

Commission for LGBT People
End-of-Year Report
2016-2017

Co-chairs: Michael Porter and Tamara Griffin

The Commission for LGBT People is a body appointed by the Chancellor to advise on planning, implementation, and evaluation of university programs, policies, and services designed to improve the status of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people on the Knoxville campus. The Commission, in its role as an advocacy group, is committed to the protection and advancement of LGBT students, faculty, and staff at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Accomplishments

A point of pride for the Commission was the creation of a transgender and non-binary resource guide that was distributed amongst UT LGBT groups and is accessible through cflgbt.utk.edu. The Commission also advocated for the UT LGBT community by providing a letter to the Chancellor urging that action be taken in response to the multiple Pride Center vandalism acts.

In a joint effort with the other UT Commissions and the Council for Diversity and Interculturalism, we created Chancellor candidate “diversity snapshots” of each of the final candidates and distributed them across campus. Representatives from the Commission attended listening sessions and provided input throughout the hiring process of our first woman Chancellor.

In collaboration with the Pride Center Ambassadors, All Out Knoxville, and UT’s LGBT Alumni Council, we hosted a LGBT tailgate during Homecoming on Nov. 5, 2017. The Commission collaborated with the Office of Communications and Marketing on the start-up of the “Meet Our Volunteer Family” spotlight.

The Commission celebrated the accomplishments of those serving the UT LGBT community this year. We gave special recognition to the pride center ambassadors and pride center student assistants at the May 2017 Commission meeting. We also supported Lavender Graduation with a financial gift. Lastly, the Commission recognized two LGBT advocates on campus with the LGBT Student Leadership Award, awarded to Sarah Swinford, and the LGBT Advocate Award, awarded to Patrick Grzanka, at the Chancellors Honors Banquet on April 13, 2017.

Plans for 2017-18

The Commission will continue upholding its commitment to the protection and advancement of LGBT students, faculty, and staff at UT. The Commission will advocate for transgender and non-binary issues on campus next year, particularly for students to have the option to change their name in the banner system. We will assess the needs of LGBTQ+ faculty and staff and advocate for training in LGBTQ+ issues across campus. The Commission will enhance its LGBT Mentorship Program by increasing visibility of the program and recruiting new faculty/staff mentors and student members. Finally, the Commission will continue supporting the Pride Center and collaborate with leadership in the hiring of a Pride Center coordinator.