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July 9, 2021

The Honorable Gene Dodaro  
Comptroller General of the United States  
Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

I write to request a review of faculty diversity at institutions of higher education and steps taken by federal agencies to promote faculty diversity and prevent racial discrimination.

Students at institutions of higher education are becoming increasingly diverse, but faculty at these institutions may not reflect the diversity of the students that they serve. The American Council on Education reports that between 1996 and 2016 the share of students of color among all undergraduate students increased from about 30 percent to about 45 percent.<sup>1</sup> The National Center for Education Statistics reports that in 2016 about 17 percent of full-time professors were people of color, an increase over time but at slower than the rate of students of color at institutions.

Unfortunately, racial discrimination could contribute to a lack of diversity among faculty, including discrimination in hiring, promotion, and compensation. The Department of Education's (Education) Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has been charged with enforcing federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance from Education, including as it relates to employment. Education may also refer certain employment complaints related to race, color, or national origin to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). In addition, the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Civil Rights Division enforces federal statutes prohibiting discrimination.

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<sup>1</sup>The terms "students of color" and "people of color" include: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and individuals of more than one race.

The Honorable Gene Dodaro

July 9, 2021

Page 2

It is important to better understand the current state of faculty diversity; as well as steps Education, EEOC, and DOJ are taking to promote diversity and protect minority faculty from discrimination. I am requesting that GAO examine the following issues:

1. What is known about the racial composition of faculty at institutions of higher education? Please disaggregate any available data by race and ethnicity. Additionally, how, if at all, does a diverse faculty contribute to student success?
2. To what extent have the Departments of Education's Office of Civil Rights and the Department of Justice taken steps to promote faculty diversity and prevent racial discrimination in faculty hiring, promotion, and compensation?

I appreciate your attention to this request and GAO's assistance on these issues. Please direct your staff to coordinate with Claire Viall at [Claire.Viall@mail.house.gov](mailto:Claire.Viall@mail.house.gov) for the Committee on Education and Labor and Max Wolf-Johnson at [Max.Wolf-Johnson@mail.house.gov](mailto:Max.Wolf-Johnson@mail.house.gov) for Rep. Frederica S. Wilson's Office. Please direct all official correspondence to the Committee's Chief Clerk, Rasheedah Hasan, at [Rasheedah.Hasan@mail.house.gov](mailto:Rasheedah.Hasan@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,



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**ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT**  
Chairman



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**FREDERICA S. WILSON**  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Higher Education and  
Workforce Investment