

## DRAFT

TO: Portland State University Faculty Senate

FROM: Faculty Senators

RE: Resolution: University Faculty Senate Rejects Any Attempts to Interfere with Faculty Autonomy in Teaching Racial and Social Justice, Including Attempted Bans on Teaching Critical Race Theory

Date: September 12, 2021

### RATIONALE:

**WHEREAS** state legislative proposals are being introduced across the United States that target academic discussions of racism and related issues in American history in schools, colleges and universities.

**WHEREAS** the Faculty Handbook and the collective bargaining agreement with PSU-AAUP affirms the importance of academic freedom to the proper functioning of universities, citing the American Association of University Professors' [1940 statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#).

**WHEREAS** the Constitution of the Portland State University Article 3 "Faculty Powers and Authority", section 2, "Faculty Authority," states that "The Faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life that relate to the education process."

**WHEREAS** these legislative proposals vary but all seek to prohibit or restrict curriculum on what they call "divisive concepts" in the teaching and education of students.

**WHEREAS** the term "divisive" is indeterminate, subjective, and chills the capacity of educators to explore a wide variety of topics based on subjective criteria that are inapposite from the goals of education and the development of essential critical thinking skills;

**WHEREAS** educating about systemic barriers to realizing a multiracial democracy based on race or gender should be understood as central to the active and engaged pursuit of knowledge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to produce engaged and informed citizens;

**WHEREAS** over seventy organizations, including the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU), issued the [Joint Statement on Legislative Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism and American History](#) (June 16, 2021) stating their "firm opposition to a spate of legislative proposals being introduced across the country that target academic lessons, presentations, and discussions of racism and related issues in American history in schools, colleges and universities . . . In higher education, under principles of academic freedom that have been widely endorsed, professors

are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject. Educators, not politicians, should make decisions about teaching and learning.”

**WHEREAS** Portland State University’s mission statement expresses the goal of “promot[ing] access, inclusion and equity as pillars of excellence.”

**WHEREAS** the President of Portland State University, Stephen Percy, wrote in the statement “Justice for George Floyd” (April 20, 21) that George Floyd’s death “was an important catalyst for a broader awareness of the harm caused by systemic injustice and racial discrimination” and that “there is still much work to be done on racial equity.”

**WHEREAS** in a nation that has for centuries struggled with issues of racial inequity and injustice, many students do not have adequate knowledge of BIPOC and LGBTQI history and the policies that contributed to inequities, Portland State University has a responsibility and opportunity to help build equity and social justice.

RESOLUTION:

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that Senate resolutely rejects any attempts by bodies external to the faculty to restrict or dictate university curriculum on any matter, including matters related to racial and social justice, and will stand firm against encroachment on faculty authority by the legislature or the Boards of Trustees.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Senate stands with our K-12 colleagues throughout the country who may be affected by this pernicious legislation.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that Senate calls upon President Percy and Provost Jeffords to affirm that they reject any attempts by bodies external to the faculty to restrict or dictate university curriculum on any matter, including matters related to racial and social justice, and will stand firm against encroachment on faculty authority by the legislature or the Boards of Trustees.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that Senate affirms the [Joint Statement on Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism](#), authored by the AAUP, PEN America, the American Historical Association, and the Association of American Colleges & Universities, endorsed by over seventy organizations, and issued on June 16, 2021.