my racialized name and sacred tribal markings) will stand in the way of my work being given an equal level of scholarly consideration as my dominant-culture contemporaries.<sup>67</sup>

## A Forthcoming Plan

Utah State has put these words into action. That same year, through the initiative of President Cockett, Utah State also introduced its “Task Force to Address Diversity and Inclusion,” charged with “Conducting a campus climate assessment on university inclusion,” “Developing a five-year strategic plan for diversity and inclusion at USU,” and “Convening key players on a regular basis to oversee implementation of the strategic plan.”<sup>68</sup> One key area for the Task Force’s reform: “Training, Instruction and Research.” While the annual “inclusive excellence” symposium called for concrete change, the President’s Office organized a group that could turn theories of diversity and inclusive pedagogy into institutional policy.

Since the beginning of her tenure, Cockett has emphasized the importance of diversity and inclusion. The Task Force stands out as potentially the most consequential of her initiatives, but it isn’t the only initiative. In 2019, the university established the Center

65 “Decentering Whiteness.”

66 “Decentering Whiteness.”

67 “Decentering Whiteness.”

68 Amanda DeRito, “USU President Creates Task Force to Address Diversity and Inclusion,” *Utah State Today*, March 7, 2019, <https://www.usu.edu/today/story/usu-president-creates-task-force-to-address-diversity-and-inclusion#:~:text=Utah%20State%20University%20President%20Noelle%20Cockett%20announced%20plans%20today%20for,and%20staff%20across%20USU%20campuses.>

for Intersectional Gender Studies and Research, which “features a new approach to past Women’s Center and Women’s Study academic programs.”<sup>69</sup> That program now offers a minor in “Intersectional Gender Studies” and “Sexuality Studies,” along with a certificate in “Inclusive Leadership.”<sup>70</sup> The intersectionality minor requires students to take IGS 1010 *Introduction to Intersectional Gender Studies*, IGS 3010: *Inclusive Leadership & Community Engagement*, and IGS 5910 *Intersectional Feminist Theories*.<sup>71</sup>

By all indicators, the work of the Task Force has only begun—and campus-wide policy changes are on their way. In June of 2021, the university released its first climate survey, which, according to the Task Force’s co-chair, “is being used by the task force in outlining strategic objectives for diversity, equity and inclusion.”<sup>72</sup> In July, Cockett announced that the university would hire a vice president for diversity, equity, and inclusion, along with two other diversity and inclusion officers.<sup>73</sup>

In October 2021, Cockett again addressed the university’s “Inclusive Excellence Symposium.”<sup>74</sup> She spoke of things to come: “The university’s equity and inclusion task force has prepared recommendations that will jumpstart the new vice president in incorporating equity and inclusion in all we do and for all we serve.”<sup>75</sup> The details of this new overhaul have yet to be released, but by all indicators, they will indeed constitute a thorough transformation.

## Weber State University

In the fall of 2021, Weber State University hosted its annual Diversity Conference on the topic of free speech.<sup>76</sup> The conference promised a good-faith engagement with a fraught issue, asking “What does Freedom of Speech mean?” “What does it look like for our country and the various communities that live within?” and “Is Freedom of Speech truly free speech in all aspects of this thing we call life?”<sup>77</sup> The keynote speaker, however, was Kimberlé Crenshaw, best known for developing the concepts of intersectionality and critical race theory.<sup>78</sup>

69 Lyndi Robins, “Intersections programs to form leaders in a diverse world,” Utah State University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://chass.usu.edu/liberalis/news/archive/summer-2021/cigrs-new-minors>.

70 New Academic Programs, Center for Intersectional Gender Studies and Research, Utah State University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://www.usu.edu/intersections/courses-and-degrees/index>.

71 Intersectional Gender Studies Minor, Utah State University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://www.usu.edu/intersections/courses-and-degrees/intersectional-gender-studies>.

72 “USU Releases Results from First Diversity Campus Climate Survey,” *Utah State Today*, June 3, 2021, <https://www.usu.edu/today/story/usu-releases-results-from-first-diversity-campus-climate-survey>.

73 “USU to Hire Leader for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion,” *Utah State Today*, July 28, 2021, <https://www.usu.edu/today/story/usu-to-hire-leader-for-diversity-equity-and-inclusion>.

74 USU’s Annual Inclusive Excellence Symposium, Utah State University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://www.usu.edu/think-care-act/events/inclusive-excellence-symposium/>.

75 Noelle Cockett, “President Noelle Cockett - Inclusive Excellence Symposium 2021,” Utah State University, YouTube, October 20, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOYAwwqy0FE>.

76 “WSU’s 23rd Annual Diversity Conference to Explore Free Speech,” Weber State University, September 23, 2021, [https://www.weber.edu/WSUToday/092421\\_DiversityConference.html](https://www.weber.edu/WSUToday/092421_DiversityConference.html).

77 2021 Annual WSU Diversity Conference, Weber State University, accessed June 12, 2022, <https://www.weber.edu/diversity/diversityconference.html>.

78 2021 Annual WSU Diversity Conference, Weber State University.



There is some irony in inviting an expert on critical race theory to reflect on the value of free speech. But the choice reflects the general emphasis of Weber State University, which keeps its thumb on the ideological scale, most obviously through its extensive DEI measures.

## Unit-Level Efforts

The university's Office of Diversity offers a menu of voluntary diversity activities, from lectures to campus engagement opportunities. The office's webpage provides resources on "Creating Change"<sup>79</sup> (which include such materials as "12 Ways You Can Be an Activist" and "Anti-Racist Resource Guide") and "Intersectionality"<sup>80</sup> (which recommends a TED Talk by Kimberlé Crenshaw). It likewise lists numerous organizations for the purpose of "Community Outreach," many of which embrace partisan political priorities.<sup>81</sup>

Several schools and departments also highlight their commitment to DEI. In June 2020, the dean of the university's library published a letter, promising to "interrogate our systems and make structural changes that advance anti-racism."<sup>82</sup> Following that letter, the library published a longer list of commitments, which included "Continued self and collective education," "Policy review," and "Curriculum revision"—revisions that would entail revising the "curriculum in LIBS 1704, including learning outcomes and assessments, to integrate anti-racist and anti-oppressive approaches."<sup>83</sup> Likewise, the Goddard School of Business & Economics' diversity statement promises to conduct "a pedagogy and curriculum review."<sup>84</sup>

## University Commitment

These commitments at the departmental level reflect priorities set by the university as a whole, most notably those priorities established in Weber State University's Strategic Plan. The university's five-year strategic plan, which was created in 2020, explicitly references the Utah System of Higher Education Equity Framework, noting, for example, "Equity is a statewide priority. An equity framework is, therefore, integrated into all of the goals, outcomes, and strategies in the WSU Strategic Plan."<sup>85</sup>

79 Creating Change, Weber State University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://www.weber.edu/DiversityOffice/creating-change.html>.

80 Intersectionality, Weber State University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://weber.edu/DiversityOffice/intersectionality.html>.

81 Campus Engagement, Weber State University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://weber.edu/DiversityOffice/campus-engagement.html>.

82 Wendy Holliday, "July 2020 Statement on Anti-Racism," Stewart Library, Weber State University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://library.weber.edu/about/anti-racism-statement>.

83 Equity, Justice, and Anti-Racism at Stewart Library, Weber State University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://library.weber.edu/about/equity-justice-anti-racism>.

84 Our Commitment to Equity, Diversity & Inclusion, Goddard School of Business & Economics, Weber State University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://weber.edu/goddard/DEI.html>.

85 Strategic Plan, Weber State University, <https://www.weber.edu/strategic-plan>.

Like the USHE, Weber State points to disparities as the impetus for its framework. The existence of these disparities justifies far-reaching measures. “Disparities in access and educational attainment pervade higher education,” the strategic plan notes. “In order to eliminate these disparities, we must adopt a framework that defines equity as ‘an actionable concept of quality and practice.’ The framework must pervade the entire institution rather than be viewed as an add-on without institution-wide commitment and accountability.”<sup>86</sup>

What does this look like in practice? The “Goals, Strategies, and Outcomes” for the strategic plan make this commitment even more concrete. The most notable goal prescribes a commitment to equity and inclusion as a litmus test for hiring and good standing: “A commitment to equity-minded and inclusive practices will be a job qualification and performance criterion for 100% of university positions.”<sup>87</sup> Thus, in order to achieve the goal of equity, Weber State University has embraced an ideological litmus test for all university employees.

## Southern Utah University

At Southern Utah University, the Office of Equity and Inclusion issued a “Shared Language” guide, an “introduction to several key terms that are often a part of discussions around equity and inclusion.”<sup>88</sup> That guide draws heavily from the Utah System of Higher Education Equity Lens Framework, and it articulates the university’s emphasis on diversity and equity.

### Office of Equity and Inclusion, Shared Language, Selected Definitions

**Anti-Racism:** Anti-racism is the active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices, and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably.

**Counter-Narrative:** Counter-narrative refers to the narratives that arise from the vantage point of those who have been historically marginalized. ... The idea of “counter-” itself implies a space of resistance against traditional domination. A counter-narrative goes beyond the notion that those in relative positions of power can just tell the stories of those in the margins.

This includes assessing, identifying, acknowledging, and addressing system policies and initiatives supporting and/or sustaining inequity and disparities. In other words, the goals and expectations are the same for all community members, but the supports needed to achieve those goals depends on the members’ needs.

**Heteronormative:** A term coined by social theorist and literary critic Michael Warner in 1991 to identify the ways in which social institutions and dominant culture are oriented around the assumed normal, natural, and ideal logic of heterosexual attraction and unions.

Heterosexuality itself is premised upon the idea that there are two distinct sexes (male and female) and associated genders (masculine and feminine) that are inherently opposite and complementary for the purpose of reproduction and the organizing of life’s activities. (See Sexism)

<sup>86</sup> Strategic Plan.

<sup>87</sup> Goals, Outcomes & Strategies, Weber State University, <https://weber.edu/strategic-plan/goals-outcomes-strategies.html>.

<sup>88</sup> Shared Language, Office of Equity & Inclusion, Southern Utah University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://www.suu.edu/equity/pdf/shared-language-standards-compressed.pdf>.

The guide, in short, is a mashup of diversity and inclusion buzzwords—one that utilizes cartoon graphics designed for elementary-aged children. Though the School of Business links to it as a resource, it stands out primarily for its triviality.<sup>89</sup> But it also symbolizes a transformation taking place at Southern Utah University, where the watchwords of identity politics, clumsily expressed in the “Shared Language” guide, have become institutionalized.

## The DEI Strategic Plan

In 2019, Southern Utah University adopted its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan. “SUU is committed to fostering an inclusive community of lifelong learners,” the introduction to the plan reads. “We encourage our community members to make observations and inquires [*sic*] through an intersectional lens.”<sup>90</sup> The plan’s many steps, designed to create this “intersectional lens,” make the values denoted by “diversity, equity, and inclusion” a *de facto* job requirement for all employees.

### Southern Utah University, DEI Strategic Plan, Selected Measures

Ensure commitment to diversity at every level of the University through the development and implementation of a comprehensive Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan by each academic and administrative department and division. DEI Plans will include detailed initiatives and hiring plans. Plans will be submitted to the Office of Equity and Inclusion.

Create the Office of Equity and Inclusion, which will remain a part of the Office of the President.

Establish a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee to address the on-going needs of the campus community and make recommendations to the CDO.

Provide and support ongoing opportunities for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion education, training and programs.

Provide cultural competency training to recruiting staff.

Incorporate diversity as a performance dimension within the tenure and promotion process for faculty. (How well an employee or unit engages in efforts to promote and support diversity, equity and inclusion.)

Incorporate diversity as a performance dimension within the annual employee performance appraisal process for administrative and professional staff. (How well employee or unit engages in efforts to promote and support diversity, equity and inclusion.)<sup>91</sup>

Thus, Southern Utah University calls for DEI goals at all levels of the university, to be achieved by multiple stakeholders and imposed upon all employees, without regard for questions of academic freedom.

89 School of Business Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee, Southern Utah University, , accessed May 20, 2022, <https://www.suu.edu/business/diversity.html>.

90 Diversity Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan 2019 – 2024, Southern Utah University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://www.suu.edu/equity/pdf/dei-strat-plan.pdf>.

91 Diversity Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan 2019 – 2024.

## Utah Valley University

On June 1, 2020, the chief administrators of Utah Valley University issued a letter on diversity and inclusion. The letter highlighted the university's new Inclusion Plan, which had been developed prior to the widespread protests and riots of 2020. "We will work daily," the letter concluded, "on words and actions that will enlarge understanding, empathy, and love."<sup>92</sup>

That statement gave new impetus to an ongoing project at Utah Valley University. The university had already spent 18 months developing its 2020 Inclusion Plan, a plan that is exhaustive in scope.<sup>93</sup> In addition to university-level reforms, the plan calls for additional actions at the departmental level. This is an increasingly common strategy for encoding the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion into institutional bureaucracies. The result, then, is a multilayered effort, which makes DEI one of the most important guiding principles of the university's governance. Below we organize the plan's initiatives into two general categories: training and evaluation.

### Utah Valley University, Inclusion Plan Policies, Training

Increase staff participation by 20% in professional development opportunities that are focused on advancing inclusion, diversity, and equity

Market available local conferences that focus on employee development based on inclusion, diversity, and equity

Benchmark and co-sponsor events, educational workshops, and activities to raise awareness on issues including (but not limited to) inclusion, diversity, equity, biases, and microaggressions

Increase the number of faculty with expertise in inclusion, diversity, and equity in the development, delivery, and participation in Foundations of Inclusion (FOI) Workshop Series by 10% each year

Integrate gender identity and expression, LGBTQ+, and intersectional identity-related discussion into student programs, trainings, and workshops

Integrate gender identity and expression, LGBTQ+, and intersectional identity-related education into faculty programs, trainings, and workshops

Integrate gender identity and expression, LGBTQ+, and intersectional identity-related education into staff programs, trainings, and workshops<sup>94</sup>

The plan, in other words, mandates universal training, effectively required for students, staff, and faculty. This training, moreover, must embrace concepts that carry political connotations, often overt connotations. These themes include diversity, equity, inclusion,

92 "A Message of Diversity and Inclusion," Utah Valley University, June 1, 2020, [https://www.uvu.edu/news/2020/06/06012020\\_inclusion.html](https://www.uvu.edu/news/2020/06/06012020_inclusion.html).

93 Inclusion and Diversity, Utah Valley University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://www.uvu.edu/inclusion/#:~:text=Exceptional%20Care%20in%20Inclusion&text=At%20UVU%2C%20include%20is%20an,feedback%20from%20our%20community%20stakeholders>.

94 Inclusion Plan 2020-2024, Utah Valley University, [https://www.uvu.edu/inclusion/docs/inclusion\\_plan2020-2024.pdf](https://www.uvu.edu/inclusion/docs/inclusion_plan2020-2024.pdf).

microaggressions, bias, intersectionality, and gender identity and expression. Few would contest that these are the watchwords of a specific political ideology.

Utah Valley University, however, goes further. Not only does the institution require training in political concepts; it encodes these concepts as *de facto* job requirements.

#### **Utah Valley University, Inclusion Plan Policies, Evaluation**

Integrate inclusion, equity, and diversity goals into annual faculty reviews across each college and department

Provide faculty with resources and educational workshops to incorporate a wider range of pedagogical strategies and inclusive classroom practices to facilitate the curriculum

Incorporate inclusion, equity, and diversity goals into strategic plans and annual performance reviews across departments and divisions

Integrate inclusion, equity, and diversity goals at the executive level

Develop a process and method to review, assess, and construct policy through an equity framework and lens<sup>95</sup>

Thus, Utah Valley University embraces the trend of establishing a commitment to diversity and inclusion as a litmus test for faculty, staff, and administrators. Such policies violate academic freedom and enforce conformity to a narrow set of views. They set the stage for politically motivated research and diluted educational standards, all in the name of equity.

## **Utah Tech University**

The DEI programming at Utah Tech University is minimal. The university hosts a Center for Inclusion and Belonging, which advertises its services as advisement, mentoring, orientation (including “university-preparatory workshops”), personal counseling, and student organizations.<sup>96</sup> The center’s website advertises a few student organizations and DEI scholarships. The page suggests very few institutional policies, and ultimately a small DEI “footprint” at Utah Tech.

<sup>95</sup> Inclusion Plan 2020-2024, Utah Valley University, [https://www.uvu.edu/inclusion/docs/inclusion\\_plan2020-2024.pdf](https://www.uvu.edu/inclusion/docs/inclusion_plan2020-2024.pdf).

<sup>96</sup> Center for Inclusion and Belonging, Utah Tech University, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://cib.utahtech.edu/>.

# Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Utah's public universities obey state law and possess minimal curricular requirements regarding American history and civics. Utah's universities do offer some robust courses in the category of "American Institutions"—but they can be easily sidelined. We have also found growing efforts to institutionalize the concepts of *diversity, equity, and inclusion*, driven by the concept of "intersectionality." These DEI measures, enthusiastically enforced by a growing host of advocates within the public universities' administration and faculty, provide an anti-civics education that exerts a far more powerful effect on students at Utah's public universities than does its weak American Institutions mandate.

In light of these developments, we make the following recommendations for Utah policymakers.

**Strengthen the American Institutions requirement.** Utah's current American Institutions requirement is a good start, but more can and should be done. If Utah takes its civic mission seriously, it should establish a more robust engagement with American history and government. Moreover, the DEI revolution under way in higher education makes imperative a strengthened American Institutions requirement. We recommend three steps along these lines:

- 1. Require more civics education courses.** Require four courses in American history and government, specifying that one course in Utah state government and history will count toward this requirement.
- 2. Create robust course guidelines.** Mandate that these courses be survey courses, not focusing on special topics in American history and government. Such courses

should cover key texts in American history, important principles related to American government, and major Supreme Court decisions. A good example of such survey courses would be HIST 2700 *United States to 1877* and HIST 2710 *United States 1877 to Present*.

3. **Craft guidelines for qualifying Concurrent Enrollment courses.** Utah state policymakers should use their greater powers over K-12 curriculum to ensure that high school students can take courses that fulfill the spirit of the American Institutions requirement. This reform will allow Utah students to avoid the chokepoint of American Institutions courses in college taught by DEI advocates. Utah policymakers should be sure to staff the commission that creates the requirements for these Concurrent Enrollment courses with reformers who are independent of the DEI establishment.

**Curtail the DEI bureaucracy.** At most of Utah’s public universities, the DEI bureaucracy is ascendent and self-perpetuating. Many DEI initiatives include the call for more initiatives, an expansion of the bureaucratic apparatus and its reach. This being the case, policymakers should consider an array of options to stand as a backstop against increasingly extensive DEI requirements. We recommend three:

1. **Protect academic freedom and freedom of conscience.**
  - a. Prohibit the use of diversity statements or criteria for admissions, hiring, evaluations, or promotion.
  - b. Prohibit the use of mandatory trainings on diversity, equity, and inclusion.<sup>97</sup>
2. **Ensure transparency.**
  - a. Ensure that all orientations and training sessions related to diversity, equity, and inclusion for students, staff, and faculty are recorded and posted online for public access.
  - b. Ensure that all course syllabi will be posted online seven days prior to the beginning of class.<sup>98</sup>
3. **Establish an academic freedom bureaucracy.**
  - a. Create an office to enforce matters relating to academic freedom, free speech, due process, and transparency.<sup>99</sup>

97 E.g., Campus Intellectual Diversity Act, Civics Alliance, <https://civicsalliance.org/campus-intellectual-diversity-act/>; Universities Nondiscrimination Act, Civics Alliance, <https://civicsalliance.org/universities-nondiscrimination-act/>.

98 E.g., Syllabus Transparency Act, Civics Alliance, <https://civicsalliance.org/syllabus-transparency-act/>.

99 E.g., Ombudsman Act, Civics Alliance, <https://civicsalliance.org/ombudsman-act/>.

## Conclusion

Increasingly, students in Utah's public universities are more likely to glean knowledge of America's political history not through their required courses—which are minimal—but through growing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. The content of the formal curriculum, the American Institutions courses, runs the risk of becoming overshadowed and even shaped by these initiatives. Such initiatives place demands on what and how faculty can teach, and increasingly, Utah's universities explicitly ask faculty members to demonstrate their commitment to DEI. Policymakers and citizens alike should call for real reform. Otherwise, diversity, equity, and inclusion could soon become the only substantive civics education required throughout Utah's institutions of higher education.





