Diversity Awards Ceremony

Becoming a true citizen of the world: Embracing cultural diversity in all aspects of life

Microsoft Teams Live
April 15th  5:30 - 7:00 PM
Order of Program

Introduction of Hosts
Alicia Makaye, Ph.D.
- Program Host
Chris Bhatti, MBA
- Program Host

Anthems
"Star-Spangled Banner"
- by Margie
"Lift Every Voice and Sing"
- by Committed (@committedsings)

Welcome
George Fair, Ph.D.
- Vice President, Office of Diversity and Community Engagement
Richard C. Benson, Ph.D.
- President, University of Texas at Dallas

Dance Performance
Dallas Black Dance Theatre

Diversity Scholar Testimonial
Sofia Hidalgo

Diversity Poetry
Competition Showcase
Jonathan White
- Assistant Director, Student Life Programs
- SUAAB / Meteor Theatre

Student Diversity Advisory Council Speech
Nicole Peters / Clayton Gabel

UTD Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) Presentation
Rafael Martín, Ph.D.
- Vice President, Chief of Staff, UT Dallas

Congratulations and Thanks to Everyone
Chris Bhatti, MBA
Alicia Makaye, Ph.D.
George Fair, Ph.D.

Closing Entertainment
Bruce August
Introduction of Hosts

Chris Bhatti, MBA, is the Assistant Vice President/Associate Dean for The Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science, as well as Assistant Vice President of Development and Alumni Relations at The University of Texas at Dallas. Chris holds a Bachelor's degree from Southern Methodist University, a Master's from The University of Texas at Dallas, a Master's in Business Administration from Southern Methodist University, and a Certificate in Dispute Resolution from Southern Methodist University. Before SMU, Chris taught science as well as coached cross-country and track and field at The Hockaday School. Chris also built the robotics program, which integrated a STEM curriculum for the middle school, and after his fourth-year teaching, he received the Ellen Higginbotham Award for Teaching Excellence.

Dr. Alicia Makaye (the "A" in GXA) is a philanthropist, entrepreneur, and co-founder of GXA. This IT Solutions provider helps other businesses take command and control of their IT. Dr. Makaye is a U.S. Air Force Veteran and a graduate of UT Dallas with a Ph.D. in Public Affairs. She is also an alumna of Goldman Sachs' 10,000 small businesses entrepreneurship program (cohort of 10). Dr. Makaye most recently served as a Tech Titans judge, helping to nominate some of the best IT industries for 2018. She frequently speaks and participates in activities that foster youth development and encourage youth to consider a profession in Information Technology.
Dean George Fair is an advocate for public education and the attainment of quality education regardless of background or socioeconomic status. An expert on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which was later made a part of the No Child Left Behind Act, Fair works with North Texas school districts to obtain and apply grant funds to educate homeless children. Fair translates his passion for education into action with three UT Dallas programs: the Academic Bridge Program, the new College Readiness Initiative and Jumpstart.

Dr. Richard C. Benson, the fifth president of the University of Texas at Dallas, earned a bachelor of science and engineering degree in aerospace and mechanical science from Princeton University, a master’s degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Virginia, and a doctorate in mechanical engineering from the University of California, Berkeley.
Performance Groups

Bruce August, Jr. is a native of Galveston, Texas and currently lives in Dallas, Texas. He faithfully serves as the Assistant Director of Programming & Marketing for the Multicultural Center at UT Dallas. He received his Bachelor of Science in Computer Science from UT Dallas and his Master of Education in Higher Education Administration from the University of North Texas.

DBDT: Encore! Represents the next generation of Dallas Black Dance Theatre with dance performances of the highest level of artistic quality and relentless excellence. The title of tonight’s performance is called Reminisce, under the direction of Artistic Director Nycole Ray and choreographed by Richard A Freeman.

The Bangladeshi Student Organization (BSO) at The University of Texas at Dallas promotes the culture of Bangladesh in the Dallas Metroplex area and UT Dallas as well as assists new students coming from Bangladesh to the university.

Mariachi Caporales

Mariachi Caporales is a Mexican folk music band founded in 1993 currently dominating the music scene in Dallas, Texas.
Sofia Hidalgo is a third-year Biochemistry student with a minor in STEM education. She is from El Paso, Texas, and came to UT Dallas to find a community that could help her grow and accomplish her goals. Additionally, she is a part of the Diversity Scholars, Undergraduate Success Scholars (where she is the mentoring leader), the UTeach program, which will help her obtain her teacher’s certification, and is president of the Delta Zeta Sorority. She is also working with the Department of Community Engagement as a G Force Mentor, as she loves being able to help better equip high school students for college. In her free time, she loves to read, journal, and explore the outdoors.
To encourage the creative expression of diversity, the Student Diversity Advisory Council announced a student-focused poetry competition on February 9th. The writers of the most thought-provoking pieces were selected and awarded after one month, as well as featured here.

The winners were awarded incremental prize offerings, ranging from:

- 3rd place - $300
- 2nd place - $600
- 1st place - $800
The heat blisters my pale skin brown. Raspa stands line the roads, something cold to eat at every block. I grimace at the palm trees brushing the ceiling like bars. The border of Texas curls around the valley—a limbo of America and not. A different shade of brown than everyone around me, but I blend in easily. I grew up on papa con huevo but achar with everything. I dipped my mom’s vada in spicy salsa. Kaduvakali and Payaso del rodeo, tossed and roasted. My dad said I couldn’t go out. I could have fun if I stuck to my own kind. Skin caramelized overseas. Stars and stripes molded my mind. Still, this culture that seeped through the border and into my life. When I upset my father, he would say, “Don’t be like a Mexican” when he thought I was being selfish, I was met with “Don’t be like an American” as if Indian was the only correct answer, but he chose to raise me here where the drylands and spaced-out houses reminded him of where he grew up, but the valley was never for me. I longed for a single drop of rain during middle months of drought, to breathe in city air and not worry what the neighbors saw.

"In the Rio Grande Valley"

by Alicia Sreeny

Alicia Sreeny is a Literature major graduating in spring 2021. In the fall, she will be matriculating into the MA program at UTD while teaching high school English. In her free time, Alicia likes to cook, organize church events, and write poetry.
Shahrin Upoma is a doctoral candidate in the Public and Nonprofit Management program, where she also serves as a Graduate Teaching Assistant. She was born and raised in Bangladesh and moved to the USA to pursue higher education. She holds a bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of Dhaka and a master's degree in Economics from the University of North Texas.

Ms. Upoma’s commitment to promoting diversity, equity and inclusion through her teaching and research is grounded in her personal experience as a woman of color, first-generation college student, and immigrant. Her dissertation research focuses on gender equity in leadership in faith-based nonprofit organizations.

Ms. Upoma also teaches Diversity Management courses in public organizations, Nonprofit Management, and Leading a Diverse Workforce. Social issues that intersect with diversity, equity and inclusion are a focal area of her teaching. Her teaching pedagogy focuses on equipping the students with tools to help them deal with the intricacy of the world and strive beyond that. She won the Best Instruction by a TA awarded by EPPS in Spring 2020.
The Comet Symphonique is a student-led organization supporting students involved in the musical arts at UTD, including Wind Ensemble, String Orchestra, University Orchestra, and Brass Ensemble.

For more information, please visit: cometsymphonique.weebly.com
Angie Lee is the Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion for Richardson Independent School District. Her work stems from over 20 years in education as a teacher, reading specialist, master teacher, administrator and staff developer. Angie is passionate about ensuring all students can access quality education, promoting learning and working environments that welcome, respect and value diversity and inclusion, ultimately creating a culture where all can perform their personal best without personal compromise. In her current role, she leads the district’s EDI Department and provides oversight for ongoing and new equity initiatives. When asked about her call to action, Angie readily shares: Teaching has always been my life’s work; Educational Equity is my heart’s work.
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Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

About ERGs

Employee Resource Groups can be beneficial to the culture within an organization and its bottom line. Many of these groups often start because of an employee’s need to network with other employees with similar interests and needs. Many of these groups quickly become a model of service for the institution in the area of recruitment of talent, morale boosting, retention and professional development. In addition to all the aforementioned benefits to the institution, Employee Resource Groups help to provide a positive image of the institution to the community.

In an effort to attract and retain a diversity of talented people at all levels, it is important for the ODCE to support activities creating a welcoming campus climate in which to promote and celebrate diversity at UT Dallas. If you would like to have more information on Employee Resource Groups at UT Dallas, please contact Rosie Peterson at (972) 883-4560 in the Department of Institutional Diversity Initiatives.
In 2009, Dr. Courtney Brecheen began her higher education career at UT Dallas in the Office of the Provost. During her professional and academic careers, she has maintained a commitment to diversity, equity, and advocacy for disadvantaged groups. Examples of high-impact practices developed under her direction in the Office of Undergraduate Education (OUE) include the University’s on-campus food pantry, minority student success programs, peer mentor programs, and undergraduate research initiatives.

Currently, Dr. Brecheen’s primary responsibilities include overseeing the Graduation Help Desk, Undergraduate Success Scholars program, Cultural Scholars program, first-generation student programming, OUE survey administration, and student success data analytics. Additionally, in her roles on various committees, Dr. Brecheen advocates for historically marginalized students and intentionally strives to cultivate empathy to promote equity-driven decision-making. Dr. Brecheen enjoys working closely with the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and supporting the Office of Admission and Enrollment in recruitment efforts to increase the racial and socioeconomic diversity of UT Dallas.

Dr. Brecheen proudly serves as the Executive Sponsor of the LGBTQ+ Employee Resource Group (QuTD). She firmly believes that if the individuals who help students feel a sense of belonging, inclusion and safety, they are more likely to make students feel the same.
Inclusive Excellence and Intercultural Teaching Award

Sheryl Skaggs joined the faculty at UT Dallas in 2002 and is a sociology professor in the School of Economic, Political, and Policy Sciences (EPPS). She earned her master’s degree in sociology at the University of Texas at Arlington and her doctorate at North Carolina State University.

Dr. Skaggs teaches graduate and undergraduate sociology and public policy courses focusing on data analysis, applied community research and social inequality. Her research primarily focuses on workplace diversity based on race, ethnicity and gender, particularly within managerial and executive positions. Dr. Skaggs is currently working on a project examining leadership qualities and practices among local government administrators.

Her research has been widely published and supported by the National Science Foundation. Dr. Skaggs has been actively engaged in promoting and supporting diversity and inclusion programs within the local community and on the UT Dallas campus.
About the DAC

The Diversity Advisory Council is made up of prominent leaders from local community and industry partners.

They support the University’s goals and strategic initiatives—providing guidance through financial support, awareness and advocacy, and expertise in diversity and inclusion.

For more information, please visit:
https://diversity.utdallas.edu/partners/DAC/council.html

Chris Bhatti
University of Texas at Dallas

Sonia Canales
H-E-B

Helen Dorsey
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas

Vanessa Fernandes
Nordstrom

Felicia Johnson
The Gatson Group

Alicia Makaye, Ph.D.
GXA

Mei Miao
Truist

Laura Ramirez
Invitation Homes

Drew Walls
Collins Aerospace

Kathy Weaver
Lennox International

Mohammed Farshori
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Mitch Dean
Baylor Scott & White Health
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For more information, please visit: https://giving.utdallas.edu/DiversityAwards

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https://diversity.utdallas.edu/partners/StudentCommittee.html
Graduate Student Assembly (GSA)
Twitter: @gsa_utdallas Facebook: fb.com/GSAUTD
Diversity Advisory Council (DAC)
https://diversity.utdallas.edu/partners/DAC/council.html
Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)
https://diversity.utdallas.edu/ERGs/index.html
Comet Symphonique UTD
https://cometsymphonique.weebly.com/
Bangladesh Student Organization UTD
https://utdallas.presence.io/organization/bangladeshi-student-organization
Dallas Black Dance Theatre
https://dbdt.com/
Mariachi Caporales Dallas
https://www.facebook.com/mariachicaporalesdallas/
Credits to the Production Team

Rosie Peterson  
DIDI Director

Jasmine Johnson  
Program Coordinator

Madison Armstrong  
ERG Coordinator

Xavier Brown  
Graphic Designer

Shaunquula Wilson  
Research Associate

Amanda Pritchard  
Events and Outreach

Dee Lambert  
Doorprize Drawing

Thanks to volunteers:

as well as:

- all UT Dallas Employee Resource Groups
- Development Team
- Academic Bridge Program