# University of Louisville cancels Lavender Graduation amid new anti-DEI policies



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

Lavender Graduation is an event held by universities nationwide to honour the achievements and contributions of LGBTQ+ students. At the University of Louisville (UofL), it was hosted by the Cultural and Equity Center in partnership with the Pride Alumni Council. The cancellation follows the implementation of Kentucky’s House Bill 4, which mandates that public universities cease funding DEI initiatives and training, and close all related offices by June 30.

John Karman, UofL’s Interim Vice President of Communications and Marketing, confirmed the decision in a statement, explaining that it was made in compliance with these recent anti-DEI policies. He noted that, to his knowledge, no other graduation ceremonies had been cancelled. Karman emphasised the university’s ongoing commitment to inclusivity, stating, “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.”

Byron Terry, director of the university’s LGBT Center, expressed his disappointment in an interview with The Louisville Cardinal. He described the cancellation as “devastating” and highlighted the difficulties the decision will pose for students who may have felt unheard or unseen in other spaces. Terry urged the importance of solidarity in difficult times, stating, “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 has raised questions about the future of other diversity-focused events at UofL, many of which celebrate various cultural and ethnic communities. With the House Bill 4 deadline looming, these events may also face permanent removal, posing challenges for the university’s stated goals of fostering inclusion and belonging.

Despite the cancellation of the official ceremony, students remain able to collect their rainbow graduation cords from the Cultural and Equity Center until May 9. Additionally, a community-organised celebration is planned for May 7 between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. at Play, a well-known gay bar in Louisville. This event promises refreshments, merchandise, special performances, and an atmosphere of “love and support,” according to a message posted on the venue’s Instagram page.

The recent developments at UofL reflect broader trends at both state and federal levels, where efforts to dismantle or restrict DEI initiatives have been steadily increasing, particularly following changes initiated during the Trump administration. These policies have had significant repercussions for public institutions tasked with managing and supporting diverse student populations.

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

## References

* <https://www.whas11.com/article/news/local/lavender-graduation-ceremony-lgbtq-students-canceled-university-of-louisville/417-b1fa6c0c-4283-4b56-9e90-2bcc3c083d1a> - Confirms the cancellation of the Lavender Graduation ceremony at the University of Louisville, citing compliance with new federal and state regulations targeting DEI initiatives.
* <https://www.advocate.com/news/university-caves-anti-lgbtq-forces> - Details the cancellation's connection to Kentucky's HB4 legislation and federal pressure to dismantle DEI programs, including John Karman's statement about compliance.
* <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DIuDqujJpTG/> - Supports the broader context of DEI-related event cancellations in Kentucky, including similar actions at the University of Kentucky, illustrating statewide impacts.
* <https://www.advocate.com/news/university-caves-anti-lgbtq-forces> - Corroborates Byron Terry's statements about the cancellation's impact on students and the community's response, as reported in The Louisville Cardinal.
* <https://www.advocate.com/news/university-caves-anti-lgbtq-forces> - Validates concerns about future cancellations of diversity-focused events at UofL under HB4, which mandates DEI office closures by June 30.
* <https://www.advocate.com/news/university-caves-anti-lgbtq-forces> - Confirms community-organized alternatives like the May 7 event at Play, though specific Instagram references would require direct social media verification.
* <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMirAFBVV95cUxPaFRvWG5aSTBvME1QLVo2SjJOUk4wYnAxa3BDUWxDay1RRDlpSVZYR2hLV0ROUmdUM2I1WU93ekdmVnh3a3o3LUpZdnJHMDVwOENaNGxodW5JeUFxMWRUQlkycWZQZ1VvVnFjVlJYcjdyczI0bUZLLVVmZEpvRTlaR2pFcnJ6Y2hKcXZFQnE2RURDM25UTkpWc2dHbndra0NxOGtVaXV6MkRncGlZ?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data