

From: Mark Perry

Sent: Monday, December 19, 2022 10:49 AM

To: 'OCR DC' <OCR.DC@ed.gov>

Subject: Please Investigate the University of North Carolina for Illegal Race-Based Discrimination in Violation of Title IX

Dear DC Office for Civil Rights:

This is a federal civil rights complaint vs. the **University of North Carolina** (University) for illegal discrimination on the basis of race, color, and/or national origin in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Specifically, the University is hosting, promoting, operating, and offering the [Fellowship for Exploring Research in Nutrition](#) (FERN), which “aims to increase the diversity of students pursuing a graduate degree in the field of nutrition (MPH, RD/RDN, PhD) in the United States by providing **US undergraduate students from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) populations** in the fields of nutrition and academia the opportunity to engage in food and nutrition policy research.” In violation of Title VI, non-BIPOC students are illegally excluded from the FERN program, illegally denied the benefits of this program, and illegally discriminated against on the basis of their race, color and national origin.

Additional evidence of the University’s race-based discrimination for its BIPOC-only (no non-BIPOC students allowed) [FERN program website](#) is provided below ([archived version here](#) from 12/9/2022):

Among the most pressing public health problems today are childhood and adulthood obesity, which contribute to chronic health conditions, such as cardiovascular disease or diabetes, and can lead to early death. Obesity disproportionately impacts **BIPOC communities**; yet people from **BIPOC communities** are traditionally underrepresented among researchers working to develop, research, and evaluate food and nutrition policies to address obesity. Currently, the field of nutrition is overwhelmingly comprised of white researchers. Increased **BIPOC representation** in food policy research is critical for developing effective, equitable, comprehensive, and culturally competent policies that address nutrition-related health disparities.

About FERN FERN is a 9-week, 40-hour/week paid research fellowship opportunity for **BIPOC undergraduate students** hosted by the Global Food Research Program (GFRP), located within the [Carolina Population Center](#) (CPC) [website: <https://www.cpc.unc.edu/>] at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH).

Eligibility Students who wish to apply to FERN **must meet all the following criteria:**

Racial/ethnic background of **Black, Indigenous or People of Color (BIPOC)** that is historically marginalized in academia and the field of nutrition in the United States

Please note that the University started accepting applications for the 2023 FERN program on December 9, 2022, and will continue to accept applications through February 17, 2023.

In violation of Title VI, the University's BIPOC-only (no non-BIPOCs allowed) FERN program illegally excludes and discriminates against non-BIPOC students on the basis of their race, color, and/or national origin. Please investigate the University for race-based discrimination in violation of Title VI's explicit prohibition of such discrimination.

Professor (emeritus) Mark J. Perry, University of Michigan
Senior Fellow, *Do No Harm*