

SPECTRUM

Recognizing a spectrum of identities

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Overview of SPECTRUM

SPECTRUM hopes to attract and provide welcoming non-judgmental housing for students who identify with and are interested in but not limited to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, pansexual, polyamorous, questioning, queer, and ally communities. SPECTRUM is a community where community members feel mentally, emotionally and physically safe. This will help foster an open, accepting, and celebratory environment. Human identity can never be exhaustively explained due to its complexity. No matter where one's identity falls along the spectrum of all possible identities, there is always more to learn. An open-minded environment will foster teaching and learning about the concept of identity as a spectrum. As a team we will use obtained knowledge and shared personal experiences to break down stereotypes, and thereby prevent bias incidents. SPECTRUM will teach members to respect all opinions.

The focus of SPECTRUM is individual development and the ability to become comfortable with the identities of the members of SPECTRUM, as well as others in the community at large hold. SPECTRUM's focus is primarily, but not exclusively, aspects of identity regarding sexuality and gender. These issues, we feel, may be frightening for some. By taking part in this open and welcoming community, everyone will be able to express themselves freely. SPECTRUM also hopes to advocate a more active presence within the LGBTQA community on campus. SPECTRUM will advocate for members to attend the weekly Free2be club meetings and get to know the resources that are available to help them on their own journey of self-exploration. By participating in this program, members will obtain the basic essential tools to foster community for themselves and others at UVM. SPECTRUM has always been a place where people can feel at home regardless of how they identify and where they can be themselves free of judgment. For incoming first years, SPECTRUM will aim to create a space where they feel comfortable and can adjust to college life.

Within SPECTRUM all members will be encouraged to step out of their comfort zone in accordance with the following philosophy, Challenge by Choice. Challenge by choice is to encourage individuals to accomplish goals and overcome obstacles and challenges. Challenge by Choice will be used in this program to encourage members to achieve their goals & provide them with a safe environment where they can go beyond their comfort level. The SPECTRUM environment will be one of helpful advice and encouragement to help members to break out of their comfort zone at their own pace. In SPECTRUM the use of three levels will be used when applying the philosophy challenge by choice: green zone, yellow zone and red zone. Green zone is a place where individuals feel completely safe and are comfortable with their surroundings. Yellow zone is when the individual is in new territory and out of their comfort zone but is there but choice and feel ready to be there. Red Zone is when the individual is beyond where they are comfortable and does not feel safe in this area. SPECTRUM will never want a member to enter this zone and if a member does, SPECTRUM will do everything it can to help that member back into a zone where they feel safe. SPECTRUM feels that personal development is a goal of the program but as members we believe that we all move at our own pace. SPECTRUM will not only help members in personal growth and development but also teach them the history behind their identities they hold - primarily gender and sexuality.

This program is important because LGBTQA issues are nearly impossible to learn about and teach freely and completely in a classroom or club. The ultimate goal of this program is for participants to become accepting of others and themselves, and know they are always loved and welcomed for who they are. The emotional and political nature of the issues explored are complex, which is why safe-space housing is required. In a classroom setting, many issues may seem taboo, and may corner students to refer to personal experiences with the cautious stem of "My friend..." rather than "I once..." A learning environment with developed trust, camaraderie, and acceptance is crucial in identity development, and therefore is the best and most valuable opportunity we can offer to any student.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Learning Objective 1

Each member will be able to define what it means to be in a welcoming community and reinforce an accepting environment. They will be able to identify steps in creating a welcoming accepting community and lead by example in areas outside of the structured program.

Action Steps

A) We will continue the tradition where members will participate in creating an “Equality Flag.” This is made by randomly assigning one color of the rainbow to each program member. They will be given strips of paper to decorate with the themes being a combination of their color and their interpretation of the concepts of, ideal acceptance, ideal equality, and their personal experiences. Each member will present their “color strip” and explain the themes of the piece. Afterwards, all of the strips will be connected to form one unified “Equality Flag.” All program members will then discuss the similarities and differences of the themes as well as the symbolism of the unified flag.

B) During the first meeting of the year, members will write their definition and expectations about life in the SPECTRUM program on index cards and place them in a bowl. These thoughts will be read aloud in a fashion that will keep each author 100% anonymous. This will give everyone a good idea of our starting point and help us to set goals.

C) During each discussion and meeting throughout the year, we will touch on the subject of community and relate it to the current topic. This is necessary to reinforce the idea and to apply it to all aspects of life. Members will be expected to relate previous discussions and experiences to the current topic of discussion.

Learning Objective 2

Teach members how the gender and sexual identities that they hold can impact other aspects of their identities such as race, socio-economic status, and background, and vice versa. Each member will be able to identify the difference between sex and gender. We want everyone to have a clear understanding of the definition of transgender. Over the course of this program we hope to teach members the correct terminology and have a basic understanding of these concepts.

Action Steps:

A) We will host a meeting where members will fill out a chart that portrays their identities.

B) We will ask members of the UVM community to come and speak about their identities and experiences. For example having a person of color who identifies as part of the LGTBQA community share their experiences with the SPECTRUM community.

C) Members will be encouraged to participate in programs such as Next Step and become more involved with Social Justice issues at their own comfort level.

D) Host an event that will show the impact identities have within the L/L community and the benefits and drawback.

Event

Another new event will be “Make your own Identi-tee shirt” where individuals design/express their identities or whatever they wish to on white shirts we will provide them. This will be open to anyone who is interested/comfortable with it, and we will provide everyone with T-shirts and markers/stencils/stickers to design, express, celebrate their individuality. **(October)**

Learning Objective 3

Each member will be able to define the term “ally” beyond the classic definition. Members will identify key factors of what it means to be an ally and the concept of an “aspiring ally”, to help maintain UVM’s open and accepting environment.

They will also learn about the historical and current perceptions of allies within the LGBTQ community. We believe that an ally is someone who helps to support this community in an active versus passive manner.

Action Steps:

A) Members will be encouraged to attend at least two LGBTQ-related club events. These include, but are not limited to, Free2Be, or a one-on-one meeting with any of the LGBTQ staff at the Allen House to develop an understanding of what it means to be an ally.

B) Members will participate in a group discussion on the definition of ally as well as their experiences being one, (or not). They will also discuss how they treat their own allies and how to make allies feel comfortable and welcome.

Event

We will host an event called "RU an Ally?" For this event we will invite various on and off-campus members of LGBTQ Center and Burlington community in general to talk about what it means to be an Ally within and outside the LGBTQ community. This event will also allow UVM students to show their support by "coming out as an ally" which will help spread awareness on SPECTRUM'S goals. It is also a way to further solidify the welcoming and accepting environment that is already present at UVM. This would be a campus-wide event to both teach and learn from different perspectives since we believe allies are equally important members within the LGBTQ community. **(September)**

Learning Objective 4

SPECTRUM will encourage and support its members to attend and to volunteer at TIC.

At UVM we are extremely lucky to have an event such as TIC (Translating Identity Conference) every year. This is an unparalleled learning opportunity, not only for SPECTRUM but for the UVM community as a whole.

Action Steps:

A) Attending Free2Be meeting leading up to TIC will be highly encouraged as a way for members to get more involved in the process setting up the conference.

B) On the day of TIC, SPECTRUM members will attend some TIC workshops in addition to volunteering at the conference.

C) At the program meeting following TIC, members will discuss what they learned at the workshops they attended as well as what they learnt from volunteering.

Learning Objective 5

Each member will be able to compare and contrast different views and attitudes of various cultures, during various historical periods, toward LGBTQ lifestyles. In doing so we hope to tackle and break down the assumed stereotypes in the LGBTQ community.

Action Steps:

A) Members will watch one or more of the films: Philadelphia, Beautiful Thing, My Life in Pink, Jihad for Love, Billy Elliot, Brother Outsider, But I'm a Cheerleader, Milk, Better Than Chocolate, Rocky Horror Picture Show, Bound, Birdcage, etc. As with all movie screenings, we will have questions prepared for members to answer and topics to discuss at the end of the movie.

B) Members will take turns leading discussion groups on the issues touched by the films. These issues include, but are not limited to family interactions, general acceptance or rejection by society, interactions within the LGBTQ community, and the effect of legal LGBTQ matters on family and friends.

C) SPECTRUM hopes to have several movie sessions throughout both semesters at group meetings as well as two collaborated events with other L/L programs.

Event

Another new event we would like to propose for this year is “Travelling through Queer Culture”- collaboration with one of the various Arts Initiative L/L Programs in order to teach/show case various artists/photographers/musicians to the larger UVM community. This would help compare and contrasted with the assumed stereotypes. **(March)**

Learning Objective 6

Each member will be learn about historical and contemporary mental and physical health issues that impact the LGBTQA community.

Action Steps:

A) Members will each present one court case or law that has had an effect on the LGBT community. We will discuss any current or recent court case during that time, such as Proposition 8.

B) We will discuss HIV/AIDS as a current threat. Members will be expected to have a ballpark idea of the percentage of individuals, in their age range and otherwise, who are affected by AIDS. An AIDS experiment/demonstration will take place during this meeting

C) A safe sex presentation and activity will be held with the help and cooperation of the Center for Health and Well-being.

D) SPECTRUM hopes to bring speakers who are knowledgeable in this field to program meetings and hosted events. Examples of this would be having a presentation on Lesbian health issues and inviting Active Minds to talk about mental health issues with the LGBTQA community.

Learning Objective 7

Each member will be able to identify at least three people who have made an historical or inspirational difference affecting the LGBTQA community. SPECTRUM will explore LGBTQA history throughout the year. This will include, but is not limited to, various gay and anti-gay rights milestones such as the Stonewall Rebellion, LGBTQA rights leaders, the “ex-gay” movement, current and past policies and attitudes affecting queer-identified individuals and their spectrum of lifestyles.

Action Steps:

A) Each member will give a short presentation on one person or event of their choice that has made an impact on the LGBTQA community

B) Members will discuss in certain program meetings what makes a great leader and the magnitude of representing a minority group.

C) Discuss LGBT individuals in sports, fictional characters in literature/films, the military, the police force, etc.

Event

A possible event to go along with learning about LGBTQA history could be having a speaker who is knowledgeable about queer history. **(February)**

Community Service /Outreach to the UVM community

In cooperation with the Center for Health and Wellbeing, we will hold a safer-sex presentation, which will be open to the entire Living & Learning community. Facts about health, wellness, and communicable diseases will be explored. This event will be friendly to people of all identities and sexual orientation. **(December)**

Members of SPECTRUM will be required to participate in the Translating Identity Conference. Program members will have a choice of either attending at least one workshop at the event or volunteering for at least two hours. In order to lead by example, SPECTRUM program directors will be expected to do both. **(October)**

We would also like to become more involved with the Allen House, home to LGBTQA services on campus by helping at events such as Home for the Holidays. We feel that by visiting/volunteering with the staff.

Main Event

SPECTRUM will, like previous years, also be hosting the annual “Queer Prom.” This event allows people to experience or re-experience a high school prom, regardless of their gender identity expression or their sexual orientation. A fun dance party that celebrates diversity and inclusion for the entire UVM and Vermont community. We’ll provide music, snacks and a safe environment for stressed out students before finals. This has been our most popular event on campus. **(April)**

Program Advisor

Nelson Sears, UVM Office Manager of LGBTQA Services, has happily accepted the role of program advisor for the SPECTRUM program. Nelson Sears has a strong background in Fine Arts, Administrative Services, and men's fashion accessory design. Nelson is a great asset to our program because he is strong in the subjects where we are weak. He is known for his creative writing and performance workshops for individuals impacted by HIV. His insight into the disease and its impact on people is invaluable. We cannot imagine a mentor with better knowledge on the emotional aspect of the subject. He also brings quite a handful of diversity to the SPECTRUM table.

Program suites

SPECTRUM has always run smoothly with the two suites that are located in the "Diverse Cultures" living area of L/L A-high building. We think that the program should stay within this building because it is a nice and easy to find location for visitors/future guest speaker. The suite numbers are A260 and A280, and they contain 5 singles and 4 double rooms. This is a Co-ed program and as Program Directors, we fully intend to notify roommates to make sure they are both comfortable with each other. We estimate that our program will have 13 residents, including both PDs, which is a great sized number for our group. Having no more than two suites for this program will allow for closer interaction and therefore closer community.

Interactions with Other L/L Programs

We definitely want to collaborate with other L/L programs and clubs on campus to bring even more diverse perspectives and a closer sense of community. Some examples of events SPECTRUM would like to plan are listed below:

Gender Role in Anime and Video games Today:

Collaborating with Anime as an Art Forum we will host an event that will explore alternate depictions of gender and sexuality in an art form that as a global audience and an ever-increasing presence in the USA. We will also touch how gender and sexuality in portrayed in video games. This event will such on how Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) characters have been depicted in some video games since the 1980s and how that image has evolved since then.**(September)**

Exploring Gender and Sexuality in China:

SPECTRUM hopes to collaborate with the Chinese Program in the Global Village to raise awareness about the LGBTQA issues in China. Given China's rise as a economic and political superpower we feel that it would be beneficial to educate the L/L community about the human right issues surrounding the LGBTQA community in the most populous country in the world. This event would touch base on the formation of a an emerging Chinese PFLAG organization and a movement lead a mother of a gay son known as "Mama Wu".**(November)**

Active Minds Program and Transgender politics in the USA:

Collaborating with the Active Minds group to discuss the impact of been a transgendered person in contemporary US society. This event will be an overview of the mental and emotional struggles of transgender people. **(February)**

Community Service:

SPECTRUM, besides helping out at UVM;s LGBTQA Center would like to volunteer for the greater Burlington community by helping out at events such as the MardiGra parade, participating in the annual Firetruck pull and organizing a team for Relay for Life.

Program Member Recruitment

For recruitment we plan to make a Face book club and advertise (with posters) around campus to those interested in the program. Our email addresses/phone numbers will be readily available to those who may want to be involved with the program and our current members plan to tell others about their experiences so they are more informed.