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ALABAMIANS FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND INTEGRITY CALLS FOR A UNIVERSITY THE FOOTBALL TEAM CAN BE PROUD OF

Under Coach Nick Saban, Alabama won nine SEC West and eight SEC championships and six national championships. Crimson Tide athletic teams operate as meritocracies from recruiting to who plays without regard to race, color, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Coach Saban's "process" focuses on consistency. If every player does what's required on every play you win. Under Saban, the Crimson Tide football team wins 87.7 percent of its games; the best among FSB schools.

The 2021 Crimson Tide team was led by an African American sophomore Heisman Trophy winning quarterback. A white second team quarterback and great grandson of an Alabama coaching legend entered the transfer portal at the end of the season because his considerable talents might better be used elsewhere. That's how a meritocracy works. Talent, hard work, and capabilities determine success, not race, color, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. The Crimson Tide and Alabama athletics operate as meritocracies.

This is not the case on the academic side where "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion" (DEI) overrule the pursuit of academic excellence by a woke administration determined to infuse equity throughout the faculty and student body. Can the devastating effects get worse?

In 2011, *US News and World Report* (USNWR) accorded University of Alabama a 31st rating among publicly funded universities and colleges. The university's public affairs office rightly touted the "Top 50" rankings. Then, around 2015 or 2016, the university began creating offices and programs devoted to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). Meanwhile, Alabama's USNWR rankings plummeted to 62nd in 2019, 65th in 2020, and in 2022 tumbled to 67th among publicly funded universities and 148th among all American colleges and universities.

AAEI Spokesman Dr. Earl Tilford cautions, "It can get worse. According to the May 2021 "Path Forward Progress Update," issued by the Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, to attain the goal of "Recruiting and Retaining a More Diverse Faculty and Staff," under "Faculty-Specific

Initiatives” section, deans and department chairs must *“Conduct, with the leadership of the provost, a review of the tenure and promotion process to re-value the service performed by faculty in the interest of advancing racial equality. The review would take into account such work as mentoring of underrepresented students or performing service to underserved communities. Units should ensure that these highly valued contributions of the tenure and promotion process do not prohibit faculty from advancing in rank in a timely manner.”* This is a DEI litmus test for retention and promotion. The pursuit of academic excellence requires demonstrable pedagogical and scholarly merit and must remain blind to race, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation.”

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