

Beauregard Center Debuts 'Celebration of Achievement and Excellence'

Revamped ceremony recognizes graduating students

Monday, May 15, 2023



DIVERSITY SUPPORT COALITION STUDENT LEADERS WERE RECOGNIZED AT THE AULBANI J. BEAUREGARD CENTER FOR EQUITY, JUSTICE, AND FREEDOM'S CELEBRATION OF ACHIEVEMENT AND EXCELLENCE.

The Aulbani J. Beauregard Center for Equity, Justice, and Freedom at UNH unveiled a reimagined year-end event with the debut of its Celebration of Achievement and Excellence on May 10, recognizing graduating students in what is designed to become an annual signature event at the university.

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The celebration represents an overhaul of the center's previous graduation event. New this year was the inclusion of first-generation college graduate recognition, as well as the addition of lavender stole recognition to celebrate the achievements and contributions of graduating students who identify within the LGBTQIA+ community and redesigned Kente Cloth stoles that include Adinkra symbols and UNH branding to recognize members of the BIPOC community and students from other historically excluded backgrounds.

Language on the redesigned Kente Cloth stoles included Nea Onnim No Sua A Ohu, which translates to one who does not know, will know from learning; Adinkrahene, a symbol of charisma and leadership; and Ananse Ntontan, a symbol of wisdom, creativity, and complexities of life.

"Affinity celebrations like this one celebrate perseverance and achievement in the face of historic and ongoing exclusion and marginalization," says Yashwant Prakash Vyas, director of the [Beauregard Center](#). "This celebration was organized to offer community and to honor the contributions and collective experience and achievements of participating students."

"As we continue to work toward more significant equity, justice, and freedom for all individuals, we must recognize and celebrate every community member's diversity

Two additional new traditions were established at this year's celebration, as well. Three students were selected to offer remarks on behalf of each recognition, in place of the historic approach of having faculty or staff speakers deliver the messages, and for the first time ever the Diversity Support Coalition student leaders were recognized by the Beauregard Center for their leadership and service to the UNH

and unique

community.

experiences."

Diversity Support Coalition is an umbrella student organization with seven member organizations: Black Student Union (BSU), United Asian Coalition (UAC), Middle Eastern Cultural Association (MECA), MOSIACO, Hillel, Alliance, and Native American Cultural Association (NACA). The Diversity Support Coalition is housed within and supported by the Beauregard Center. The DSC seeks to promote and support multiculturalism, diversity, and equity at the University of New Hampshire through education and advocacy efforts.

"As we continue to work toward more significant equity, justice, and freedom for all individuals, we must recognize and celebrate every community member's diversity and unique experiences," says Kenneth Holmes, senior vice provost for student life. "This celebration serves as a reminder of our progress and the work we must do to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for everyone."

This year's ceremony marked the first time ever that first-generation college graduates were recognized. Those who were the first in their family to complete a degree from a college or university received medallions, created for this honor and handed out for the first time, depicting a sunburst overlaid with the University of New Hampshire shield, "symbolizing empowerment through educational attainment and a bright future."

"The Celebration of Achievement and Excellence was a successful and endearing graduation event. It was beautiful to see faculty, staff, family members and friends in community celebrating the achievements of our graduating students," adds Nadine Petty, associate vice president and chief diversity officer (and interim Title IX coordinator) at UNH.

Lavender stole recognition was created by Dr. Ronni Sanlo in 1995 at the University of Michigan, and by 2001 there were more than 45 such ceremonies at colleges and universities throughout the country. This year marked the first time such recognition was awarded at UNH. The Beauregard Center's lavender stoles were decorated with the colors of the progressive pride flag.

"The color lavender has been symbolic of LGBTQ+ identities over time and is significant to the LGBTQ+ history in many ways," Vyas says, noting it represents a combination of the pink triangle gay men were forced to wear in concentration camps and the black triangle designating lesbians as political prisoners in Nazi Germany. "The LGBTQ+ civil rights movement took these symbols of hatred and combined them to make symbols and color of pride and community."

Another representation of the lavender color, among many, is the mixing of gender normative colors such as pink (for cis-gender femininity) and blue (for cis-gender masculinity), "combining the gender assigned colors to blur the lines between masculine and feminine, which challenges society's gender norms."

To see more images, view our [complete gallery of photos from the event.](#)

COMPILED [Keith Testa](#) | Communications and Public Affairs |

BY: keith.testa@unh.edu

PHOTOGRAPHER [Jeremy Gasowski](#) | Communications and Public

Affairs | jeremy.gasowski@unh.edu | 603-862-4465

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