Students share their take on DEI cutbacks

By Brianna Wallen
News Editor

In a significant shift, both Walmart and Target, as well as other major companies, have recently scaled back their Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. This sparked backlash and calls for boycotts from various communities, particularly from students on campus.

Many students have taken note of this and acted accordingly. Nursing major Vickaina Louis, a freshman, said that she is boycotting Target and Walmart.

"They don't deserve my money," Louis said. "I would rather support companies that support me."

With Walmart ending its Center for Racial Equity and Target ending its "Belonging at the Bullseye" strategy, Louis and other students believe that the reduction of DEI programs is a step backward in the push for racial equality and inclusion.

"It's very unfortunate because the majority of those companies are made of Black people and their products," healthcare studies major Chrystophe Obiang Ze, a sophomore, said.

The DEI goals that once aimed to increase Black employee representation and growth, improve the shopping experience for Black customers and promote Black-owned businesses are being rolled back.

"I think it's inconsiderate when it comes down to the customers and employees," Louis said.

According to GreenAmerica.org, in November 2024, Target announced it was discontinuing its racial equity training programs for employees and evaluating initiatives focused on increasing supplier diversity.

Similarly, Walmart revealed it was ending its five-year, $100 million commitment to the Center for Racial Equity, along with ending its support for Pride celebrations and involvement in the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index.

While the cutback for DEI shocked many students, psychology major Ashnaelle Bijoux, a freshman, said it was disappointing but not surprising.

Due to this shift occurring after President Trump signed an executive order to end DEI programs across the federal government, many students are skeptical about the reason behind the cutback.

"We all saw Trump's intentions, which was to put down all that Black and Hispanic people do in the world and try to make something out of them for their family," Bijoux said.

Other students are focused on the economic impact that this change will have.

Sports and exercise science major Jayden Gerhard, a freshman, said that he is against the DEI cutback because the lack of promoting Black-owned businesses can hinder them

"They should leave it alone because it gives people a chance to make money," Gerhard said.

Overall, companies scaling back their DEI initiatives, particularly Target, can expect a decline in sales. This week a 40-day boycott of Target was launched, due to this decision.

Many students support the boycott, especially since Black people make up a significant portion of Target's shoppers.

According to Vicki Bogan, a professor at the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University, Black Americans account for approximately 8.9% of consumer spending at Target.

As Black shoppers continue to act out against Target, students said that these decisions send a message that companies are disregarding the well-being and representation of marginalized groups.

Obiang Ze also said that the cutback is also harmful to the future of Black professionals.

"Even though they already copied everything that Black people have created, they're still trying to stump future Black successors," Obiang Ze said.



PHOTO | CREATIVE COMMONS

Target is one of the companies scaling back their DEI initiatives.



PHOTOS | HAYLYNE FREDERIC

Nursing major Vickaina Louis, a freshman, in Chase Hall lobby on March 6.

Interim speaks out

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As students feel more connected to the department, Willette said it "breaks down barriers" of student faculty dynamics.

High demand for the tables' resources is leading the department to expand the program.

They are seeking other community partnerships to continue the initiative into the foreseeable future.

"People need to eat; no one should have to be hungry and try to learn hungry or go home hungry," Michalsen said.

Students have positive feedback on the 'food table.'

"It's good to see a department that is so dedicated to supporting students," psychology major Holly Gottmann, a sophomore said.

They also hope that other departments on campus will follow suit.

"It's so exciting to hear that departments are doing things like this, I hope others do the same" biology major Jadelyn Garcia-Medina, a sophomore, said.

Other departments can benefit from adopting the program and the Sociology faculty members are eager to help them establish their own versions of the program.

"This is sociology in action, this is a manifestation of social justice," Michaelsen said. "To be reflecting our sociological values and our academic perspectives in these real tables feels very powerful."

The Sociology department is proud to put its values into action, as this program reflects their powerful community.

No student should have to choose between their education and basic needs and the department is playing a role in making sure they never have to, without barriers or stigma.

Reacting to Trump and Vance's Ukraine discussion

By Haylyne Frederic
Contributor

A broadcasted meeting between President Donald Trump, Vice President James David Vance and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that took place originally to discuss a mineral exchange led to an unexpected, quickly heated discussion, shocking the average American viewer.

On Feb. 28 the event that took place can be concluded as a shocking presidential and vice presidential character observation. At the university, students and faculty took note of this interaction and realized how much the president's demeanor comes into play when taking on an important role in our country.

"I think it's always important to follow or at the very least pay attention to what is going on in national politics," Johnathan Wharton, associate professor of political science and urban affairs said. "While it was an unusual situation that we saw take place in the White House last week, it does point towards Trump and Vance's populistic type."

Wharton explained how this meeting was an act of favoritism to gain more support towards their America First cause.

"I sense that this was a strategy all along, in my opinion yes a strategy to bring out that this is something ongoing, something needs to be addressed," Wharton said.

Political science major, Landon Harris, a sophomore, states how the last 10 minutes really evolved into a foreign policy mess mainly.

Vance got asked by a reporter what "peace" would look like in Ukraine and then he said that there needs to be peace agreements established as well as ceasefires.

Zelensky himself responded and laid out to advance how Putin had broken multiple ceasefire agreements and ultimately the majority of all agreements between Ukraine and Russia.

"Ukraine gave up his nuclear weapons to have security and territorial guarantees from the UK, Russia and the US, they broke that, then there was the myth agreements, one in two, both of them broke by the Russians," Harris said. "They were essentially attempts to calm down the fighting in the region."

President of the College Democrats, Thomas Gilbertie, a junior, thinks America has always stood for democracy and freedom and Ukraine fights for those values against Russia's brutal invasion.

He makes the conclusion that supporting Ukraine is not just about aiding an ally, but it is about defending U.S. national security, economic stability and global leadership.

"Turning our back on Ukraine is just another step in this broader erosion of democracy," Gilbertie said.

He continues to notice how Trump's actions reflect a troubling pattern.

The DOJ quietly dropped its investigation into Mayor Eric Adams, while he has purged over a dozen officials from the Department of Justice, DOJ, who investigated him and January 6 rioters.

This also makes note that this administration is prioritizing personal loyalty over democratic values, undermining the institutions that keep our government accountable.

"Instead of reaffirming support, Donald Trump dismissed Ukraine's struggle and abruptly ended his press conference with President Zelenskyy, later telling him to 'come back when you're ready for peace,'" Gilbertie said. "This reckless statement emboldens dictators and signals to our allies that America may abandon them when they need us most."



PHOTOS | HAYLYNE FREDERIC

Johnathan Wharton, associate professor of political science and urban affairs, in his office on March 6.



Thomas Gilbertie, president of the College of Democrats, a junior, in the Adanti Student Center on March 6.