

The DEI threat to our military academies

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The U.S. military's failure to prepare adequately to protect the nation's security is perhaps most evident in the military academies. Here, young cadets are supposed to be trained for a career of service to the country as officers. These once-venerable institutions, which claim to prioritize "duty," "honor," "country," and "excellence," have become vectors for leftist ideology. Today, they all too often emphasize diversity over honor, equity over excellence, and inclusion over duty.

We know this because of multiple reports exposing divisive DEI curricula in the academies and firsthand accounts from current cadets. Two Air Force Academy cadets, for example, wrote about their experiences confronting this divisive ideology in op-eds for the Washington Examiner as part of our recent "Military Unreadiness" series. The cadets shared how mandatory DEI training has devastated morale among their peers, leading many to question whether the military is still an institution worthy of their service and lives.

The cadets also revealed that, following media exposure, the Air Force Academy went to great lengths to prevent additional scrutiny over its DEI trainings, marking some of these materials as controlled unclassified information, or CUI, to prevent them from being made public. Cadets who share materials marked as CUI could face reprimand, suspension, and even expulsion from the academy.

Though overclassification is a problem within the military, this appears to have been a deliberate decision on the part of academy administrators to avoid further criticism for imposing leftism on its students.

We reached out to the Air Force Academy to ask which administrators made this classification, but the academy did not respond to a request for comment. This failure to respond is incompatible with the academy's first stated "core value" — namely, "Integrity First."

The academy did, however, respond to congressional oversight. After reading the Air Force Academy cadets' accounts, the Senate Armed Services Committee and ranking member Sen. Roger Wicker (R-miss.) asked the academy to explain its justification for marking DEI materials as CUI.

Administrators claimed some elements of the training met the Defense Department's standard for "privacy" regarding "student records," which is described as "personally identifiable information from records directly related

to a student.” But under pressure, they admitted that there were no legitimate student records that would justify classifying the training materials, according to a Senate aide.

As a result, the academy is now reviewing its DEI training materials to reduce or remove the use of CUI. This is good news for policymakers and citizens who have a right to know what the military’s future ranking officers are being taught, and for current cadets who have been unfairly pressured into staying silent.

Unfortunately, the military’s lack of transparency regarding its DEI policies is a widespread problem that will take much more effort to correct. The academies routinely stonewall and outright ignore Freedom of Information Act requests that target their use of DEI materials.

Last year, for example, Judicial Watch was forced to take the Air Force Academy to court after administrators delayed acknowledging an FOIA request regarding its use of critical race theory for nearly two years. Current law requires the government to acknowledge receipt of an FOIA request within 20 days.

The Pentagon uses a similar strategy to hinder congressional oversight, which is why we applaud Senate Republicans for passing a version of the National Defense Authorization Act that prevents the Defense Department from expanding its DEI offices until a thorough audit of the agency’s DEI workforce can be conducted by the Government Accountability Office.

Military resources should not be wasted on an ideology that distracts from the armed services’ primary mission and undermines the readiness of our fighting forces, and the public deserves to know just how extensive the Defense Department’s commitment to this ideology has become.

Of course, the military’s efforts to avoid answering these important questions raise another one: If the DEI agenda is as vital to the military’s success as Pentagon and military academy leadership claims, then why try to hide it? Why prevent cadets from publicly speaking about their DEI trainings or ignore public requests to access the curricula? We’d love an explanation, but again, the Air Force Academy declined a request for comment.