

Groups to CSUN & SBE Presidents: Investigate Misuse of CSUN Name and State-Owned Instructional Materials

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RE: Concern about for-profit consulting firm using CSUN name and state-owned instructional materials

February 18, 2021

Dear CSUN President Beck and SBE President Darling-Hammond,

We are writing to express our concern that the [founders](#) of what appears to be a for-profit educational consulting firm, [Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Institute \(LESMC\)](#), are using the name of California State University Northridge, and may be using legislatively-mandated instructional materials developed for the State Board of Education, for personal gain and to promote a highly politicized and divisive curriculum in K-12 classrooms throughout the state.

All three of LESMC's founders are also state employees: two are faculty in the Chicano/a Studies Department at CSUN — Theresa Montano and Stevie Ruiz — and the third, Guadalupe Carrasco Cardona, has taught in public high schools in California and is an adjunct lecturer at CSU Long Beach. In addition, in 2019 Montano and Cardona were members of the SBE-appointed Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Advisory Committee and responsible for helping to develop the highly controversial and highly politicized first draft of the ESMC, which met with enormous criticism from the public, state legislators and the Governor, and was ultimately rejected by the SBE.

We believe the behavior of these LESMC founders is unethical and may well be in violation of state law, and we are asking you to investigate the following matters as they relate to CSUN and the State Board of Education, respectively:

- The LESMC website includes a webpage offering the “[Services](#)” of the LESMC’s “many dedicated Ethnic Studies scholars and practitioners throughout the state of California and throughout the United States” and advertises “packages and experts that can help you with your Ethnic

Studies professional learning needs.” The offering of such services strongly suggests that LESMC is a for-profit educational consulting business. At the same time, the website’s “[Contact](#)” page (see attached screenshot) gives LESMC’s address as “California State University at Northridge, Department of Chicana/o Studies, 18111 Nordhoff St., Northridge, CA 91330” and provides an accompanying map with a marker placed in the middle of CSUN — clearly implying that LESMC is a project of CSUN’s Department of Chicana/o Studies. We believe that such a misleading use of the name of CSUN in order to imply a connection between the state university and their for-profit business may be a violation of these state laws:

- [California Code, Education Code - EDC § 89005.5](#): “**No person shall, without the permission of the Trustees of the California State University, use this name [California State University], or any abbreviation of it or any name of which these words are a part, in any of the following ways: ...**(B) **To imply, indicate, or otherwise suggest that any product, service, or organization is connected or affiliated with, or is endorsed, favored, or supported by...the Trustees of the California State University or any educational institution administered by the trustees.** The permission of the trustees is required before any name listed in this subdivision may be used for any commercial purpose...(C) Every person violating this section is guilty of a misdemeanor.”
- [California Code, Government Code](#) - GOV § 19990: “**A state officer or employee shall not engage in any employment, activity, or enterprise** which is clearly inconsistent, incompatible, in conflict with, or inimical to his or her duties as a state officer or employee...Activities and enterprises deemed to fall in these categories shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following: (a) **Using the prestige or influence of the state or the appointing authority for the officer's or employee's private gain or advantage** or the private gain of another...”
- Until recently, the LESMC website hosted a webpage entitled “Principles,” which linked many conceptual terms to an 18-page “[Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Coalition Glossary](#)” that, with the exception of a two-paragraph introduction and a few new entries, is identical to the language of the [Glossary](#) that was part of the first draft of the ESMC, including highly politicized and controversial entries such as the anti-Israel “Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS)” movement and “Capitalism.” We are concerned that as part of the curriculum design services offered to school districts, LESMC personnel may lift, in whole or significant part, instructional materials from the first draft of the ESMC that were developed with taxpayer dollars and are owned by the state.

We believe the LESMC founders must not be permitted to use the name of a state supported university and other taxpayer-funded resources for advancing their own personal and political interests, and we hope your respective offices will promptly investigate this matter.

Thank you for your consideration,

AMCHA Initiative
California Association of Scholars
Californians for Equal Rights

Cc: CSU Board of Trustees
CSU President Joseph Castro
CSU Executive Vice Chancellor and General Counsel Andrew Jones
State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond
State Attorney General Xavier Beccera
State Controller Betty Yee

