

**NEWS RELEASE**

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## **Education Leaders Push To “Save Sociology” in Universities Amid State Board of Education’s College Removal**

**TALLAHASSEE, FLA. (January 18, 2024)** – Education leaders are calling on the Florida Board of Governors (BOG) to “Save Sociology” and reconsider an amendment that would remove Principles of Sociology as a general education core course option for students. The proposal, which will be voted on at the BOG’s January 24<sup>th</sup> meeting, comes on the heels of the Florida State Board of Education’s decision to remove it as a core course offering in all Florida colleges. Removing sociology as a core course offering for universities, would all but ensure fewer learning opportunities for students and further strain for faculty and graduate assistants in this area of expertise.

### **What leaders are saying:**

**Teresa M. Hodge, United Faculty of Florida (UFF) President, Associate Professor of Mathematics at Broward College**

“Florida students deserve an education system that will allow them an opportunity to think critically and analytically so they can grow to become productive and successful citizens. When the State Board of Education (SBOE) and the Board of Governors (BOG) remove a course like sociology as a core course offering from colleges and universities, respectively, they’re actually limiting a student’s ability to analyze the society they live in and the larger world around them through the lens of scientific inquiry and research studies. The removal of this course by the SBOE from the general education curriculum of colleges, and the consideration by the BOG to do the same, has just made Florida the only state in the nation that would no longer include sociology as a core course option within the general education curriculum, thereby placing our higher education system at a lower level of quality than competing institutions across the country. This action now puts Florida students at a critical disadvantage on the regional, national, and global stage.

As a mathematics professor with a research background, I am appalled by the baseless and thoughtless decision of the SBOE and the pending decision of the BOG to muffle our state’s distinguished faculty and to intentionally stunt the future growth and productivity of Florida’s students by removing this core course from their curriculum. Such action is indefensible! While that may work for some who believe that higher education is simply a pawn in a larger political chess game, at UFF we are committed to making sure Florida’s higher education system remains first class.

**The Higher Education Affiliate of Florida Education Association, National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers, and AFL-CIO**

Those of us in academia understand that no subject is taught in isolation. So, it's important to underscore the fundamental role that core general education courses play with each other in building the foundation of a student's general education. In fact, sociology is currently a core requirement for many fields of study, such as healthcare, dental hygiene, and human services. It also serves as a basic introduction to urban planning and social work, as well as many other programs at the various higher ed institutions across the state. That has now changed.

UFF is focused on ensuring that higher education in this state remains viable for our faculty, graduate assistants, and students and that it has a future in which research, analysis, teaching and learning, critical thinking, discourse, and academic freedom continue to thrive."

**Andrew Spar, President, Florida Education Association (FEA)**

"This story is one that is becoming far too common in Florida - any course or curriculum that seeks to expand opportunities for students is deemed unnecessary or just too controversial for students. Make no mistake, the removal of sociology courses as a core general education requirement is part of a continued attack on our state's education system. We've seen it in our K-12 programs- first, they banned books, then classroom libraries, and now they are removing dictionaries from shelves because of their content. Then they attacked curriculum for being too "woke" because it taught the truth about slavery or because some schools dared to want to offer AP African American History.

Now, its continuing to happen to our higher education system. Florida's colleges and universities are where students go to learn, to grow and to prepare for futures they can be proud of. By stripping them of their ability to learn about diverse topics from diverse teacher all because some state leaders deem learning too controversial, Florida is taking away precious opportunities for students. Students at our state's award-winning higher education institutions deserve access to core curriculum that will set them up for success. They deserve to grow and thrive in every part of their educational journey, with teachers and education staff that care about them and want to see them succeed. We must continue to fight back against measures that seek to put special interests over the needs and outcomes of students."

**Randi Weingarten, President, American Federation of Teachers (AFT), AFL-CIO**

"The decision by the Florida State Board of Education to remove sociology as a core course offering from Florida colleges demonstrates the lengths to which the powers that be in Florida will hurt and undermine the students they are responsible for supporting in the name of their political aims. Florida's Board of Governors is poised to impose the same backwards thinking to Florida's universities, undermining the professionals who know that sociology is a fundamental building block for many degrees and careers,

ranging from lawyer to doctor and other healthcare professionals to social work. But it is now a casualty in Florida to Gov. Ron DeSantis' 'war on woke.' This recommendation to end sociology as a general education requirement was made without faculty input and will make it harder for students from a vast range of academic and professional fields to complete their course requirements in an efficient and timely manner.

We know Florida extremists don't want to recognize lived experience—except if it completely jibes with their own. But the truth is that knowledge of these experiences is critical to success in professions such as social work, medicine, law and education. Members of the Florida Board of Governors may think they're preventing woke indoctrination, but they're just making it more difficult for students to get the education they need to pursue their careers."

**Becky Pringle, President, National Education Association (NEA)**

"Young adults entering our colleges and universities are yearning for more educational options, not fewer, and we intend to stand with them and hold policy-makers accountable for undercutting their opportunities.

Students embarking on their college journey shouldn't face restrictions while exploring the direction of their education. Eliminating sociology courses hinders a chance for students to explore a field that fosters critical thinking, civic engagement, and a deeper understanding of social dynamics, enabling them to become well-informed citizens and providing them the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive."

Additional contact information or background available upon request.

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*The United Faculty of Florida represents over 25,000 faculty at all 12 public universities, 15 colleges and Saint Leo University, along with graduate assistants at four universities.*