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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Felzkowski Reacts to UW-Madison Internal DEI Division Review

Madison, WI- Today, findings were released from a University of Wisconsin – Madison internal review of the Division of Diversity, Equity and Education Achievement (DDEEA) after UW-Madison’s Vice Chancellor of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), LaVar Charleston, was removed from his position in January and returned to his faculty appointment due to “concern about financial operations and fiscal judgements in the division.”

The new review explains that these “areas of concern” included, but were not limited to, the following:

- Decisions to provide substantial lump sum awards to 85% of DDEEA staff without consultation or prior communication with other campus leadership. 72 lump sum salary increases in DDEEA (89% of division employees) exceeded 3% of base salaries, an “unusually high percentage.” 55% of these employees had previously received an additional performance lump sum within the past year.
- Excessive spending in travel and event expenditures. The average per-employee spending was the single highest among all campus divisions. For fiscal years 23 and 24 combined, these expenses totaled \$4.35 million, over double pre-pandemic expenditures. Mr. Charleston was appointed Vice-Chancellor in July 2022.
- Supplies expenses, including office furniture, promotional items, and electronics, almost doubled in fiscal years 23 and 24 compared to fiscal year 19

The review also concedes that the “administrative management systems in place during this time period were not structured to prevent this situation” and “this longstanding absence of checks within the process enabled poor decision-making by Dr. Charleston.” Senate President Mary Felzkowski released the following statement:

I am incredibly concerned that the only reason these findings came to light is because of a legislature-initiated audit of DEI practices. The university should be ashamed, students should be outraged, and taxpayers should be disgusted.

As the nationwide DEI racket begins to unravel, it would be unwise to not question why Mr. Charleston felt privileged enough to abuse his position. Would a leader in the accounting department have felt this same privilege?

As is evident across the DEI scam, funds and efforts to purportedly help underserved populations often end up subsidizing the lifestyles of those at the top. How much of the increased travel expenditures were for Mr. Charleston to join his wife, the Chief Diversity Officer at Harvard?

While I am pleased to see university leaders acknowledge the gravity of Mr. Charleston’s actions and begin to implement much needed power checks, I remain incredibly concerned. The scope of the damage that DEI has caused to our country and culture is immeasurable and has had no significant impact on educational outcomes for those it claims to assist.

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