

In light of the recent murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, and countless others as a result of systemic racism and violence against the Black community, [149 student organizations](#) at UT Austin have made statements calling for donations and action against racism on campus. A [petition](#) created by UT students with 13,000 signatures (and counting) calls on the University to **acknowledge its racist history**. The UT student community has come together to identify **8 tangible action items** that the University must take to condemn racial violence and support Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities on UT's campus.

As Interim President Jay Hartzell publicly stated in his first email to the student body, "The University of Texas has always had a mandate to be a 'university of the first class.' Part of that mandate means that this university and the people of this community will take an active role in addressing the critical problems our society is facing". **UT must now act on this public commitment by taking an active role and listening to students. BIPOC student leaders should be at the forefront of these conversations.**

We call for the University of Texas at Austin to 1) divest from the Austin Police Department and the University of Texas Police Department, 2) implement a test-optional undergraduate and graduate admissions policy, 3) incorporate land acknowledgments in all UT programming, 4) use a multi-faceted approach to incorporate conversations on race and systemic racism in the United States 5) rename Robert Lee Moore Hall, Painter Hall, Littlefield Hall, Littlefield Patio Cafe, Littlefield Fountain, Belo Center for New Media, James Hogg Auditorium, and remove the James Hogg Statue to stop honoring people who perpetuated racism on this campus, 6) discontinue the use of "The Eyes of Texas" at all UT related events, 7) adopt equitable and inclusive practices in the recruitment, selection, and promotion of UT faculty, and 8) institutionalize and fund a campus climate survey.

1. Divestment from APD and UTPD

1. Police brutality continues to plague this nation, as seen in the murder of George Floyd and many Black individuals, as well as in the death of Mike Ramos, who lost his life at the hands of the Austin Police Department (APD). In the protests following, many more cases of police violence were documented, including APD having shot both a pregnant woman in the stomach and a 16-year-old in the head^{[1][2]}. After eight hours of the public telling Austin City Council about police brutality and their wishes to defund APD, the council voted and approved a grant of \$430,685 to APD^[3]. It has become glaringly clear that law enforcement consistently disregards the welfare and rights of people of color, especially the Black community. UTPD also remains complicit in upholding actions of white supremacy and failing to protect UT students against actors of violence, as seen in their repeated UTPD text alerts that racially profile men of color^{[4][5]}. Therefore, we clearly demand the **immediate removal of APD and UTPD officers from UT's campus and student-centered neighborhoods, as well as their removal in response to mental health crises and survivor support, as this can often be traumatizing. We demand the insurance of student safety through methods other than UTPD policing (through fund reallocations outlined in 1b), as policing often endangers and intimidates Black students and students of color.**

2. There is precedent to divesting from city police departments as seen in University of Minnesota ending contracts with the Minneapolis Police Department after the death of George Floyd.^[6] Additionally, Minneapolis City Council members committed to disband the Minneapolis Police Department and instead invest in community-led public safety, with Minneapolis City Council President Lisa Bender stating that **"efforts at incremental reform have failed."**^[7] The University of Texas has already committed to implementing restorative justice policy^{[8][9]}, which

is in line with the foundation of divestment from all forms of police. We call for this

foundation to be expanded upon through **reallocation of all UTPD funding to investments in mental health service providers, social workers, survivor advocates, food security resources (UT Outpost), housing displacement prevention, public health initiatives, and all other forms of nonviolent and community-led student safety methods.**

2. Adopt a Test-Optional Admission Policy

1. UT has had a long and fraught history with the use of standardized tests in undergraduate admissions. In fact, this practice only began during the integration of the University as a means to exclude Black students from admission. Last year, the University acknowledged that **“the ugly desire to keep out African American students was a major driver of ... UT’s decision in the 1950s to begin testing applicants for admission”**[\[10\]](#). Even now, the requirement of standardized test scores for both undergraduate and graduate admissions disproportionately harms underrepresented minorities.

2. The UT Automatic Admissions rule is hailed by administrative officials as a form of a test-optional policy for undergraduates. It is true that for students who qualify for automatic admission, their test scores are not considered as a factor in determining their admission to the university as a whole. Their test scores are still utilized as a factor in determining a student’s admission to their desired major(s) and program(s).

A university report shows that after the adoption of this policy, ethnic/racial diversity at UT increased along with average freshman GPA.[\[11\]](#) The same report states that **high school class rank is a better predictor of college success than test scores, particularly amongst African American and Latinx students.** This study shows that any form of a test-optional admissions policy is directly beneficial to achieving diverse admissions. As we gain a greater understanding of the systemic inequities that our Black and Latinx students face, it is important to expand any current test-optional admissions. The current system must be expanded as it still does not eliminate test scores from admissions decisions for all students or from decisions regarding a student’s admission to their desired major or program(s).

3. As more peer institutions, most recently the University of California System[\[12\]](#), implement test-optional admissions policies, there is now more information available on the impact of these policies in the current educational climate. A study published by the National Association for College Admissions Counseling

(NACAC) showed that test-optional policies lead to greater application and enrollment rates, particularly among traditionally underrepresented minorities (URM) and low socioeconomic status (SES) individuals[\[13\]](#).

Furthermore, there were no significant differences in first-year GPA, cumulative GPA, or graduation rates among students who submitted test scores versus those who did not. **Overall, both the SAT¹³**[\[14\]](#) **and GRE**[\[15\]](#)[\[16\]](#) **correlates more strongly with family affluence than with any predictor of academic success. Therefore, we call for the university to eliminate the requirement of standardized test scores for admissions, including admission to a student’s desired major(s) and program(s).**

4. Please reference our thorough statement regarding test-optional admissions policies [here](#)[\[17\]](#).

3. Incorporate land acknowledgements in all UT programming

1. The University of Texas at Austin does not own the land it is on; UT is on Indigenous territory. As such, **we demand that all UT events and**

programming (commencement, rallies, etc) begin with land acknowledgements to honor the Indigenous Peoples who have been living on the land for centuries, to highlight the long-standing history that has brought individuals to this land, and to understand

and consciously think about one's place within that history. **The Native American community at UT should be directly involved in the formation of UT's official shared land acknowledgement.** Many UT spaces already practice land acknowledgements such as the Multicultural Engagement Center, the Gender and Sexuality Center, and the University Writing Center.^[18]

4. Use a multi-faceted approach to incorporate conversations on race, systemic racism through 360 connections, orientation, introductory classes, flags, and a required module

1. **360 connections and orientation:** First-year students are encouraged by the Student Success Initiative office to enroll into a 360 Connection. During orientation students learn about 360 Connections which include but are not limited to First-Year Interest Groups (FIGs), Transfer Interest Groups (TRiGs), honor societies, success programs, and LEAP.^[19] Therefore, we ask that these groups that have the authority to the mandate and incorporate into their curriculum conversation about race and the racist history at UT. Furthermore, New Student Services – the department that coordinates UT Orientation – should incorporate these conversations and topics into their campus tours as a way for incoming students to acknowledge the history of this campus.

2. **Redefining the CD flag:** To actively encourage students to be anti-racist and acknowledge our country's racist history, **the University of Texas should redefine the CD flag requirement to address race, systemic racism, and oppression in the U.S. and incorporate these themes into core classes.**

1. All undergraduate students at UT must fulfill this requirement in order to graduate. To fulfill the requirement students must receive a C or higher in a designated UT class that focuses on how the United States has disproportionately affected certain communities due to race. This requirement serves to address the themes and issues in The United States that are relevant to understanding race, systematic racism, and oppression.

Classes that would be included in the requirement would be classes framed around one of the following groups of people; African Americans,

Indigenous Peoples in the United States, Asian Americans, and Latino/a Americans. Currently, the classes that carry a Cultural Diversity flag are too broad and too expansive. Instead, only classes that give students a space to learn about racial equality, equity, and social justice should count for the CD requirement. We believe by changing the CD requirement, students would be encouraged to use critical thinking and reflection and dialogue on these issues.

3. **Required module:** The history of the University of Texas at Austin is grounded in racism - this much is evident from Dr. Edmund Gordon's Racial Geography Tour^[20]. To combat this history, **UT must create a required module for incoming students detailing the racist background of the university's origins** as a way to educate the student body and acknowledge its historical failure to treat all students with dignity and respect. Similar to AlcoholEdu and the Sexual Assault Prevention for Undergraduates (SAPU) module, this new module would be required to view their grades.

1. This module should encompass elements of UT's history as far back as its confederate origins, the civil rights era injustices such as *Sweatt v.*

Painter (1950), and recent events like *Fisher v. University of Texas* (2016) and the long-overdue removal of confederate memorials.

Mandating the viewing of Dr. Gordon's Racial Geography Tour could be an effective aspect of this module.

5. **Rename Robert Lee Moore Hall, Painter Hall, Littlefield Hall, Littlefield Patio Cafe, Littlefield Fountain, Belo Center for New Media, James Hogg Auditorium, and remove the James Hogg Statue**[\[21\]](#).
1. **UT must take tangible steps to condemn racial violence and support Black communities on UT's campus.** Renaming Robert Lee Moore Hall and Painter Hall are one small way in which UT can stop honoring people who perpetuated racism on this campus. Other universities including the University of Alabama have also appointed committees to study building names on their campus with an eye towards renamings[\[22\]](#).
 2. **Robert Lee Moore Hall (RLM)** houses the physics, math, and astronomy (PMA) departments. Robert Lee Moore was a Mathematics faculty member at UT (1920 -1969) and has a well documented history of racism towards Black students, even going so far as to refuse to teach Black students solely based on their race [\[23\]\[24\]\[25\]](#). **The continued inaction on renaming the building signals a lack of commitment to equity to current and prospective UT students, especially those who identify as Black.** As seen in GR 17(F)6[\[26\]](#), JR 1710[\[27\]](#), JR 18(S)3[\[28\]](#) and SR 1904[\[29\]](#), there is continued and widespread student support for the promotion of a culture of inclusivity on campus and the renaming of Robert Lee Moore Hall (RLM) as led by the People for PMA movement[\[30\]](#).
 3. **Renaming Painter Hall (PAI)** is another tangible step that UT can take to stop honoring people who perpetuated racism and refused to admit Black students to this campus. Theophilus Shickel Painter served as Acting President for UT Austin from 1944 to 1946. At the time, Heman Marion Sweatt applied to UT's Law School and according to Painter was "duly qualified for admission into the Law School at the University of Texas, save and except for the fact that he is a negro."[\[31\]](#) In a letter to the Attorney General, Painter writes "The Registrar of the University declined to accept the application of Mr. Sweatt and refused to register him as a student. This action on the part of the Registrar was done with my consent and approval as Acting President of The University of Texas at Austin."[\[32\]](#) This led in the Supreme Court Case Sweatt v. Painter[\[33\]](#) which successfully challenged the "separate but equal" clause, resulting in the enrollment of the first Black students at UT in 1950[\[34\]\[35\]](#). However, it has been well-documented that Painter made multiple attempts to keep UT segregated[\[36\]\[37\]\[38\]](#) and we should not continue to honor his racist beliefs.
 4. **Belo Center for New Media (BMC)** houses the School of Journalism, the Stan Richards School of Advertising and Public Relations, and the college's Dean's Office. BMC is named after Alfred Horatio Belo, who was a Confederate Army officer and commanded the 55th North Carolina Infantry Regiment.[\[39\]](#) For his direct contributions as a Confederate in the Civil War, Belo should not continue to be honored.
 5. **Hogg Auditorium** hosts several lectures and events throughout the year and both the auditorium and **James Hogg Statue** honor James Stephen Hogg[\[40\]](#). As governor, James S Hogg signed the first Jim Crow bills into law in 1891, spurring on an era of segregation, racist rhetoric and hate crimes[\[41\]\[42\]](#). Hogg's racist beliefs should not continue to be honored.
 6. **Littlefield Hall, Littlefield Fountain**[\[43\]](#), and **Littlefield Patio Cafe**[\[44\]](#), named after George W. Littlefield and his wife Alice Payne Tillar Littlefield. Despite being one of the largest benefactors of the University of Texas at Austin, George W. Littlefield is a known racist whose pro-slavery and anti-Black beliefs should not continue to be commemorated at our University. G.W. Littlefield built his

wealth on the stolen land of Indigenous groups and slave labor^{[\[45\]](#)}.
Furthermore George W.

Littlefield chose to commemorate the Confederate Army and the “Lost Cause” by financially supporting and commissioning memorials for Confederate Generals. At the time, UT signed an agreement with Littlefield which required the University to promote the “Southern perspective of American history”, resulting in a lawsuit in 2017 after the University removed the confederate statues^[46]. Though we recognize that G.W. Littlefield’s contributions to the formation of the University of Texas at Austin, we urge the University to stop glorifying an individual whose discriminatory beliefs and actions created an unwelcoming and inequitable campus climate.

7. Renaming Robert Lee Moore Hall, Painter Hall, James Hogg Auditorium, memorials after George Littlefield, and removing the James Hogg Statue has widespread student support and petitions have gathered more than 12,000 signatures thus far^[47].
8. It is now more important than ever for UT Administration to tangibly act on their stated commitment to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion through decisively renaming these two buildings and unequivocally condemning Robert Lee Moore, T.S. Painter, James Hogg, and George Littlefield’s racist beliefs.

6. Discontinue any use of “The Eyes of Texas” at all UT related events, and compose a new official school spirit song with the inclusion of BIPOC composers and musicians.^[48]²³

1. “The Eyes of Texas” was originally debuted as a song at a minstrel show where the performers were in Blackface, or theatrical makeup used by non-Black performers to portray caricatures of Black individuals^[49]. Endorsing “The Eyes of Texas” as the official school song with its explicit, anti-Black origin directly harms the Black community. As such, we call for **discontinuing “The Eyes of Texas” in all UT programming**, including but not limited to sporting events, orientation, commencement ceremonies, and any on campus activities, and to **create a committee with proper BIPOC representation of faculty and student composers, musicians, and ethnomusicologists from the Butler School of Music, whose focus is to compose and write a new official school spirit song.**

7. Adopt equitable and inclusive practices in the recruitment, selection, and promotion of UT faculty.

1. According to the 2019 census, 12.8% of the population of Texas is African American or Black^[50]. However, only 3.8% of faculty at UT identify as Black or African American as of 2019. Within this, we see disparities within ranks and tenure status as well. Although 30.4% of White faculty are Full Professors, only 25.9% of Black faculty are Full Professors^[51]. Among all Full Professors nationally, 3.8% of Full Professors are Black^[52], but only 3.4% of UT’s Full Professors are Black⁴⁰. For other comparable public universities such as Texas A&M University, 4.4% of Full Professors are Black^[53]. Thus, this points to disparities within recruitment, retention, and promoting of Black faculty members at UT compared to other peer institutions.
2. According to the University of Texas Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan^[54] (DIAP) which was adopted in 2017, the University committed to expanding culturally diverse faculty through the establishment of new recruitment practices and the creation of an advocates/allies program for faculty among other tangible action items. Since this plan was released, there has been limited transparency with the student body as to how this plan is being implemented, and the DIAP progress updates website has not been updated since 2018, despite the promise of annual updates^[55].
3. The University must continue to uphold the action items outlined in its DIAP and further expand its efforts to uphold conversations and actions to

recruit and retain faculty from underrepresented backgrounds.
Accountability and transparency

structures should be placed on Colleges and Schools through the Council for Racial and Ethnic Equity and Diversity (CREED), such as establishing an expedited timeline for these changes to be implemented and providing semesterly updates to the public on the implementation of these faculty recruitment, selection, and retention processes. We also recommend that Colleges adopt the guidelines laid out in the Inclusive Search and Recruitment Toolkit^[56] developed by Dr. Shelly Payne, Advisor to the CNS Dean for Diversity and Inclusion.

4. Furthermore, the University must increase funding for ethnic studies departments, and centers such as African and African Diaspora Studies, Program in Native American and Indigenous Studies, Mexican American Latino/a Studies, and Center for Asian American Studies. There is a clear student interest in the classes offered by these departments, and the University needs to ensure that these courses and majors are accessible to students. These departments/centers are cultural centers that serve as spaces for students to learn about racial history as well as systemic inequity.

8. Institutionalize and fund an annual UT Campus Climate Survey on racism, queerphobia, classism, ableism, and all other connected forms of oppression

1. In an effort to continuously identify and work towards resolving issues on campus related to all forms of discrimination and oppression, UT must institutionalize and fund an annual campus climate survey and review through a third-party, as well as incorporating questions surrounding student safety in already existing Course Instructor Surveys (CIS). There is a precedent for this University-wide climate surveys, as UCLA conducted a similar survey in 2019^[57]. Additionally, many student led collectives have advocated for CIS to include an assessment of student safety in classrooms, including the Coalition Against Sexual Misconduct, Natural Sciences Council, Liberal Arts Council, and the Daily Texan^{[58][59]}.

2. There is already a precedent for climate surveys as we have seen through the UT Systems Cultivating Learning and Safe Environments (CLASE)^[60] survey on domestic violence and sexual assault. Through this survey, UT Austin is able to collect data and write reports identifying specific action items the University must pursue to ensure student safety.

3. This survey should be hosted by relevant offices such as the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (DDCE) with funding allocated to these offices in order to administer the survey and analyze the data. We request that student input is used to develop the questions on this campus climate survey.

Several action items from this statement have been requested by UT students for many years. Student legislative records show the same requests being made and delayed, forcing students to graduate before seeing their initiatives followed through. Students recognize that this unfortunate cycle is not uncommon in higher education. Amidst the Black Lives Matter movement, several universities across the U.S have broken this pattern and made steps towards achieving similar action items. They have set the precedent for UT to do the same. A “university of the first class” should not only condemn racial violence and show support for BIPOC communities through words. Our mandate to be a “university of the first class” requires action.

The UT student community demands that administrators listen to students in this period of historical change by addressing these 8 tangible action items and working to make our campus more equitable and inclusive.