WHAT IS LAVENDER GRADUATION?

Lavender Graduation is an annual ceremony conducted on numerous college campuses, prior to the university-wide commencement event, to honor lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students and to acknowledge their achievements and contributions to the university.

Students at colleges and universities nationwide have been celebrating both their academic achievements and their cultural heritages at specialized commencement events. Many of these events are student-initiated and usually occur during (or before) the university-wide commencement weekend. These events provide a sense of community for minority students who often experience tremendous culture shock at their impersonalized institutions. For many students they are the payoff for staying in school. Friends and families find the smaller, more specialized ceremonies both meaningful and personal.

Lavender Graduation is a cultural celebration that officially recognizes LGBTQ students and acknowledges their achievements and contributions to the university as students who survived the college experience. The community has the opportunity to express pride and affirmation. Through such recognition LGBTQ students may leave the university with a positive last experience of the institution thereby encouraging them to become involved mentors for current students as well as active alumni.

PLANNING & ORGANIZING THE EVENT

Items Checklist

--Certificates/Pins
--Awards/Recognition
--Tassels/Cords/Stoles/Caps
--Printed Program/Announcement
--Décor/Balloons/Banners/Signage
--Slideshow

Logistics Checklist

--Date/Time
--Location/Venue
--Invitations/Guest List
--Moderators/Speakers/Reflections
--Keynote/Guest Speaker
--Refreshments/Cake/Catering
--Photographer

EVENT DETAILS

Like other commencement ceremonies, lavender graduation ceremonies typically include a guest speaker; presentation of certificates; presentation of awards; special stoles, cords, and tassels; refreshments afterwards; and, of course, a reading of graduates' names. Attendance is open to family, friends, students, faculty, staff, allies, and all members of the campus LGBTQ community.

Some institutions use the lavender (purple, violet) color for tassels, cords, stoles, or caps. Others use the rainbow colors. Some include LGBTQ symbols (inverted triangles, lambdas).
SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT

You are invited to the annual [name of institution] Lavender Graduation ceremony, which will be held on [date/time/location].

This is a special commencement ceremony to celebrate our graduating LGBTQ students and recognize their unique struggles in pursuit of this important achievement. This is our opportunity to express pride for and affirmation of our LGBTQ students.

All graduating LGBTQ seniors in attendance will be honored with a special [certificate, pin, tassel, cord, stole, cap]. The event will include guest speakers, student reflections, a presentation of awards, and refreshments.

You are asked to RSVP, letting us know you are participating and also telling us the names of your guests.

LGBTQ students do not have to be out to celebrate with us. The event will be a safe and secure place where students can come and exist without fear of how they'll be treated. A photographer will be present, but we will not release photos of anyone without prior permission. Any information you provide will be kept completely confidential.

SAMPLE AGENDA

--Meet and Greet/Appetizers
--Welcome/Introduction/Opening Remarks
--Special Presentation/Slideshow
--Keynote Speaker
--Student Reflections
--Presentation of Awards/Certificates
--Presentation of Tassels/Cords/Stoles/Caps
--Closing Remarks
--Reception/Refreshments

SAMPLE ELEMENTS

--Reciting the names of the graduating LGBTQ students
--Inviting LGBTQ affirming faculty and staff
--Introducing LGBTQ campus leaders
--Introducing officers of the LGBTQ student organization
--Asking LGBTQ activists from the community to be keynote speakers
--Conducting a special presentation (slideshow) of memories, events, history, and accomplishments
--Recognizing special achievements of outstanding individuals
--Presenting a musical performance
--Presenting a reading (poem/reflection)