



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Penn State Homecoming Announces Changes to Student Court Selection Process

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. (April 10, 2018) — The 2018 Homecoming Executive Committee and Royalty Committee are rolling out changes in regards to how Homecoming Courts are selected. Beginning in 2018, Penn State Homecoming will eliminate the gendered titles of “Homecoming King and Queen”, as well as rid the number ratio of male to female representation within the court. In an effort to embrace diversity and gender inclusivity within our community, ten candidates who capture the essence of the values we hold true as a University will be chosen, regardless of their gender, gender identity, and/or gender expression to represent the Senior Class as members of the Student Court.

“Homecoming, as an organization, supports and strives to embody the aspirations of the ‘All-In’ initiative. To us, it’s less about what a student looks like on paper and more about embracing the whole person and the unique experiences and backgrounds of each Penn Stater,” said Ally Berdan, Executive Director for Homecoming 2018.

In the past, the top two members of the Student Court, who were once known as “King and Queen,” were crowned during the annual Homecoming Football game. In an effort to embrace change within our organization, we are looking to acknowledge the top two recognized students with the Guide State Forward Award.

“The student-led changes to this year’s Homecoming are positive and exemplify the ideals of the Homecoming Committee and the University’s commitment to building a welcoming and inclusive environment for all,” said Damon Sims, Vice President for Student Affairs.

Penn State Homecoming acknowledges where the ideals of diversity and inclusion may not have been clearly prioritized in the choosing of Student Courts in the past. With this realization, Homecoming seeks to embrace this change as a permanent precedence within it’s selection process.

“We can’t say ‘We Are’ and exclude part of our community. The decision of the Homecoming Committee to insure Homecoming is open and welcoming to all is commendable, a true ‘We Are’ event,” said Paul Clifford, CEO of the Penn State Alumni Association.

As Student Court members, these outstanding students will have the opportunity to showcase their talents, participate in university-wide service, as well as engage and participate with each event occurring during Homecoming Week.



“I believe the events of Homecoming brings our community together in public spaces, this year we are being given an opportunity that allows us to build and practice a greater love for our entire community,” said Mildred Williams, Program Coordinator at the Paul Robeson Cultural Center.

Starting April 10th, members of the Penn State student body will be able to nominate a rising Senior during various spring court nomination events, as well as online. Spring Nominations will close April 25th and re-open in the Fall.

“As Royalty Director, I have come to acknowledge that my platform is more than that of a student leader, but an opportunity to enact change within our University.” said Renee Clauson-Rivera, 2018 Royalty Director. “Building upon the traditions set forth by previous Homecoming committees and student members is important to me as a diverse student looking to embrace that same diversity within the organization.”

Homecoming will review applications from both nomination periods and select the top 20 candidates who will then interview in front of a Faculty and Staff Panel. The panel, made up of various Penn State faculty and staff members on a volunteer basis, will deliberate and select the final 10 individuals who will become members of the 2018 Homecoming Student Court.

“I appreciate the effort of those involved with Penn State Homecoming to create a process that is more openly inclusive and allows a variety of Penn State students to participate and be honored in that process,” said Jennifer Pencek, Programming Coordinator of the Gender Equity Center.

Student Court members will be selected based on the whole-person concept, not just on academic grades and leadership. Reviewers will consider how students represent the six Penn State core values of: respect, integrity, responsibility, discovery, excellence and community.

“These changes are exciting for the Penn State community and showcase the commitment that our student leaders have in making sure all Penn State students connect to the larger traditions and histories that make us Penn State” said Brian Patchcoski, Director of the LGBTQA Student Resource Center.

“Recognizing Penn State’s continued dedication toward diversity, equity, and inclusion, these changes challenge us to expand our understanding of sexual and gender diversity and extends a welcome that other universities and institutions have been doing for some time. These changes are about making the Penn State experience an ever more inclusive one.”



For further information about the various resources available on campus, please visit the following websites: [Gender Equity Center](#), [Paul Robeson Cultural Center](#), [Multicultural Resource Center](#), [All In at Penn State](#), and [LGBTQA Student Resource Center](#).

About Penn State Homecoming

Penn State Homecoming is a student - run organization that aims to celebrate tradition and instill pride in all members of the Penn State family through active engagement of students, alumni, faculty and staff across the community. Our organization is comprised of many student volunteers who donate their time to creating a multitude of events that make the Homecoming celebration a yearlong event.

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