

## **Resolution Rejecting Efforts To Interfere with the Teaching of Racial, Gender, and Other Forms of History And Justice**

Approved by the Stony Brook University A & S Senate on 3.21.2022

Educators across this nation committed to the highest principles of intellectual honesty and integrity have come under attack through censorship legislation and other tactics to repress the freedom to teach essential critical thinking skills. In an attempt to stifle the right of students to learn and faculty to teach the tenets of racial, social, and environmental justice that reflect not only American history, but that of our 21st-century cultural reality, partisan politics is seeping into our classrooms.

We must unite under the principles of Academic Freedom and call upon Stony Brook University and SUNY to reaffirm its respect and support for open and candid dialogue and instruction about our shared histories and present-day experiences. Intending to censor and control content, critics have labeled such teaching approaches “divisive.” As a recognized faculty governance organization at Stony Brook University, the A & S Senate holds as our central responsibility to teach freely, fairly, and without prejudice, and therefore reject that label.

To that end, we present the following:

WHEREAS the term “divisive” is indeterminate, subjective, and chills the capacity of educators to explore a wide variety of topics based on arbitrary criteria that are in opposition from the goals of education and the development of essential critical thinking skills.

WHEREAS multiple states have already passed, are in the process of debating, and have proposed legislation to curb and limit academic freedom within primary, secondary, and/or higher education institutions; such as, [Texas H.B. 3979](#); [Ohio HB 327](#); and, [Florida CS/CS/HB 1557](#).

WHEREAS districts are also attempting and passing book bans and otherwise restricting access to books in schools, particularly books on racial history and LGBTQ+ relationships and expression, such as in [Yorktown Heights, NY](#).

WHEREAS at least [one organization](#) is currently soliciting information and publishing misleading information about primary and secondary curriculum in New York State (including two school districts on Long Island) in order to encourage the rejection of education in race and social justice. [Another organization](#), which has had a significant

impact on the Smithtown School Board, published “newsletters” that include misleading and untrue information about race education.

WHEREAS, in a nation that has for centuries struggled with issues of racial inequity and injustice, many students do not have adequate knowledge of racial history and LGBTQ+ history and the policies that contributed to inequities, Stony Brook University has a responsibility and opportunity to help build equity and social justice, as described in the University “[Mission Statement](#)” and reaffirmed in President McInnis’s recent “[Message About Free Speech and Civility](#).”

WHEREAS, the SUNY University Faculty Senate approved its “[A Resolution Reiterating University Faculty Senate Commitment to Education about Racism and American History and in Support of the “AAUP Joint Statement on Legislative Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism and American History”](#)” in October of 2021.

WHEREAS, in an effort to produce engaged and informed citizens, educating about systemic barriers to realizing a multiracial and equitable democracy should be understood as central to the active and engaged pursuit of knowledge in the 21st century.

BE IT RESOLVED that the A & S Senate calls upon current and future leaders of Stony Brook University and The State University of New York to reject all attempts by bodies external to the university to restrict or dictate university curriculum on any matter, including matters related to racial and social justice, and to stand firm against encroachment on faculty authority.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the A & S Senate stands in support with our colleagues in higher education and K-12 throughout the country who may be affected by similarly harmful legislation.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that this body forward this resolution for support to the Stony Brook University Senate and the SUNY University Faculty Senate.