



Do No Harm

11357 Nuckols Road PMB 115
Glen Allen, VA 23059

August 27, 2025

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL: ocr@ed.gov

U.S. Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights
Lyndon Baines Johnson Department of Education Bldg
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-1100

Re: Complaint Under Title VI – Race Discrimination at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine

To whom this may concern:

Do No Harm files this complaint against the University of Connecticut School of Medicine. UConn is engaging in unlawful race discrimination against white and Asian students through its “Visiting Externship for Students Underrepresented in Medicine.” By UConn’s own telling, this externship program is “a pipeline for students of color” but not others.

This kind of blatant race discrimination is illegal. Race discrimination is “invidious in all contexts.” *SFFA v. Harvard*, 600 U.S. 181, 214 (2023)(cleaned up). As a public university subject to the Equal Protection Clause, UConn cannot “use race as a factor in affording educational opportunities.” *Id.* at 204 (cleaned up). Under Title VI, federal-funds recipients including UConn doubly cannot discriminate based on race. “Simple justice requires that public funds, to which all taxpayers of all races contribute, not be spent in any fashion which encourages, entrenches, subsidizes, or results in race in racial discrimination.” *Barbour v. WMATA*, 374 F.3d 1161, 1170 (D.C. Cir. 2004). Illegal DEI programs like UConn’s externship program “not only violate the text and spirit of our longstanding federal civil-rights laws,” but “they also undermine our national unity, as they deny, discredit, and undermine the traditional American values of hard work, excellence, and individual achievement in favor of an unlawful, corrosive, and pernicious identity-based spoils system.” *Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunities*, Exec. Order 14173, §1 (Jan. 21, 2025).

This Office has the statutory obligation to investigate and remedy violations of Title VI by universities that accept federal funds. See 34 C.F.R. §§100.3, 100.7. Do No Harm respectfully requests that the Office open an investigation into UConn's Visiting Externship for Students Underrepresented in Medicine and rectify the race discrimination committed by UConn.

I. UConn's Visiting Externship for Students Underrepresented in Medicine discriminates against white and Asian students.

UConn's School of Medicine operates the Visiting Externship for Students Underrepresented in Medicine. See UConn Sch. of Med., *UConn School of Medicine Visiting Externship for Students Underrepresented in Medicine*, perma.cc/2PRS-2QC6. This externship program allows fourth-year medical students from other accredited medical schools to be placed at UConn as visiting students to complete externships in various fields, ranging from anesthesiology, dermatology, emergency medicine, family medicine, internal medicine, OB/GYN, pediatrics, psychiatry, surgery, neurosurgery, orthopedic surgery, otolaryngology, and urology. *Id.* The externships last for four weeks, provide the visiting students with mentorship and career guidance, and expose them to a valuable experience. *Id.* The externship also comes with a \$1,500 stipend to cover living expenses and travel costs. *Id.* UConn accepts applications from third-year medical students, and the most recent application cycle closed on May 12, 2025. *Id.*

This externship program, however, discriminates against white and Asian students. To be eligible, the applicant must belong to a group that UConn considers to be "underrepresented in medicine." *Id.* According to UConn, the "immediate objective" of the externship program is "to increase the number of students from groups underrepresented in medicine (URiM) participating in fourth-year electives at our institution." *Id.* The program application explicitly requires applicants to explain how their "lived experience background as underrepresented in medicine make [them] competitive for [UConn's] residency program." UConn Sch. of Med., *2025 VESUM Application*, perma.cc/RTT8-4EUL.

UConn does not consider whites and Asians to be underrepresented in medicine. UConn explicitly states that the externship program is "**a pipeline for students of color.**" UConn Health, *Embracing Diversity, Equity & Inclusion*, perma.cc/JS2F-NL8V (emphasis added). UConn has also stated that it considers "Native Americans," "African Americans," "Hispanics/Latinx," "the LGBTQ community," "persons with disabilities," and "persons living in poverty" to be underrepresented in medicine. UConn Sch. of Med., *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*, perma.cc/3L9S-83AM. Indeed, the prevailing belief by entities like UConn within the medical field is that whites and Asians are overrepresented. For instance, the American Association of Medical Colleges considers "American Indian," "Alaska Native," "African

American," Hispanic," "Latino," "Spanish Origin," "Native Hawaiian," and "Other Pacific Islander" to be underrepresented. AAMC, *FACTS Glossary*, perma.cc/2989-3625. All this suggests that UConn excludes white and Asian students, whom it doesn't consider to be underrepresented, from the externship program. At a minimum, UConn disfavors white and Asian applicants.

The fact that UConn considers LGBTQ, disabled, or low-income applicants to be underrepresented does not cure UConn's race discrimination. A student of color could *always* apply to the externship without additionally identifying as LGBTQ, disabled, or low-income. A white or Asian applicant, however, must additionally identify as LGBTQ, disabled, or low-income to be eligible to apply to the externship program. White and Asian students are thus "force[d] ... to overcome additional hurdles" to apply to the externship program because of their race. *Nuziard v. Minority Bus. Dev. Agency*, 721 F. Supp. 3d 431, 473 (N.D. Tex. 2024); cf. *AAER v. Founders First Cmty. Dev. Corp.*, 2024 WL 3625684, at *4 (N.D. Tex. July 31, 2024) (a contracting program discriminates based on race when it requires applicants to "be Latinx, Black, [or] Asian, or otherwise meet one of the specified demographic categories" such as LGBTQ, military veterans, or women).

II. UConn's race discrimination violates federal law.

UConn's race discrimination violates Title VI. Under Title VI, "[n]o person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." 42 U.S.C. §2000d. UConn's externship program is a "program or activity" under Title VI because it is an "operatio[n]" of the UConn School of Medicine. 42 U.S.C. §2000d-4a(2)(A). UConn is a public university that receives federal financial assistance through federal financial aid and grants. See, e.g., UConn Health, *Office of Student Financial Aid Services*, perma.cc/UP7Y-3LHT; USASpending.gov, *University of Connecticut*, perma.cc/HB5G-L6V9. UConn has caused and will continue to cause white and Asian students to be "excluded from participation in," "denied the benefits of," and "subjected to discrimination under" the externship program "on the ground of race, color, or national origin." 42 U.S.C. §2000d. This Office has an obligation to investigate and remedy race discrimination by federal-funds-receiving universities like UConn.

As explained above, UConn's race discrimination also violates the Equal Protection Clause because UConn is a public university. And to the extent that the externship program involves a contract, UConn also violates 42 U.S.C. §1981, which prohibits race discrimination in contracting. This Office should investigate these violations in addition to any Title VI violations and consider referring the matter to the Department of Justice for further or concurrent action.

Conclusion

For all these reasons, Do No Harm requests that the Office of Civil Rights open an investigation into UConn's Visiting Externship for Students Underrepresented in Medicine.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristina Rasmussen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kristina Rasmussen
Executive Director
Do No Harm