

**Resolution Defending Academic Freedom as it Relates to  
Teaching about Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Critical Race Theory  
at the University of Michigan**

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

**WHEREAS** In Michigan, a Senate measure was introduced in May 2021 (debated in October 2021) barring K-12 public schools from teaching “critical race theory”, any part of the *New York Times’ 1619 Project*, or other “anti-American and racist theories” with a 5% penalty funding cut for schools that defy the order. In November 2021, a related [measure](#) passed the Michigan House of Representatives; and

**WHEREAS** these legislative proposals vary in scope but all seek to prohibit or restrict what they often call “divisive concepts” in the teaching and education of students; and

**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; and

**WHEREAS** a hundred and forty five organizations have co-signed the [Joint Statement on Legislative Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism and American History](#) authored by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Historical Association (AHA), the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) and PEN America posing a “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;”, and

**WHEREAS** a 2010 adopted [Senate Assembly Statement on Academic Freedom](#), defines, the freedom of teaching as: “Faculty members must be able not only to disseminate to their students the results of research by themselves and others in their profession, but also to train students to think about these results for themselves, often in an atmosphere of controversy that, so long as it remains in a broad sense educationally relevant, actively assists students in mastering the subject and appreciating its significance.”; and

**WHEREAS** The Regent’s bylaws regarding Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action states “The University of Michigan is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, height, weight, or veteran status.”; and

**WHEREAS** a guiding principle for the mission of the University is the provision of an environment in which the exchange of ideas is free from racism, sexism and other forms of prejudice and intolerance, although the contents of those exchanges may engage with these topics; and

**WHEREAS** alarming movements across the country related to these issues are occurring, as in Texas, where educators were directed to teach “both sides” of the Holocaust, in compliance with a bill curbing the teaching of history; in Georgia, where the university system enacted new moves to remove the protections of tenure; and

**WHEREAS** in a nation that has for centuries struggled with issues of racial and gender inequity and injustice, many students do not have adequate knowledge of BIPOC and LGBTQIA history and the policies and institutions that have contributed to inequities, the University has a responsibility and opportunity to work towards equity and social justice; and

**WHEREAS** educating about systemic barriers to realizing a multiracial democracy based on race or gender should be understood as central to developing engaged and informed citizens; and

**WHEREAS** in a [message to the university community](#) regarding the case of George Floyd, the Regents stated, “We cannot be bystanders on such crucial issues of racial justice and live up to the highest values of a public university.”

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Faculty Senate resolutely rejects all 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 stand firmly against encroachment on faculty authority by legislative bodies;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Faculty Senate stands with our K-12 colleagues throughout the country who may be affected by legislation of this ilk;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Faculty Senate calls upon President Coleman and Provost Collins 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 legislative bodies.