

United States Senate

COMMITTEES:
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
FINANCE
JOINT ECONOMIC
JUDICIARY
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

July 23, 2025

Donde Plowman
Chancellor, University of Tennessee
1015 Volunteer Blvd
Knoxville, TN 37996

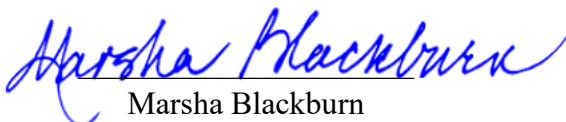
Dear Chancellor Plowman:

I write to express my concern regarding reports that the University of Tennessee-Knoxville (UTK) is concealing its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs instead of fully complying with President Trump's executive action to end wasteful DEI programs in educational institutions.¹ For the benefit of UTK students and our state, I urge you to end all DEI programs and fully comply with the President's executive action.

Leaked footage shows UTK employees discussing how the University is concealing woke DEI programs by renaming them while continuing to push the harmful content. In one video, a UTK employee said that the DEI programs had not been abandoned and, "[They have] been fully committed to the work of DEI." He goes on to say, "these committees and task forces were built back in 2020 and they're still up and running... it's just in terms of some of these bills... they know how to navigate the language within the bills to ensure that DEI is protected."

Renaming woke DEI programs to circumvent compliance and public scrutiny degrades the educational experience of your students and the trust placed in institutions of higher education like Vanderbilt. As a beneficiary of federal funding, UTK has a responsibility to align with the President's executive order and return to a focus on providing quality education to your students. I look forward to working with you to ensure that UTK remains a preeminent institution for research and workforce development.

Sincerely,


Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator

¹ See Exec. Order No. 14,173.