

On Tuesday, September 22, 2020, the White House issued [Executive Order 13950](#) addressing the content of diversity and inclusion training programs offered by federal contractors and federal grant holders.

As shared governance leaders on campus, we write today to express our concern about the intent and implications of Executive Order 13950. We worry the Order threatens academic freedom and could lead to censorship on campus. Academic freedom allows institutions of higher education to decide for themselves what ideas they wish to explore, as well as how they wish to explore them. This principle extends beyond the classroom to encompass protection for research and extramural discussions. Yet by singling out specific concepts for potential sanction, the Order risks silencing campus conversations among students, faculty, and staff about some of the most salient and debated issues of the day.

The Faculty Senate's [Statement on Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom](#) (April 23, 2019) speaks directly to our concern. According to that Statement:

If an institution of higher education is to function effectively, all faculty members, research professionals, and students must enjoy freedom of inquiry in research and creative endeavors, and must be free to teach and learn without fear that new or unpopular ideas will be stifled, or divergent viewpoints suppressed. In university-connected events both inside and outside the classroom or laboratory, members of our community must be free to challenge and question accepted wisdom.

We will continue to collaborate with Interim Associate Vice President Liz Tovar and the DEI Office on how best to advance the University's core values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We will also continue to monitor the University's response to Executive Order 13950 in an effort to prevent any curtailment of the freedoms our institution holds dear. In the immediate term, our focus will be on monitoring the rationale behind and the consequences of the University's decision to temporarily pause DEI-related training programs.

**Undergraduate Student Government (USG) Leadership**

**Graduation and Professional Student Government (GPSG) Executive Team**

**University of Iowa Faculty Senate Officers**

**University of Iowa Staff Council (UISC) Executive Committee**

**October 8, 2020**