



September 3, 2025

Board of Trustees  
University of West Florida  
11000 University Parkway  
Building 10, Room 234  
Pensacola, FL 32514

Dear Esteemed Board of Trustees:

On behalf of Equality Florida, the state's largest civil rights organization dedicated to securing full equality for Florida's LGBTQ community, I write to express our strong opposition to two proposed regulation amendments that pose serious threats to the safety and integrity of the University of West Florida.

The amendment proposed to Regulation 3.010 would modify the definition of "sexual harassment" in the Student Code of Conduct and eliminate express protections based on gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Removing language that explicitly addresses individuals based on these characteristics implies a chilling message, particularly to LGBTQ students: that their dignity, safety, and rights no longer deserve protection.

These changes are as dangerous as they are regressive. LGBTQ students already face disproportionately high rates of harassment and discrimination on college campuses. In revising the definition of prohibited conduct, the University risks creating a hostile environment where students feel less empowered to report abuse, leading to underreporting and longterm harm to student wellbeing and campus culture. Such a move contradicts best practices in higher education, may undermine federal Title IX protections, and could expose the University to legal liability.

Additionally, the proposed repeal of Regulation 6.0056, which created the University's minority business program, would reduce the participation of underrepresented entrepreneurs in procurement processes, erasing hard-won gains and perpetuating economic disparities. It also sends a troubling signal to students from diverse backgrounds: that diversity and inclusion are not values the University is committed to upholding.

The University of West Florida has a responsibility to educate, protect, and empower all of its students. Institutions of higher learning must model integrity, equality, and inclusion, particularly at a time when LGBTQ and minority communities face heightened national scrutiny and discrimination. The proposed regulations represent a clear departure from those principles.

Equality Florida urges the Board of Trustees to reject both proposed amendments. Upholding existing anti-harassment protections and maintaining programs that support minority-owned businesses are not partisan or political acts; they are affirmations of your duty to foster a safe, diverse, and equitable learning environment.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jon Harris Maurer".

Jon Harris Maurer  
General Counsel & Public Policy Director  
Equality Florida