

Student Experiences In Texas Higher Education Post-D.E.I.

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I

Background

In 2023, Governor Gregg Abbott signed into law Texas Senate Bill 17 (SB 17) banning diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) offices, programs, and initiatives at public universities in Texas, significantly affecting students from marginalized backgrounds. With the removal of DEI offices, students have lost access to mentorship programs, scholarships, and cultural organizations that provided academic and emotional support. The law also prevents universities from considering diversity in hiring impacting curriculum related to race, gender, and social justice. How are students and student organizations responding to discourse that prohibits DEI changes on their campuses? How do different college campuses interpret and enact Texas laws that prohibit DEI? How are students impacted?

II

Methods

- Archival research of newspaper articles
- Interviewing
- Surveying
- Participant Observation
- Collaborative documentary

Ongoing Findings

- Archival Themes: Students report feeling scared, uncertain in navigating unfamiliar environments *alone*.
- Interviews and Surveys: Ongoing

III

Literature I

Hicks (2025) reports marginalized students on university campus’ feeling scared post-SB17 and related higher ed focused legislation. Gamez (2023) reports that SB-17 exacerbates the systemic barriers marginalized/first-generation students face in Higher Education, the misconceptions of D.E.I. are harming students for a “Whiter” university. Walker (2025) reports requests to dissuade attendance and censor promotions of academic conferences citing D.E.I. violations at certain Texas universities.

IV

Literature II

Uribe (2024) reports student organizations taking on services and roles the university removed due to D.E.I. concerns. Kitterer (2025) reports students suing universities for limiting student organizations activities on campus’. Rice (2025) explores the sudden removal of scholarship programs that served Hispanic/Latinx students. The removal of D.E.I. on campuses is neglecting the issues plaguing marginalized students causing student organizations to take of the financial and labor burdens of making up the resource deficit.

V

Reflections

Research with an ongoing political topic has been and (I imagine) will continue to be difficult. The culture war of which the Texas Legislature is currently involved in has many evolving fronts of which the effects will not be known until the future. The duration of the research was marked by institutional/bureaucratic difficulties. The collaborative process was liberatory in gaining different frames of analysis and tangible ways of resisting. The research is still ongoing and will be for the foreseeable future.

VI

Citations



In accordance with Texas law (SB 17), the University of North Texas, including the Department of Anthropology, the Department of Media Arts, and the Honors College, does not support or endorse diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives.