

By: Senator(s) Boyd, Tate, Blackwell,  
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Williams

To: Universities and  
Colleges

SENATE BILL NO. 2515

1 AN ACT TO ENACT THE "REQUIRING EFFICIENCY FOR OUR COLLEGES  
2 AND UNIVERSITIES SYSTEM (REFOCUS) ACT"; TO ESTABLISH THE  
3 "MISSISSIPPI UNIVERSITY SYSTEM EFFICIENCY TASK FORCE" TO EXAMINE  
4 THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY SYSTEM  
5 IN MISSISSIPPI, AS IT RELATES TO THE UNIVERSITIES' COLLECTIVE  
6 MISSION OF ENROLLING AND GRADUATING MORE DEGREED MISSISSIPPIANS  
7 AND RETAINING THEM IN THE STATE, AND ANTICIPATED NATIONWIDE  
8 CHALLENGES WITH REGARD TO DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS AND A PROJECTED  
9 OVERALL DECLINE IN ENROLLMENT; TO REQUIRE THE TASK FORCE TO  
10 DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LEGISLATURE ON CHANGES TO POLICY  
11 AND LAWS IN MISSISSIPPI WITH A GOAL OF INCREASING THE EFFICIENCY  
12 OF THE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY SYSTEM IN THE STATE; TO SET THE  
13 MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK FORCE; TO PROVIDE FOR OTHER PROVISIONS  
14 RELATED THERETO, INCLUDING PER DIEM AND VOTING; TO ESTABLISH THE  
15 PURPOSE OF SECTION 4 OF THIS ACT; TO DEFINE TERMS; TO REQUIRE  
16 PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES TO  
17 ENSURE THAT EACH UNIT DOES NOT ESTABLISH OR MAINTAIN A DIVERSITY,  
18 EQUITY AND INCLUSION OFFICE; TO ENSURE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES  
19 TREAT EACH STUDENT, FACULTY, AND STAFF MEMBER FAIRLY; TO REQUIRE  
20 UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES TO MAKE A REPORT TO THEIR RESPECTIVE  
21 GOVERNING BOARDS; TO REQUIRE THE GOVERNING BOARDS TO MAKE REPORTS  
22 TO THE LEGISLATURE; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

23 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

24 **SECTION 1.** This act shall be known and may be cited as the  
25 "Requiring Efficiency For Our Colleges and Universities System  
26 (REFOCUS) Act."

27 **SECTION 2.** (1) There is hereby established the "Mississippi  
28 University System Efficiency Task Force" created to examine the



29 efficiency and effectiveness of the public university system in  
30 Mississippi, as it relates to the universities' collective mission  
31 of enrolling and graduating more degreed Mississippians and  
32 retaining them in the state, and anticipated nationwide challenges  
33 with regard to demographic shifts and a projected overall decline  
34 in enrollment. The task force shall develop recommendations to  
35 the Legislature on changes to policy and laws in Mississippi with  
36 a goal of increasing the efficiency of the public university  
37 system in Mississippi, planning for future demographic shifts and  
38 possible enrollment declines at all institutions and the state  
39 level, and continuing progression toward the goal of increasing  
40 the post-secondary education attainment level in the state.

41 (2) The members of the task force shall be as follows:

42 (a) The Chairmen of the Universities and Colleges  
43 Committees of the Mississippi Senate and Mississippi House of  
44 Representatives, or their designees from their respective  
45 committee membership;

46 (b) The Chairmen of the Appropriation Committees of the  
47 Mississippi Senate and the Mississippi House of Representatives,  
48 or their designees from their respective committee membership;

49 (c) The Chairmen of the Finance Committee of the  
50 Mississippi Senate and the Ways and Means Committee of the  
51 Mississippi House of Representatives, or their designees from  
52 their respective committee membership;



53 (d) The Director of the University Research Center and  
54 State Economist, or his or her designee;

55 (e) One (1) designee who holds an undergraduate degree  
56 from one (1) of the four (4) public regional universities in  
57 Mississippi appointed by the Speaker of the House. Such designee  
58 shall have significant business or other professional experience  
59 and shall be a resident of the State of Mississippi;

60 (f) One (1) designee who holds an undergraduate degree  
61 from one (1) of the three (3) public historically black  
62 universities in Mississippi appointed by the Governor. Such  
63 designee shall have significant business or other professional  
64 experience and shall be a resident of the State of Mississippi;

65 (g) One (1) designee who holds an undergraduate degree  
66 from one (1) of the four (4) public research universities in  
67 Mississippi appointed by the Lieutenant Governor. Such designee  
68 shall have significant business or other professional experience  
69 and shall be a resident of the State of Mississippi;

70 (h) One (1) member of the Board of Trustees of the  
71 Mississippi State Institutions of Higher Learning appointed by the  
72 Speaker of the House;

73 (i) One (1) member of the Board of Trustees of the  
74 Mississippi State Institutions of Higher Learning appointed by the  
75 Lieutenant Governor; and



76 (j) One (1) member of the Board of Trustees of the  
77 Mississippi State Institutions of Higher Learning appointed by the  
78 Governor.

79 (3) The task force shall meet within forty-five (45) days of  
80 the effective date of this act and shall evaluate the current  
81 data, resources, laws and policies of the State of Mississippi.  
82 Specifically, the task force shall:

83 (a) Evaluate the current funding formula and  
84 appropriations process for the Mississippi public university  
85 system, particularly as it relates to enrollment and graduation  
86 rates;

87 (b) Evaluate the process of developing physical plant  
88 plans for Mississippi's public universities, including the use of  
89 enrollment data and projections in such plans and the Mississippi  
90 Institution of Higher Learning's role in determining collective  
91 system needs requiring additional state resources;

92 (c) Collect and analyze publicly available data and  
93 statistics related to enrollment and graduation rates and  
94 projections, with particular focus on the enrollment and  
95 graduation rates of Mississippi residents, as well as other data  
96 relating to shifting demographics, at all of Mississippi's public  
97 universities;

98 (d) Examine employment, postgraduation life based on  
99 degrees, employability, salary and location;



100 (e) Examine staffing levels for teaching faculty by  
101 program and degrees;

102 (f) Examine any existing or developing plans, both on  
103 an individual public university and university system basis, to  
104 address projected demographic shifts and enrollment declines;

105 (g) Evaluate successful strategies for addressing  
106 challenges in efficiency and enrollment in the Mississippi  
107 university system and across the nation, including current  
108 partnerships across the system; and

109 (h) Review any other matters related to the above  
110 issues or the efficiency and effectiveness of the public  
111 university system in Mississippi.

112 (4) The task force may request the assistance of the  
113 Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning and any other related  
114 agency, entity or organization with expertise in higher education,  
115 demographic, enrollment and other issues.

116 (5) The Chairmen of the Universities and Colleges Committees  
117 in the Mississippi Senate and Mississippi House of Representatives  
118 shall call the first meeting. The members of the task force shall  
119 elect a Chair or co-Chairs from among the members at its first  
120 meeting. The task force shall develop and report its findings and  
121 recommendations to the Mississippi Legislature on or before  
122 December 1, 2025. A majority of the membership shall be required  
123 to approve any final report and recommendation. Meetings of the  
124 task force shall be held at the State Capitol; however, if it is



125 not feasible for the task force to hold an in-person meeting, the  
126 task force may convene utilizing an online meeting platform that  
127 is accessible for viewing by the public.

128 (6) The Joint Legislative Committee on Performance  
129 Evaluation and Expenditure Review shall provide necessary clerical  
130 support for the meetings of the task force and the preparation of  
131 the report.

132 **SECTION 3.** The purpose of Section 4 of this act is to  
133 prohibit institutions of higher learning and community colleges  
134 from taking certain actions and engaging in discriminatory  
135 practices. This act seeks to ensure that employment, academic  
136 opportunities and student engagement are based solely on  
137 individual merit, qualifications and academic performance, without  
138 consideration of an individual's views on diversity, equity an  
139 inclusion.

140 **SECTION 4.** (1) For the purposes of this section, the  
141 following words shall have the meanings ascribed herein unless the  
142 context clearly requires otherwise:

143 (a) "Diversity, equity and inclusion" includes:

144 (i) Any effort to manipulate or otherwise  
145 influence the composition of the faculty or student body with  
146 reference to race, sex, color, or ethnicity. apart from ensuring  
147 colorblind and sex-neutral admissions and hiring in accordance  
148 with state and federal anti-discrimination laws;



149 (ii) Any effort to promote differential treatment  
150 of or provide special benefits to individuals on the basis of  
151 race, color, or ethnicity.

152 (iii) Any effort to promote or promulgate policies  
153 and procedures designed or implemented with reference to race,  
154 color or ethnicity.

155 (iv) Any effort to promote or promulgate  
156 trainings, programming, or activities designed and/or implemented  
157 with reference to race, color, ethnicity, gender identity, or  
158 sexual orientation; and

159 (v) Any effort to promote as the official position  
160 of the administration, the college, the university, or any  
161 administrative unit thereof, a particularly widely contested  
162 position that:

163 1. One race, sex, color, ethnicity, gender  
164 identity or sexual orientation is inherently superior to another,  
165 sex, color, ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation;

166 2. An individual by virtue of his or her  
167 race, sex, color, ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation  
168 is inherently oppressive to others whether consciously or  
169 unconsciously;

170 3. An individual should be discriminated  
171 against or treated adversely solely because of his or her race,  
172 sex, color, ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation;



173                   4. An individual by virtue of his or her  
174 race, sex, color, ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation  
175 bears responsibility for actions committed in the past by like  
176 individuals; or

177                   5. Promotes transgender ideology,  
178 gender-neutral pronouns, heteronormativity, gender theory, sexual  
179 privilege or related formulation of these concepts.

180                   (b) "Diversity, equity and inclusion office" means an  
181 office, division or other unit of an institution of higher  
182 learning established for the purpose of:

183                   (i) Influencing hiring or employment practices at  
184 the institution with respect to race, sex, color, ethnicity,  
185 gender identity or sexual orientation other than through the use  
186 of color-blind and sex-neutral hiring processes in accordance with  
187 any applicable state and federal antidiscrimination laws;

188                   (ii) Promoting differential treatment of or  
189 providing special benefits to individuals on the basis of race,  
190 sex, color, ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation;

191                   (iii) Promoting policies or procedures designed or  
192 implemented in reference to race, sex, color, ethnicity, gender  
193 identity or sexual orientation, other than policies or procedures  
194 approved in writing by the institution's general counsel and the  
195 Board of Trustees of the Mississippi State Institutions of Higher  
196 Learning or the Mississippi Community College Board, as





197 applicable, for the sole purpose of ensuring compliance with any  
198 applicable court order or state or federal law; or

199 (iv) Conducting trainings, programs or activities  
200 designed or implemented in reference to race, color, sex,  
201 ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation, other than  
202 trainings, programs or activities developed by an attorney and  
203 approved in writing by the institution's general counsel and the  
204 Board of the respective institution which includes the Board of  
205 Trustees of the Mississippi State Institutions of Higher Learning  
206 or the Mississippi Community College Board, as applicable, for the  
207 sole purpose of ensuring compliance with any applicable court  
208 order or state or federal law.

209 (c) "Institution of higher learning" means any one of  
210 the following, as stipulated in Section 37-101-1:

211 (i) The University of Mississippi;

212 (ii) Mississippi State University of Agriculture  
213 and Applied Science;

214 (iii) Mississippi University for Women;

215 (iv) The University of Southern Mississippi;

216 (v) Delta State University;

217 (vi) Alcorn State University;

218 (vii) Jackson State University;

219 (viii) Mississippi Valley State University; and

220 (ix) Any other of like kind which may be hereafter  
221 established by the state.



222 (d) "Community college" means any one of the following:  
223 (i) Coahoma Community College;  
224 (ii) Copiah-Lincoln Community College;  
225 (iii) East Central Community College;  
226 (iv) East Mississippi Community College;  
227 (v) Hinds Community College;  
228 (vi) Holmes Community College;  
229 (vii) Itawamba Community College;  
230 (viii) Jones County Junior College;  
231 (ix) Meridian Community College;  
232 (x) Mississippi Delta Community College;  
233 (xi) Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College;  
234 (xii) Northeast Mississippi Community College;  
235 (xiii) Northwest Mississippi Community College;  
236 (xiv) Pearl River Community College; and  
237 (xv) Southwest Mississippi Community College.

238 (2) The Board of Trustees of the Institution of Higher  
239 Learning and the Mississippi Community College Board shall ensure  
240 that each unit of the institutions and colleges:

241 (a) Do not, except as required by federal law:  
242 (i) Establish or maintain a diversity, equity and  
243 inclusion office;  
244 (ii) Hire or assign an employee of the institution  
245 or contract with a third party to perform the duties of a  
246 diversity, equity and inclusion office;



247 (iii) Compel, require, induce or solicit any  
248 person to provide a diversity, equity and inclusion statement or  
249 give preferential consideration to any person based on the  
250 provision of a diversity, equity and inclusion statement;

251 (iv) Give preference on the basis of race, sex,  
252 color, ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation to an  
253 applicant for employment, an employee or a participant or  
254 contractor in any function of the institution;

255 (v) Require as a condition of enrolling at the  
256 institution or performing any institution function any person to  
257 participate in diversity, equity and inclusion training, which:

258 1. Includes a training, program or activity  
259 designed or implemented in reference to race, color, ethnicity,  
260 gender identity or sexual orientation; and

261 2. Does not include a training, program or  
262 activity developed by an attorney and approved in writing by the  
263 institution or college's general counsel and either the Board of  
264 Trustees of the Mississippi State Institutions of Higher Learning  
265 or the Mississippi Community College Board, as applicable, for the  
266 sole purpose of ensuring compliance with any applicable court  
267 order or state or federal law; and

268 (vi) Penalize or discriminate against a student  
269 employee or contractor and the basis of their refusal to support,  
270 believe, endorse, embrace, confess, act upon or otherwise assent  
271 to a diversity equity or inclusion concept.



272 (b) Within one hundred twenty (120) days of the  
273 effective date of this act, The Board of Trustees of the State  
274 Institutions of Higher Learning and the Mississippi Community  
275 College Board shall adopt a confidential complaint process,  
276 investigative procedures, and all other policies, procedures and  
277 penalties for appropriately disciplining an employee or contractor  
278 of the institution who engages in conduct in violation of  
279 paragraph (a).

280 (c) Within one hundred twenty (120) days of the  
281 effective date of this act, the above listed Boards shall transmit  
282 a copy of all requirements adopted in the above paragraph to the  
283 Lieutenant Governor and the Speaker of the House. Additionally,  
284 they shall include a plan detailing how they will provide  
285 notifications of the policy to students and employees.

286 (d) Beginning in 2026, by July 30th of each year, each  
287 Institution of Higher Learning shall submit to the Board of  
288 Trustees of the Institutions of Higher Learning and each community  
289 college shall submit to the Mississippi Community College Board an  
290 annual report summarizing all reported incidents and the  
291 disposition of those investigations and violations. By October  
292 30th of each year, each board shall prepare a report that compiles  
293 the reports from each institution and college and makes  
294 recommendations for any proposed changes to this act, and submit  
295 it to the Legislature. A representative of each board may be  
296 called to testify before the standing legislative committees with



297 primary jurisdiction over higher education at a public hearing of  
298 the committee regarding the board's compliance with this section.

299 (3) Nothing in this section may be construed to limit or  
300 prohibit an institution of higher learning or community college,  
301 or an employee of such, from submitting to the grantor or  
302 accrediting agency a statement that certifies compliance with  
303 state and federal antidiscrimination laws for purposes of applying  
304 for a grant or complying with the terms of accreditation by an  
305 accrediting agency.

306 (4) Subsection (2) (a) of this section may not be construed  
307 to apply to:

308 (a) Programs for Military Veterans, Pell Grant  
309 recipients, first-generation college students, nontraditional  
310 students, students from low-income families, students with  
311 disabilities or students presently or formerly under a child  
312 protective services order;

313 (b) Scholarly research or a creative work by an  
314 institution of higher learning's students, faculty or other  
315 research personnel or the dissemination of that research or work;

316 (c) An academic department defined as a unit of public  
317 institution of higher learning that exists primarily for the  
318 purpose of offering courses for degree credit and that does not  
319 establish policy or procedures to which other units the public  
320 institution are subject;



321 (d) An activity of a registered student organization at  
322 an institution or community college;

323 (e) A policy, practice, procedure, program or activity  
324 to enhance student academic achievement or postgraduate outcomes  
325 that is designed and implemented without regard to race, sex,  
326 color, ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation;

327 (f) Data collection;

328 (g) Student recruitment or admissions;

329 (h) Programs, campus activities or certifications for  
330 compliance with state and federal laws or applicable court order;

331 (i) Prohibiting an institution or college from  
332 requiring or taking action against a student, employee or  
333 contractor for failing to comply with federal or state law;

334 (j) To discuss pathological approaches or experience  
335 with students with mental or physical disabilities; or

336 (k) To affirm fidelity to and provide an oath to uphold  
337 the constitution and the laws of the State of Mississippi and the  
338 United States.

339 **SECTION 5.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
340 and after passage.

