



DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION
The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

December 2, 2020

Ms. Sabrina Conza
Foundation for Individual Rights in Education
510 Walnut Street
Suite 1250
Philadelphia PA 19106
Via email to: sabrina.conza@thefirg.org

Re: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the University of Oklahoma

Dear Ms. Conza,

I received your correspondence of November 16, 2020. I have carefully considered the concerns you raised regarding the University of Oklahoma (“University”) workplace diversity training module. In the tradition of American institutions of higher education, the University is deeply committed to fostering an environment conducive to the robust exchange of ideas, including unpopular ideas. In observance of that role, the University has codified students' rights to disseminate ideas and hear speakers of their choice in its Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities. The special protections accorded to faculty employees under the doctrine of Academic Freedom are also adopted as official University policy.

In reviewing your letter, I respectfully disagree that the University’s workplace diversity training constitutes an unlawful infringement on employees' rights. Nonetheless, although I disagree that the training suffers from the deficiencies you’ve identified, in my role as Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer, I want the training module to be as inclusive as possible and do not wish for any person to feel fearful, threatened, or compelled to any particular viewpoint. I’ve asked for a meeting with our vendor to discuss this concern and see if there might be a means to communicate that through the software. In addition, I would be happy to meet with Ms. Owen to talk about her concerns and receive her feedback personally.

In closing, thank you for reaching out to discuss this important matter. While we may not always agree on every issue, I welcome the opportunity to keep these communication channels open as we continue to create a campus community where all feel safe and a sense of belonging.

Warmly,

Belinda Higgs Hyppolite, Ed.D.
Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion & Chief Diversity Officer

Cc: Anil Gollahalli, University Vice President and General Counsel
Jill Irvine, Interim Senior Vice President, and Provost
Jane N. Irungu, Associate Provost for Inclusive Faculty Excellence