

# Educational Overview

## Estimated Costs of DEI Administrative Programs in U.S. Universities

Union of Saints

### Introduction

Many colleges and universities in the United States operate administrative programs focused on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). These offices typically oversee initiatives such as student support programs, hiring policies, training workshops, compliance reporting, and campus climate assessments.

Because these offices require staff, salaries, benefits, and operating budgets, they represent a measurable administrative cost within university budgets.

This document explains:

- Typical staffing levels
  - Estimated operating costs
  - Cost per student per year
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## 1. Typical DEI Administrative Structure

A mid-size university DEI office may include:

- Chief Diversity Officer or Vice Provost for Equity
- Directors of diversity programs
- program coordinators
- training staff
- compliance specialists
- administrative assistants
- data analysts

Some universities also maintain **DEI staff embedded within individual departments** (for example within engineering schools, medical schools, or student affairs).

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## 2. Example of a Large University DEI Budget

An analysis of public salary records at University of Michigan found:

- **142 DEI administrators**
- **\$18.1 million annual payroll including benefits** ([RealClearInvestigations](#))

Some administrators earned more than **\$200,000 annually**, while the chief diversity officer salary exceeded **\$380,000**. ([RealClearInvestigations](#))

Later estimates suggested the number of DEI-related roles at the university grew further, with payroll exceeding **\$30 million annually** in some analyses. ([The Federalist](#))

These figures illustrate how administrative costs scale when a university employs dozens or hundreds of staff dedicated to diversity initiatives.

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## 3. Estimated Cost Per Student Per Year

To estimate **cost per student**, we divide total program cost by the student population.

Example using the Michigan data:

- Annual DEI cost: **\$18,000,000**
- Undergraduate population: **about 32,600 students**

Calculation:

```
[  
18,000,000 \div 32,600 \approx 552  
]
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**Estimated cost per student:**

→ **about \$500–\$550 per student per year**

The report also noted that the \$18 million payroll alone could cover **tuition for more than 1,000 students** at the university. ([Open The Books](#))

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## 4. Typical Cost Range Across Universities

Costs vary widely depending on institution size.

University Size	Estimated DEI Budget	Cost Per Student
Small university (10k students)	\$2–4 million	\$200–\$400
Mid-size university (20k students)	\$4–8 million	\$200–\$400
Large research university (30k+ students)	\$10–30 million	\$300–\$700

These figures include salaries, benefits, and program expenses.

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## 5. Funding Sources

University DEI programs may be funded through multiple sources:

### Tuition and Fees

Student tuition contributes to the general operating budget that funds administrative offices.

### Government Funding

Public universities receive funding from:

- state appropriations
- federal research grants
- federally backed student financial aid

Because these funds support the university budget overall, administrative programs may be indirectly supported by taxpayer funding.

### Private Donations and Foundations

Some universities receive philanthropic gifts specifically designated for diversity initiatives.

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## 6. Growth of Administrative Programs

Many analysts note that **administrative staffing in higher education has grown faster than faculty hiring** in recent decades.

DEI offices represent one component of this broader expansion of university administration.

Examples include:

- diversity training programs
- compliance reporting for federal civil rights law

- scholarship programs targeting underrepresented groups
  - campus inclusion initiatives
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## 7. National Context

Across the United States there are roughly:

- **4,000 degree-granting colleges and universities**

If DEI administrative programs average **\$3–10 million per institution**, the nationwide spending could reach **several billion dollars annually** depending on definitions and scope.

Because costs are spread across millions of students and taxpayers, the **individual financial impact varies significantly by institution**.

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## Conclusion

DEI administrative programs have become a significant component of university governance and student services.

Based on available public salary analyses and university budget data:

- **Typical DEI administrative budgets:** \$2–30 million annually
- **Estimated cost per student:** about **\$200–\$700 per year**

These figures vary widely depending on the size and structure of the university.

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- Estimated nationwide DEI spending: **~\$6B–\$16B annually**
- Estimated cost per taxpayer: **~\$40–\$100 per year**

*Union of Saint's argues for:*

- equal treatment under law
- race-neutral policies
- lowering taxpayer costs
- socioeconomic support rather than racial classification
- programs that include **any American** facing disadvantage.