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Subject: FW: Governor"s Weekly Column: Choosing Educational Excellence Over Ideology
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Subject: Governor's Weekly Column: Choosing Educational Excellence Over Ideology

Governor Pete Ricketts
Growing Nebraska for the Next Generation

Choosing Educational Excellence Over Ideology
By Governor Pete Ricketts
November 30, 2021

Governor's official photo here.

Chancellor Ronnie Green believes the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) is racist. Under his leadership, UNL recently released a plan to address "institutional

racism" as part of its "Journey for Anti-Racism and Racial Equity." From racially motivated hiring practices to divisive trainings, the plan would inject Critical Race Theory (CRT) into every corner of campus.

At the foundation of UNL's plan are the writings of Ibram Kendi, who has openly called for discrimination on the basis of skin color. Kendi has written that "The only remedy to racist discrimination is antiracist discrimination. The only remedy to past discrimination is present discrimination."

This plan is the product of ideologues—not thoughtful Nebraska academics. Needless to say, I could not be more disappointed in the Chancellor's plan, and I completely disagree with the notion that UNL is a racist institution. UNL's focus should be on educational excellence, not ideological indoctrination. At its core, the plan is legally questionable, intellectually flawed, and politically charged.

UNL's approach not only pushes CRT, but also runs counter to the Nebraska State Constitution. Article I-30 expressly forbids racial discrimination in public education stating that "The state shall not discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of...public education."

Nebraska strives to be a place where people are treated fairly, and we recognize we always need to be open to doing better. We must address specific acts of racism whenever we encounter them, and we should look to continuously improve the quality of education available to Nebraskans of all backgrounds. However, the accusation that UNL is institutionally racist is false and outrageous. It's the product of the sloganeering of political activists—not thoughtful academics.

UNL's plan is also based on the flawed assumption that differences in outcomes among racial groups are the result of systemic racism and how people are treated based on skin color. The data, however, doesn't support this conclusion. The University's plan makes the claim that racism is "often structural and embedded into systems," however, it does not spell out specific examples of what this looks like at UNL besides vaguely stating there are "different outcomes for different groups." In reality, degree completion rates of White and Asian students at UNL are virtually identical. In fact, Asian students in Nebraska (on average) display the highest measure of college degree readiness of any racial group.

Additionally, there are factors other than "institutional racism" that help explain educational outcomes. For example, nationally, students of groups with high family income levels and low nonmarital birth rates tend to do

better on measures of academic performance. In Nebraska, data shows students from higher income families are more likely to go to college than their peers from low-income families. Additionally, males from low-income White households in Nebraska are less likely to attend college than males from low-income Asian, Black, or Hispanic households. There are a variety of factors that influence educational outcomes, and it's important to look closely at the data to understand the full story.

UNL is also presenting its plan as non-political, however, the plan fails its own test of diversity by presenting only one view of race relations in America. The chancellor's resource list features the writings of Critical Race Theorists like Ibram Kendi and the New York Times' 1619 Project, while excluding the scholarly work of conservative Black intellectuals like Glenn Loury, Shelby Steele, and Robert Woodson who strongly disagree with CRT. The University's plan gives the impression that CRT has universal scholarly support, when it clearly does not. In fact, some respected academics, including John McWhorter, a linguist at Columbia University, have gone so far as to call CRT a new form of racism.

McWhorter has been a vocal critic of Kendi, noting the circular logic Kendi uses to argue for "anti-racism." Kendi writes that, "Racism is a marriage of racist policies and racist ideas that produces and normalizes racial

inequities." McWhorter points out the redundant, non-academic nature of this and other claims made by Kendi. You may not be surprised to learn that McWhorter's work isn't included on UNL's recommended resources list.

The University's misguided focus on achieving equity of outcomes, rather than equality of opportunities, is pushing a Marxist and communist ideology. It fails to honor our American values of respecting individual rights and focusing on excellence. And it betrays the legacy of our country's great civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who dedicated his life to the dream of Americans judging one another according to the content of their character and not skin color.

The University isn't going to stop pushing CRT without action from Nebraskans. Nebraskans need to let the University know that they reject their plan to apply CRT on UNL's campus. The University of Nebraska Board of Regents is meeting at 9:00 AM this Friday, December 3rd, at Varner Hall in Lincoln. Three regents—Paul Kenney, Jim Pillen, and Rob Schaefer, have consistently opposed CRT. More need to step up so we can stop this radical ideology. You can attend the meeting or contact the Board of Regents by visiting: nebraska.edu/regents/board-members.

If you've seen CRT being imposed at a college or K-12 school, please let me know by emailing

Pete.Ricketts@nebraska.gov or calling 402-471-2244. Our kids deserve an education that's free from narrow-minded ideology. Together, let's work to keep the educational focus on excellence, not identity politics, in Nebraska.

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