



Texas Exes Pride Alumni Network NEWS & UPCOMING EVENTS

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NETWORK NEWS

Changes in the New Year

Senate Bill 17 was passed in the last Texas legislative session and it has changed the landscape of diversity and inclusion at public colleges and universities across the state. As an entity independent of the University, The Texas Exes and its affiliate regional chapters and affinity networks are not subject to the new law, but it does mean changes have occurred for our shared campus community.

In late December 2023, the Gender and Sexuality Center staff [prepared this writeup](#) about the changes coming in 2024 due to SB17.

To summarize the most significant changes:

- As of January 1, the Gender and Sexuality Center was closed, and the new Women's Community Center (WCC) opened in the same physical space.
- Training and resources provided by any units on campus related to race, sexual, orientation, and gender identity are prohibited.
- The Division of Diversity and Community Engagement was changed to the **Division of Campus and Community Engagement (DCCE)**.
- University Resource Groups for faculty and staff, including the Pride and Equity Faculty Staff Association (PEFSA), are no longer sponsored and funded entities of the University. PEFSA has been reorganized as a registered faculty/staff organization and is doing well adjusting to the changes.
- Student organizations are still free to organize events and offer resources and training related to race, sexual, orientation, and gender identity; however, they will no longer have staff support that has existed in the past.
- Lavender Graduation, previously organized by GSC staff, students, and volunteers, must be fully organized by volunteer efforts and without university funding. **Other cultural graduations on campus** are similarly affected.

In early April, another shoe dropped with the President's announcement of the **closure of DCCE and the WCC**, elimination of positions and offices, and reorganization of some programs.

We know it is a lot of change to process, but that means we must get to work!

First, you can help by visiting us and/or **donating to Lavender Graduation Celebration** which will be held this week on Wednesday, May 8 from 4–6 p.m. at the Etter-Harbin Alumni Center.

Donations made through the online form will be put into a "general" Pride Alumni Network support fund. We will use these funds to host future alumni and student events, socials, and professional development. If you want your general donation to be specified for use at Lavender Graduation, please email pridealumninetwork@texasexes.org so we can ensure it is correctly categorized.

Last week, PEFSA organized a successful silent auction fundraiser at Cheer Up Charlies that raised over \$1000 for future Lavender Graduations!

Our Network will need everyone's help putting on this event in 2025 without university funding that used to come from DDCE and various departments on campus. The Texas Exes Association is committed to supporting all affinity networks impacted by SB17 and will be working with the Pride Alumni Network on other fundraisers this upcoming year.

Following Lavender Graduation this week, we'll shift our fundraising efforts to Pride celebrations in the summer since the University (and our strong partnerships with Dell Medical School and Texas Athletics) will no longer be able to fund the longstanding festival and parade entries.

We will also build a stronger working relationship with the [Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies](#) so we can maintain a connection to the student groups that still exist on campus and ensure that our LGBTQIA+ community at UT is continuously supported through our advocacy efforts.

The new leadership of the Pride Alumni Network is coming together to serve the rest of this year (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024) and the next one, starting in July 2024. As a reminder, we're always looking for dedicated alumni willing to volunteer their time and talents!

NEW NETWORK LEADERSHIP

Network President: Elissa Garza

Elissa (She/her/hers) has proudly stepped in to serve as the new Texas Exes Pride Alumni Network President starting back in February 2024.

Since graduating in 2018 with her Bachelor of Arts in History, Elissa has been a dedicated Life Member of the Texas Exes. Continuing her education, Elissa earned her Master of Science in Public Communications from S.I. Newhouse at Syracuse University.

Based in San Antonio, Elissa is dedicated to her role as a public involvement communications professional, specializing in innovative outreach strategies that prioritize equitable engagement with underrepresented communities.

Empowered to lead the Pride Alumni Network, especially as Senate Bill 17 continues to alter the landscape of DEI initiatives on the UT campus, Elissa is committed to fostering an inclusive environment and advancing the network's mission.

PRIDE ALUMNI NETWORK LINKS

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