



The Rooted Collective & ULI: January 29th, 2024

To sign this petition, follow this link: <https://forms.gle/2x4gUITn49CdH3E68>
We're Here to Stay!

Statement

By UT students, alumni, and community members

On December 21, 2023, UT Legal decided to discontinue the Monarch program and services effective January 1, 2024. Students were informed of this decision on January 10, 2024, by the Monarch Coordinator. The decision to discontinue the Monarch program occurred alongside other program closures in response to SB 17 (anti-DEI legislation).

Our concerns are as follows:

1. **The decision to close the Monarch program was not made transparently.**

UT Austin administration has not issued a statement regarding the closure of the Monarch program and explaining the decision. Furthermore, the decision occurred behind closed doors, suddenly, and without notice. While all other offices and divisions at UT Austin received ample time to be in compliance with SB 17, the Monarch program was not given time to address any concerns from the UT administration or legal department. As tuition-paying students at The University of Texas at Austin, we are, at the very least, owed accountability from the university to give the rationale for closing the program.

2. **SB 17 does not apply to the Monarch program.**

Section C of the UT system guidance for SB 17 clearly states that "programs that enhance student achievements without regard to sex, race, color, or ethnicity" are exempted. The Monarch program did not implement any race or gender-based programming. Immigrants are not a single racial or ethnic group.

3. **The university is using federal legislation to implement a state law.**

The Dallas Morning News reported on January 25, 2024, that the university referenced the federal law, IRIRA (1996), related to the closure of the Monarch program. This appears to be in reference to a singular scholarship provided by the Monarch program since 2022 for undocumented students. The university has had ample time since the creation of this scholarship in 2022 to provide the Monarch program with the opportunity to remove the scholarship or change the qualifications for application to the scholarship. We believe it is unreasonable and unjust to close an entire program based on one scholarship offering.

The Monarch Program

The Monarch program was created in 2016 by a former UT Austin graduate student, as a result of student advocacy for services. Through continued student advocacy, the program hired its first full-time coordinator in 2021 and received institutional funding for the first time in 2023. The Monarch program served at least 60 students per semester. The program served students on campus of all races/ethnicities and genders. The Monarch program provided specific, but not exclusive, support for undocumented students, students with temporary status, students from mixed-status families, and U.S. citizen allies. Services included advising, mentoring, and workshops for academic, career, financial, and mental health support. The program also provided support to prospective students and created gatherings and socials to promote a sense of community. Additionally, the Monarch program provided training for staff members in departments across campus to better understand the unique needs of immigrant students at UT Austin. Lastly, the Monarch program gathered and created resources accessible to students.

Because of the discontinuation of the Monarch program, there are now no dedicated programs providing services for students who are undocumented, hold temporary status, or are from mixed-status families. The burden once again falls to students to provide their own services and resources. The Rooted Collective and the University Leadership Initiative are collaborating with local organizations to fill the gaps left by the closure of the Monarch program.

Our Demands

To the University:

1. Immediately reinstate the Monarch program
2. Provide a clear statement as to the rationale for closing the Monarch program including a) why the Monarch program was not given time to address concerns and b) how the Monarch program is implicated by SB 17

To the Community:

1. Demand that UT Austin administration provide a clear rationale for ending the Monarch program and to reinstate the Monarch program by
 - a. Sending an email to the administration at president@utexas.edu and UT Legal at Amanda.Cochran@austin.utexas.edu, ypla@austin.utexas.edu using this [email template](#)
 - b. Sharing Rooted's Instagram posts on social media and tagging @jc.hartzell.
2. Sign the [petition](#) to support our demands.
3. Donate to the [Rooted fundraiser](#) to raise the \$10,000 budget lost by the closure of the Monarch program to put toward continuation of services.

Signed,

Aerin Fajardo, Current Student, University of Texas at Austin
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