

Explosive: 32 ‘Race-Based’ Scholarships at FSU Under Federal Fire

A conservative legal group filed a federal civil rights complaint against Florida State University (FSU), challenging thirty-two scholarships that allegedly favor students based on race, national origin, color, or sex. The complaint argues these programs violate Title VI, Title IX, and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

The Equal Protection Project described FSU’s practice of presenting scholarships as open to all applicants while signaling a preference for African American, Hispanic, Seminole Tribe, or female students. That, it charges, amounts to illegal discrimination promoted by a public university. The filing states donor preferences included in scholarship listings discourage non-favored applicants from applying and cannot be defended under civil rights law.

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Title VI bans discrimination in federally funded programs based on race, color, or national origin. Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. Both statutes apply to FSU as a public university receiving federal funding. The complaint calls for the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) to open a formal investigation, impose remedies, and consider terminating federal aid if violations are confirmed.



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This action aligns with broader federal scrutiny of

preferential aid programs. The Department of Education has also launched civil rights investigations into scholarships for undocumented and DACA students at multiple universities, citing similar discrimination concerns. Those investigations were prompted by Equal Protection Project complaints that non-citizens are being prioritized over American-born students.

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FSU, located in a state where Governor Ron DeSantis has prioritized rolling back DEI policies, now faces scrutiny for institutional endorsement of race- and sex-based scholarship preferences. The case does not yet include FSU's response. Legal observers expect OCR to evaluate whether donor intent excuses discriminatory criteria or whether the university's platform is an active promoter of disallowed preferences.

The challenge highlights legal tension between donor-specific scholarship criteria and federal nondiscrimination laws. Conservative critics argue that ignoring donor preference language is no longer tenable when it appears in public university scholarship listings. Potential outcomes include reform of scholarship platforms, elimination of race-based criteria, or referral for DOJ enforcement if the OCR finds sustained violations.

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The outcome may set a precedent. FSU's case joins a growing trend of Equal Protection Project complaints targeting roughly 500 programs across 100-plus institutions.

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