



Background on the Comptroller's Report

Sex Week is an event held by the student organization Sexual Empowerment and Awareness at Tennessee (SEAT) to foster a comprehensive and intellectual discussion on sex, sexuality, and relationships to educate the University of Tennessee-Knoxville (UTK). The event occurs annually in the Spring and has been held on campus since 2013. From its conception through the present day, some legislators and University administrators have expressed their concerns and disapproval of the event.

Two weeks before the first Sex Week in 2013, former UTK Chancellor Jimmy Cheek withdrew University funding for the event in response to pressure from the General Assembly. This money was allocated through University departments and denied to SEAT on the basis that these funds were derived from state tax and tuition dollars. The organizers launched a crowdsourcing campaign, raising private donations to recover funds and succeeded in hosting the first-ever Sex Week in April 2013.

The controversy surrounding the defunding of Sex Week led the University to conduct a series of internal reviews into how student organizations request and receive funds and again attracted the attention of legislators. In March 2014, the Tennessee Senate adopted Senate Joint Resolution 626 directing changes to the student activity fee allocation process in the UT System and formally condemning Sex Week. In 2014, the Board of Trustees adopted the Student Programs and Services Fee (SPSF) to supersede the University Programs and Services Fee authorized by the Board in 1971, which had previously funded student programming. To allocate money to student organizations a new process called the Student Programming Allocations Committee (SPAC), was enacted and is the current funding process. All students pay the same fee, however, they can choose a portion of their fee to support student programs by 'Opting-in' and, in turn, gain free admission to events funded through SPAC.

The Committee itself is composed of both students and university employees appointed by the UTK Chancellor but is Chaired by the Student Body President, which reflects the Committee's purpose of providing support for events planned by students, funded by students, and created for students. All registered student organizations can apply for SPAC funding and Sex Week has been partially supported through funds allocated by SPAC every year since its introduction.

In 2016, the Tennessee General Assembly again stated their opposition to Sex Week by amending the Tennessee Code through the passage of Public Chapter 1066 to "prohibit the use of State Funds to support gender-neutral pronouns, to promote or inhibit the celebration of religious holidays, or support sex week." In April 2018, members of the Tennessee General Assembly requested that the Comptroller's Office research Sex Week at UTK, and determine whether state resources, direct or indirect, are used to support the event.

After nearly a year of investigation, the Comptroller's Office published their report online and presented their findings in Nashville at a meeting of the Senate Education Committee on Wednesday, February 20th, 2019. You can read the report and the university's response on the Transparent UT website. The report found that Sex Week has been supported by through the years by varying combinations of SPSF, private donations, and indirect benefits through the use of university facilities which are funded by state resources. Sex Week 2019 is solely funded through SPSF. The Comptroller's report includes 14 policy considerations for UTK, ranging from minor changes in campus policy to an outright ban on the event. Included is a letter from Interim UT President, Randy Boyd and Interim Chancellor, Wayne T. Davis detailing how they will respond in the coming months and their commitment to "eliminate the Student Programming Allocation Committee" and "develop a process in which the administration decides what programming to fund, including sex education programming, with input from students."