

PRESS RELEASE

U.S. Department of Education Opens Investigations into Five Universities for Alleged Exclusionary Scholarships Benefitting Illegal Alien Students

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The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has opened national origin discrimination investigations into the University of Louisville, the University of Nebraska Omaha, the University of Miami, the University of Michigan, and Western Michigan University. The investigations will determine whether these universities are granting scholarships only for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) or "undocumented" students, in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964's (Title VI) prohibition against national origin discrimination.

These investigations are based on complaints submitted to OCR by the Legal Insurrection Foundation's Equal Protection Project, which seeks to ensure equal protection under the law and non-discrimination by the government in any form.

"On January 20, 2025, President Trump promised that 'every single day of the Trump Administration, [he] will, very simply, put America first.' Neither the Trump Administration's America first policies nor the Civil Right Act of 1964's prohibition on national origin discrimination permit universities to deny our fellow citizens the opportunity to compete for scholarships because they were born in the United States," **said Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Craig Trainor.** "As we mark President Trump's historic six months back in the White House, we are expanding our enforcement efforts to protect American students and lawful residents from invidious national origin discrimination of the kind alleged here."

"Protecting equal access to education includes protecting the rights of American-born students. At the Equal Protection Project, we are gratified that the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights is acting on our complaints regarding scholarships that excluded American-born students," **said William A. Jacobson, founder of the Equal Protection Project.** "Discrimination against American-born students must not be tolerated."

The investigations also will examine additional scholarships that appear to exclude students based on other aspects of Title VI, including race and color.

Background

According to the complaints, the following scholarships allegedly provide unlawful exclusionary funding based on national origin:

- University of Louisville’s Sagar Patagundi Scholarship to “subsidize the cost of higher education...for undergraduate DACA and undocumented students;”
- University of Nebraska Omaha’s Dreamer’s Pathway Scholarship for “students who are DACA or DACA-eligible and Nebraska residents who are seeking an undergraduate degree;”
- University of Miami’s U Dreamers Program, which “is available to academically talented and admissible [DACA] and undocumented high school seniors and transfer students;”
- University of Michigan’s Dreamer Scholarship, which “is intended to support undocumented students or students with DACA status;” and
- Western Michigan University’s WMU Undocumented/DACA Scholarship “for undergraduate students who are ineligible to receive federal student aid due to an undocumented or DACA status.”

OCR will also investigate other allegedly impermissible and exclusionary scholarships detailed in the complaint, which include:

- University of Louisville’s Dawn Wilson Scholarship for “undergraduate LGBTQ+ students of color” and the Louisville Tango Festival Scholarship for “Latino/a/x and Hispanic students;”
- University of Nebraska Omaha’s HDR Scholarship, which gives “preference...to underrepresented minority students;” and
- Western Michigan University’s Elissa Gatlin Endowed Scholarship for “African American, Native American, or Hispanic American” students.

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Office of Communications and Outreach (OCO)

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