

**The Graduate Student Assembly
The University of Texas at Austin**

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Pablo Montes, Co-Chair, Native American and Indigenous Center Committee,
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Guadalupe Reyna, Director of Finance, Students for Equity and Diversity,
Chloe Kersh, Vice President, Liberal Arts Council,
Michaela Lavelle, President, Liberal Arts Council,
Kate Diller, Policy Coordinator, Liberal Arts Council
SPONSORS: David Jenkins, President, Senate of College Councils

Resolution: J.R. 18 (F) 1 - A Resolution in Support of Creating a Native American and Indigenous Cultural and Resource Center

Executive Summary: This legislation is a statement of student support for the creation of a Native American and Indigenous Cultural and Resource Center on campus. This center will be located in central campus to combat the historical marginalization and displacement that Native American and Indigenous communities continue to endure. Through the hiring of paid staff, provision of centralized resources, service learning opportunities, mentorship, and financial assistance, this center will be a space conducive to the academic, spiritual, cultural, and personal growth of Native American and Indigenous students. This center will not only promote cultural, language, spiritual and intellectual diversity on campus, but also in the greater Austin community and Central Texas area.

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WHEREAS (1): The University of Texas at Austin is located on land historically¹ and currently² inhabited by Coahuiltecan, Comanche, Apache, Tonkawa, Tawakni, Kitsai, Wichita, Carrizo, and many more Native American and Indigenous peoples not explicitly stated, who continue to experience marginalization and displacement; and,

WHEREAS (2): There are over 1,500 Native American and Indigenous (NAI) students on the UT campus³, within the larger community of approximately 90,000 Native Peoples in Austin and the Central Texas area⁴; and,

WHEREAS (3): NAI students currently convene in spaces such as the Multicultural Engagement Center (MEC) and the Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAIS) office space in Patton Hall; and,

WHEREAS (4): The NAIS office is for academic programming and does not have the financial and spatial resources for all student and community programming; and,

WHEREAS (5): The MEC caters to a broad student population and houses the Afrikan American Affairs, Asian Desi Pacific Islander American Collective, Latino Community Affairs, Native American and Indigenous Collective, Queer and Trans People of Color Agency, and Students for Diversity and Equity⁵ that are overseen by only 3 full-time

¹ "American Indians." The Bullock Texas State History Museum.

<https://www.thestoryoftexas.com/discover/campfire-stories/native-americans>

² "Indian Nations of Texas." Texas State Library and Archives Commission. 22 June 2017.

<https://www.tsl.texas.gov/exhibits/indian/intro/page2.html>

³ "Facts and Figures." 2018. University of Texas at Austin. <https://www.utexas.edu/about/facts-and-figures>

⁴ United States Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/en.html>

⁵ "Agencies." Multicultural Engagement Center at the University of Texas at Austin. 2016. Division of Diversity and Community Engagement. <http://diversity.utexas.edu/multiculturalengagement/agencies/>

staff⁶ and due to time, budget and physical space constraints cannot fully accommodate NAI student needs; and,

WHEREAS (6): In March of 2018, Provost Maurie McInnis released the statement indicating 340,000 plus square feet in the “heart” of campus would be “repurposed to directly support students;”⁷ and,

WHEREAS (7): NAI students still do not have a space on campus that is dedicated to their cultural and spiritual needs or a space that provides centralized resources; and,

WHEREAS (8): In 2017, the Native American and Indigenous Student Collective issued a petition in support of the creation of a NAI Cultural and Resource Center and received nearly 600 signatures from faculty and students⁸; and,

WHEREAS (9): Reputable universities across the country, including Stanford University, University of Oregon, University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of California-Los Angeles, Yale College, University of Montana, and Colorado State University have established cultural centers that recognize the needs of their NAI students⁹; and,

WHEREAS (10): President Fenves articulated that “the core purpose of The University of Texas at Austin is to transform lives for the benefit of society. [And that] we cannot carry out that purpose until every person in our community is included and treated equitably”¹⁰; and,

WHEREAS (11): Without the creation of a NAI cultural center, NAI students will continue to be excluded from the UT community and treated in an inequitable manner; now,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT (1): A cultural and resource center for NAI students, faculty, community members, and allies be created on campus; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED (2): That this center will be located in central campus to combat the historical marginalization and displacement that NAI communities continue to endure; and,

⁶ “Contact.” Multicultural Engagement Center at the University of Texas at Austin. 2016. Division of Diversity and Community Engagement. <http://diversity.utexas.edu/multiculturalengagement/contact/>

⁷ McInnis, Maurie. "Update on Campus Space-Advancing our Academic Mission." Message to UT Student Body. 8 May 2018. <https://provost.utexas.edu/messages/update-on-campus-space>

⁸ “Native American & Indigenous Student Space @ UT Austin.” Change.org. 591 Signatures as of 12 Nov 2018. <https://www.change.org/p/randy-l-diehl-native-american-indigenous-student-space-ut-austin-dd2e7c79-a99a-4039-b5a5-7e9a21883025>

⁹ <https://nacc.stanford.edu/about-us>, <https://longhouse.uoregon.edu/>, <https://www.uwsp.edu/dca/NativeAm/Pages/default.aspx>, <https://www.aisc.ucla.edu/>, <https://nacc.yalecollege.yale.edu/>, <https://www.montana.edu/tribalhh/longhouse.html>, <https://nacc.colostate.edu/about/>

¹⁰ “Message on University Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan.” President Fenves. <https://president.utexas.edu/messages/message-university-diversity-inclusion-action-plan>

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED (3): That this center will provide a space conducive to the academic, spiritual, cultural, and personal growth for NAI students; and,

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED (4): That this center will have similar spatial dimensions to centers such as the Gender and Sexuality Center and the Multicultural Engagement Center, which are both located in the Student Activity Center (SAC); and,

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED (5): That this center will have paid staff including, but not limited to, student workers, an administrative assistant, program and student coordinators, graduate student assistants, grant specialist, assistant director, and a center director; and,

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED (6): That this center will fulfill the needs of NAI students through: academic support, mentorship, leadership and service learning opportunities, financial assistance, and community engagement; and,

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED (7): That this center will serve as a place in which NAI students can engage with various Native American and Indigenous elders to learn about sacred traditions and medicines, spirituality, kinship, music, dance, folklore, and art; and,

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED (8): That this center will provide resources and information for all students and faculty wanting to know more about NAI history and current events; and,

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED (9): That this center will promote cultural, language, spiritual and intellectual diversity on campus; and,

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED(10): That this resolution be sent to President Gregory Fenves, *President of the University of Texas at Austin*, Dr. Maurie McInnis, *Executive Vice President and Provost*, Dr. Soncia Reagins-Lilly, *Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students*, Dr. Leonard N. Moore, *Vice President for Diversity and Community Engagement*, Carlos Martinez, *Chief of Staff*, Luis Zayas, *Dean for School of Social Work*, Joseph C. TenBarge Jr, *Assistant Dean & Director of Liberal Arts Information Technology Services*.

PASSED by the GSA General Assembly, November 14, 2018.

Signature of the GSA President: 