

# [***NAACP urges student-athletes to reconsider Florida colleges after state eliminates DEI programs***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BHX-SRM1-DYMD-63F4-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — Black student-athletes [*should reconsider attending public colleges and universities in Florida*](https://naacp.org/articles/naacp-urges-student-athletes-reconsider-pwi-universities-florida-amidst-dismantling-dei), the NAACP said [*in a letter to NCAA President Charlie Baker*](https://naacp1org-my.sharepoint.com/personal/amercedes_naacpnet_org/_layouts/15/onedrive.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Famercedes%5Fnaacpnet%5Forg%2FDocuments%2FCharlie%20Parker%20NCAA%20March%2011%202024%5B90%5D%2Epdf&parent=%2Fpersonal%2Famercedes%5Fnaacpnet%5Forg%2FDocuments&ga=1) on Monday.

The letter was in response to the University of Florida and other state schools that have eliminated their diversity, equity and inclusion programs. It was also addressed to current and prospective student-athletes.

“This is not about ***politics***,” the letter read. “It’s about the protection of our community, the progression of our culture, and most of all, it’s about your education and your future.”

The letter was signed by NAACP National Board of Directors Chairman Leon W. Russell and NAACP President and CEO Derrick Johnson.

Last year, Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signed a bill prohibiting the use of state funds for any DEI programs. [*The University of Florida responded in March by closing the Office of the Chief Diversity Officer*](https://apnews.com/article/dei-eliminated-university-florida-desantis-gainesville-education-804ff56bfeaa9787a91860e8470ae664), eliminating 13 full-time DEI positions and 15 administrative appointments, and ending DEI-focused contracts with outside vendors.

Other state schools like North Florida and Florida International also have shut down DEI programs.

“While it is our duty to spread awareness and encourage action around these egregious assaults, we also recognize that protest can come at a price,” the letter read. “The sad reality is, for many Black student-athletes, collegiate sports may be their sole opportunity at achieving the upward mobility necessary to propel them into their rightful places in society.”

It's unclear how awareness of the debate over DEI might affect current or prospective student-athletes who are considering powerhouses like Florida and Florida State — especially at a time when name, image and likeness deals have become so integral to building rosters — but a growing campaign could hinder those schools' recruiting efforts.

Florida great and Pro Football Hall of Famer Emmitt Smith asked minority athletes at his alma mater to “be aware and vocal” about the decision.

Johnson took it a step further Monday.

“Florida’s rampant anti-Black policies are a direct threat to the advancement of our young people and their ability to compete in a global economy,” Johnson said in a statement. “Diversity, equity, and inclusion are paramount (to) ensuring equitable and effective educational outcomes.

“The value Black and other college athletes bring to large universities is unmatched. If these institutions are unable to completely invest in those athletes, it’s time they take their talents elsewhere.”

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