# University of Louisville cancels Lavender Graduation amid anti-DEI policy enforcement



The University of Louisville has officially cancelled its long-standing Lavender Graduation ceremony for LGBTQ+ students, citing compliance with new federal and state policies that restrict practices related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The announcement was made on the same day the event, originally scheduled for April 21 at 3 p.m., was set to take place.

Lavender Graduation is traditionally a reception held by universities to celebrate the achievements and contributions of LGBTQ+ students. At UofL, the ceremony is hosted by the Cultural and Equity Center in partnership with the Pride Alumni Council. The cancellation marks a significant change in the university's approach to recognising LGBTQ+ graduates amid evolving political and legislative pressures.

Byron Terry, director of the LGBT Center at UofL, expressed the impact of the cancellation, describing it as "devastating." Speaking to The Louisville Cardinal, he noted the difficulty it poses for creating spaces where students who may “have never been heard before or seen before” feel acknowledged and celebrated.

John Karman, the university’s Interim Vice President of Communications and Marketing, explained the rationale behind the decision in a statement: “The decision was made following the state’s new anti-DEI policies. To my knowledge, no other graduation ceremonies have been cancelled.” He reassured the community, adding, “UofL remains committed to its mission and values to be inclusive for all. We pride ourselves on our dedication to creating a sense of belonging for every member of the Cardinal community. While some things are changing, who we are, what we believe, and the values we hold dear have not and will not change.”

The cancellation reflects broader trends at both the federal and state levels, where anti-DEI initiatives have intensified. The Trump administration notably dismantled various DEI-related programmes, and institutions face repercussions for non-compliance. Kentucky’s House Bill 4 intensifies this enforcement by requiring public universities to cease funding DEI initiatives and training, and to close all related offices by June 30.

It remains uncertain whether additional diversity-focused ceremonies at UofL will be cancelled as the state's legislative deadline approaches. The university traditionally hosts numerous events celebrating diversity, including cultural and ethnic heritage ceremonies, which could be affected by the new legal framework. This raises questions about how such policy shifts will align with the university’s stated commitment to fostering inclusion and belonging.

Despite the cancellation of the official Lavender Graduation, the university continues to support individual recognition of LGBTQ+ graduates. Students can collect their rainbow graduation cords at the Cultural and Equity Center until May 9. Furthermore, a community-organised celebration is scheduled for May 7 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Play, a well-known gay bar in Louisville. According to an Instagram post by the organisers, the event will feature refreshments, merchandise, special performances, and an atmosphere of “love and support.”

Byron Terry underlined the resilience of the LGBTQ+ community during challenging times. He commented, “It feels like a piece of us is taken away. But there are times when we can actually lean on each other. These hard moments show you, and it allows people to do more right. And so I want to encourage people to show more of that compassion, even when the times aren’t hard, because people are going to need to see that now more than ever. Let’s work on good in a more powerful community.”

The cancellation of this emblematic ceremony marks a significant development in the landscape of university recognitions for LGBTQ+ students at UofL, set within a broader context of shifting policies that impact diversity and inclusion initiatives across public institutions in Kentucky.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)