Introduction

For years many higher education institutions have been asking themselves in what ways does a diverse community enhance learning, scholarship, leadership and service? How do diverse perspectives and experiences affect the quality of education and how can institutions improve? As with many other institutions, the University of Vermont (UVM) has been asking these questions. We have explored, examined, engaged, and resourced many initiatives and efforts to actively progress in our institutional diversity goals. We want to attract and retain talented individuals from populations that have historically been underrepresented in academia and at the University of Vermont, especially people of color and women.

Based on scholarly research and best practices, we know that there is no magic wand. So to address these questions and advance our institutional diversity goals, the UVM senior leadership has invested in The Inclusive Excellence at the University of Vermont: A Framework for Building a More Diverse, Inclusive, and Multiculturally Competent Campus 2016-2021. This document, which is also referred to as The Framework for Inclusive Excellence was produced by the Office of the Vice President for Human Resource, Diversity, and Multicultural Affairs in collaboration with the President’s Commission for Inclusive Excellence. The Framework for Inclusive Excellence outlines the elements for building an infrastructure that truly manifests inclusive excellence. It firmly states we must have a diverse community of talented students, faculty, staff and administrators; provide an educational environment in which all of our members can thrive and reach their greatest potential as scholars and professionals; and prepare our students to work and live in a diverse and complex world.

The implementation of The Inclusive Excellence Framework is about making systemic changes designed to embed diversity in the university’s decisions, resources, behaviors and practices in the spirit of engagement, improvement and accountability. It involves every college and division at the University of Vermont, including the Offices of the President and Provost to inventory our collective diversity and inclusion work, and to create action plans along four pillars of inclusive excellence. These four pillars of The Framework are: academics, community, environment and
operations.

In addition, The Office of the Vice President for Human Resources, Diversity and Multicultural Affairs is coordinating the compilation and analysis of the data gathered from this institution-wide initiative to identify our best practices, gaps, and resources needed to move forward regarding inclusive excellence.

This year’s annual report highlights some of the active programmatic and strategic initiatives as they pertain to the climate at UVM for students from marginalized identities.

**Strategic and Targeted Efforts of Affinity Centers to Support a Positive Climate and Experience for Students from Marginalized Identities at UVM**

Across the United States and even globally there has been an increase in high profile incidents of inequity and violence around race, national origin, immigration status, sexual orientation, and gender identity, among other identities and affiliations. Attacks against communities of color and the LGBTQ+ community, police violence against men of color, and the targeting of immigrant communities across the country, have left many feeling vulnerable, fearful, and angry. The national conversation, political rhetoric, and shifts in public policy have ignited communities near and far to address what it means to be a diverse, inclusive, and just community or institution. As such, universities and colleges across the United States are experiencing an uptake in activism and calls for greater accountability.

The University of Vermont has not been immune from having to grapple with these national and local emerging issues, which impact members of our community. UVM has continued its strategic work, as well as being responsive to emerging events, through actions such as President Sullivan’s institutional statements reiterating the University’s commitment to justice and inclusion in the aftermath of the Charlottesville attack and policy changes regarding the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). UVM’s president was among the more than 700 presidents of colleges and universities across the nation who signed a statement in support of DACA. Additionally, UVM’s flying of the Black Lives Matter flag, efforts around non-gender segregated restrooms, development of affirmative recruitment guidelines, coordination of a Women’s Summit, Restorative Circles among many other initiatives, signal our ongoing commitment to diversity, inclusion, equity and social justice.

Below is a list of student centers whose missions are directly related to supporting our students from marginalized identities. These centers and their staff are critical parts in creating a positive climate for students, which directly impacts the recruitment and retention of students from underrepresented populations or historically marginalized identities. The Centers help to articulate the message that diversity is a core value for UVM, provide affinity based networks, and have mechanisms to help address bias, harassment and discrimination. Most importantly they foster inclusion and decrease isolation and alienation for UVM’s students. See Attachment A for student testimonies.
Interfaith Center

What follows are some highlights about key programs, initiatives and the impact of UVM’s Interfaith Center. This August represented the first fall opening of the Interfaith Center, a newly established space and program at the University of Vermont. Its overall mission is to equip individuals and the institution as a whole to engage more comfortably and competently with matters of spirituality and religion. As national surveys have demonstrated (e.g., Astin, Astin & Lindholm, 2011; Mayhew et al., 2016) the vast majority of incoming students are expecting their college or university to not only provide a welcoming environment for people of diverse religious and philosophical perspectives, but opportunities for meaningful engagement with individuals who possess perspectives other than their own.

A key programmatic initiative for the 2017-18 academic year is the Interfaith Center’s Interfaith Engagement Series (IES). Comprised of six, monthly “Dinner & Dialogue” events and two community service projects (i.e., one fall, one spring), the IES aims to facilitate intentional dialogue and community building among students across the religious and philosophical spectrum. The Interfaith Youth Core and Fetzer Institute have awarded the Interfaith Center with a “Healing the Heart of Democracy” grant to support this effort, recognizing IES’s promise for “creating and enhancing dialogue among people from different identities about the values that bind us together as a diverse nation.” The IES is also core to the Interfaith Center’s efforts to build student leadership capacity and sustained involvement in interfaith engagement, as it collaborates closely with interested students who are working to establish an “Interfaith Student Collective” club that will be recognized by the Student Government Association.

In helping to equip staff and faculty to engage more comfortably and competently with matters of spirituality and religion, the Interfaith Center is partnering with Professional Development & Training to offer the “Religion 101 Series,” as well as other workshops and conversations. Building on the well-received “Islam 101” program from the 2017 spring semester, this fall they offered Judaism 101 and will soon be scheduling an installment on Christianity. The aim of these workshops is to increase staff/faculty’s religious literacy regarding a particular tradition, as well as to explore and discuss how the campus environment can present challenges to students, staff and faculty who identify with this tradition.

Lastly, the physical space offered by the newly established Interfaith Center for spiritual and religious conversations, community, education and practice has been very well received. For example, last spring just one student group accepted the invitation to host their weekly meetings at the Interfaith Center. As of September, there are now five different student groups regularly using the Interfaith Center for their worship, community, and educational meetings. There has also been an increase in students and staff using the space on a drop-in basis for prayer and meditation, quiet study and conversation. There are plans for additional enhancements to the center. President Sullivan and I have worked closely to look at improvements to the landscaping and interior (e.g., carpets and painting) of the Interfaith Center.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Ally (LGBTQA) Center

What follows are some highlights about key programs, initiatives and the impact of UVM’s
LGBTQA Center. Please note that in this section the term LGBTQ+ appears. This is to denote that many gender identities and sexual orientations make up the queer community, not just those that are represented by a letter in the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning) acronym.

When the LGBTQA Center was founded, this program was literally lifesaving and provided a safe space for lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals at UVM in a hostile world. The national, local and campus climates for LGBTQ+ individuals and communities have changed significantly since the Center’s founding 17 years ago. Much of the improvement on UVM’s campus is due to the efforts of the LGBTQA Center and its dedicated staff. The newest member of the staff is Kate Jerman, who joined the Center as its new director in July 2017.

Over time, the Center’s efforts have expanded to include services to a much broader array of identities, especially transgender and gender non-conforming people. The Center is mindful of and constantly adapting to new identities and constituencies as sexual identities and gender identities evolve and new terms emerge.

Direct support programs for LGBTQ+ students remain vital to the Center’s mission. It provides a rich calendar of monthly events and activities and regularly has anywhere from 20-30 students gathered for events like Crockpot Comfort where dinner and small group conversations provide nourishment for body and soul, to gatherings like Rainbow Graduation where several hundred members of the UVM community gather to celebrate the success of LGBTQ+ students, recognize the contributions of campus allies, and honor the brilliance and resilience of our diverse UVM queer communities.

In addition, as the campus’ needs have evolved, the Center has grown to provide education, outreach, and training on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity for the entire campus community; alumni networking; prospective student outreach; and advocacy. The LGBTQA Center also upholds the University’s aim of inclusive excellence by, for example, acting as liaisons with Residential Life to secure safe and affirming housing for LGBTQ+ students, working with the Office of the Registrar to enable students to select their name and pronouns in campus systems such as class rosters, and partnering with Career Services to provide students with affirming career prospects and to support their professional development in a way that is inclusive of their whole selves.

Advocacy for UVM’s trans and gender non-conforming communities has been an especially prominent area of growth over the last few years. The LGBTQA Center was instrumental in securing gender-neutral housing for students, adding sexual orientation and gender identity fields to the data collection efforts of other offices such as Admissions so that LGBTQ+ student communities could be counted and valued by campus, and policy changes that resulted in improved health insurance coverage for transgender employees and students. The LGBTQA Center has also worked in partnership with others on campus to ensure that transgender and gender non-conforming people on the UVM campus have a “safe place to pee.” The Gender Inclusive Restroom Taskforce has increased the number of non-gender segregated restrooms on campus, improved signage and ADA accessibility and raised awareness of the availability of safe bathrooms on campus.
Participation in LGBTQA sponsored events and in LGBTQ+ themed clubs and activities continues to grow as more students safely and comfortably identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. This growth isn’t due to LGBTQ+ students entirely though; an active and growing number of cisgender and heterosexual students believe in LGBTQ+ equality and are participating in traditionally LGBTQ+ spaces as proud allies. The Ally and Advocate community at UVM is strong and contributes to UVM’s reputation as an inclusive campus.

The LGBTQA Center looks forward to one day having dedicated space on campus that is student-centered, fully accessible to people with disabilities, and large enough to conduct the activities that meet the campus’ goals for diversity and inclusive excellence. The current location at the Allen House continues to be a challenge to efforts to serve the UVM community and students in particular. The student experience, for LGBTQ students as well as students seeking competence around issues of sexual orientation and gender diversity, would be vastly improved if the LGBTQA Center had space in the Living/Learning Center similar to the new space for the Mosaic Center for Students of Color (MCSC).

**Mosaic Center for Students of Color (MCSC)**

What follows are some highlights about key programs, initiatives and the impact of UVM’s MCSC. The MCSC offers an array of robust initiatives and programs focused on facilitating the success and well-being of self-identified students of color at the University of Vermont. Functioning as a culturally intelligent hub of connection to a wide range of university and community resources including the deans ‘offices of all seven colleges, the MCSC enables student to access what is needed in order to thrive holistically.

Through widespread collaboration and consultancy, the MCSC staff serves as a bridge between students and the individuals in university spaces who are best equipped to advise and guide their journey. The one stop shop approach exemplifies the best of strategic enrollment strategies where student advisors mentor and coach students before connecting them to campus partners. This results in students of color being more engaged in all aspects of university life.

Involved with students before they formally matriculate, the Center’s Summer Enrichment Scholars Program (SESP) is a summer bridge program that provides participants with an early college experience so that they can more easily transition to college life during the challenging first year. For the duration of the program, participants live on campus, take a free three-credit class, work in a university office and explore Vermont. When these students return in the fall, they are already acquainted with campus life, which frequently elevates them to influential student leadership roles.

During the academic year, many students seek the services of the Center’s Leadership Coordinator who works to help the six-affiliated student-run ethnic identity organizations (e.g., Black Student Union, Alianza Latinx, etc.) sustain their institutional presence and enact their missions. These clubs enable students of color to develop and celebrate their racial identities and benefit our campus with programs such as Soul Food Social, Comida Para La Gente, and Lunar New Year, which educate and entertain from 200-300 community participants.
Additional MCSC programs build community and develop understanding about race, power, privilege and intersectionality. They build confidence, resiliency and multicultural capitol; characteristics that strengthen students’ ability to progress to graduation. Meaningful, collaborative and well attended options include: Sisterhood Circle, Brotherhood; Women of Color Leadership Retreat, Khadija’s Circle, Spring Awards Banquet, and Racial Aikido. These programs serve collectively over 200 students and UVM community members each year. Many of them are offered in the Center’s new location in the heart of the living/learning community. The new beautiful space, complete with a large common room, full service kitchen, classroom and club space, provides a “home away from home” that is heavily used by an increasing number of students of color and those who seek to live in a multiracial community.

Finally, the MCSC staff serves on numerous institutional work groups and committees, sharing their knowledge and experience so that policies and practices represent UVM’s highest aspiration for equity and inclusion. By working to meet the needs of all students including those who might be most marginalized in our community such as immigrant youth, Muslim students and/or first generation college students, the MCSC furthers the university’s commitment to enable “access to success” for its’ learning community.

Women’s Center

What follows are some highlights about key programs, initiatives and the impact of UVM’s Women’s Center. Much of the programming currently offered by the Women's Center includes a focus on and opportunity for women of color to connect with one another, to the Women’s Center space and with the Mosaic Center for Students of Color. This lens of intersectionality is how the Center approaches the work they do by centering marginalized identities, beyond but inclusive of gender, as a means of demonstrating the connections between myriad identities and the oppressions experienced therein.

Educational efforts seek to better exemplify the ways that marginalization shows up on UVM's campus by asking students to consider the ways their identities do and do not hold power in our cultural communities and how they might use those powerful identities to ally with and create space for those who are without power in those identities.

Key efforts that have helped students face challenges at UVM include the Women of Color Leadership Retreat (WOCLR) and Sisterhood Circle. These programs help students of color who identify as women cope and find the resiliency they need to stay at UVM. WOCLR was born at the Women’s Center and is a collaborative program with the Mosaic Center for Students of Color. These programs help students of color who identify as women cope and find the resiliency they need to stay at UVM. WOCLR was born at the Women’s Center and is a collaborative program with the Mosaic Center for Students of Color.

The WOCLR takes place early in the school year and recruitment focuses on first year students. The feedback received about the retreat is that many of these students were struggling at UVM and were starting to reconsider their decision to attend. Participants describe feeling like they have no community and are suddenly thrust into a new identity as one of very few women of color in their classes and on campus. When they attend the WOCLR, they get to see that they are actually part of a larger community. They meet other WOC from across campus and the community, and learn that many have similar experiences. Through this retreat, friendships are
formed and connections are made. Students learn about allies, including faculty, staff, and community members. The program evaluations are filled with comments of hope and renewal following this retreat.

The Sisterhood Circle, in collaboration with the Mosaic Center for Students of Color, meets monthly with self-identified women of color, including students, staff, and faculty. During the Circle, women of color share a meal and discuss their concerns. In Sisterhood Circle, there are a range of topics and conversations that help with retention efforts.

The Women's Center is also a safe space for survivors of sexual and relationship violence. It is a space to connect with those who have had similar experiences, find comfort in that connection, and a place to call "home." Many of the students who come to the Women’s Center credit this space as helping them find community and resources, which allow them to stay at UVM, regain their sense of wellbeing and access mental health related services. Students seek to use the Center in ways that demonstrate it is a space of comfort, a space of support, a space for empowerment and a space for healing.

Both the WOCLR and the Dismantling Rape Culture Conference (DRCC) have grown so much over the last several years that they are currently at their maximum capacity based on funding and human capacity. The WOCLR consistently accepts 36 participants and maintains a waitlist. DRCC had over 500 attendees last year and continues to grow annually. As a result of this growth, the Center will have to re-evaluate how best to meet the needs of attendees and determine whether or not to cap attendance.

The Women’s Center is now fully staffed for the first time since 2015. Melissa Murray was hired as the new director for the Women’s Center. It is now in the process of trying to grow its programs and reach. There is clear interest in creating stronger connections to student groups with gender-equity focus. They are concentrating their efforts on intensive outreach to find ways of rebuilding connections to student groups and spaces. Additionally, the connections being forged with Athletics and Fraternity and Sorority life demonstrate an opportunity to expand the ways that the Women's Center has traditionally interacted with these potentially less-marginalized, but incredibly impactful groups of active students on our campus.

Summary

The national events and conversations on diversity, inclusion, equity and social justice in the past year have impacted the climate for students and influenced institutional conversations and programmatic endeavors at the University of Vermont.

Students of color who identify as Muslim, DACA recipient and/or undocumented, queer and/or transgender have been especially targeted by the national agenda. More members of our campus community seem eager for information to improve support for these members of our community. The University of Vermont remains an extremely predominantly white institution, even as our incoming class of 2021 represents a positive spike in enrollment with 13% of that student body identifying as students of color. The structural ethnic and racial makeup of the community can
present a challenge for some students of color who experience hyper-visibility. Here at UVM, there is great desire for education and resources (e.g., financial and physical space) to meet the need of the most marginalized students of color.

Experiences in the classroom (including in D1 diversity courses) continue to be of great interest and concern to students, faculty and administrators. The academic and administrative leaders are actively strategically planning and working together and listening to students’ voices to confirm what the learning outcomes should be for diversity courses. In addition, there is a need to ensure that the experiences of different populations, especially students of color, in the classroom are positive, informative, free of disrespect and taught by faculty who are prepared, equipped and supported to teach diversity courses.

Recruitment and Retention of Faculty of Color and women faculty are an absolute priority of the President, Provost and other senior academic leaders. In the past year, the Division of Human Resources, Diversity and Multicultural Affairs (HRDMA) convened several forums to gather information about the experiences and climate for women faculty and faculty of color through faculty forums. Additionally, HRDMA has led programmatic and strategic initiatives (e.g., Women’s Summit, updated affirmative recruitment guidelines) in support of a more diverse faculty. The Provost’s Office is not only investing financially in building a diversity profile to be used in recruitment advertisement, but he will also be engaging the deans as financial partners in the recruitment and retention of underrepresented identities (e.g., enhancing recruitment pipelines and the recruitment of cohorts).

To be successful in this, UVM must continue to energetically engage in strategic and responsive actions that center the realities of diverse and marginalized identities into the heart of our mission. Accountability is a must at all levels and across all of the academic and administrative areas at the university. We must be willing to take risks and be different at particular times in order to move the needle in the area of diversity and inclusion.

UVM’s next steps are to assure oversight and measurement regarding our Framework for Inclusive Excellence in relationship to the related action plans of the colleges, schools and divisions. We will need to measure success not only by the achievement of demographic changes but by the degree and efficacy of progress and effort. It will be important to develop dashboard metrics.
ATTACHMENT A

Student Testimonies

Interfaith Center

Student (Sophomore)
The Interfaith Center at UVM is a great space for students to explore different faiths, religions, ideas, philosophical points of view, as well as meet new people with differing backgrounds. Since visiting the Interfaith Center and taking part in events held there, I have had many thought provoking discussions around faith and identity. I am majoring in Social Work, so having a space where I can learn more about religions, cultures, and varying points of views is helpful to my growth as a person, student, and future professional. This space is helping me to learn and gain a better understanding of our world.

I have been able to connect with other students of different faiths who I might not have met otherwise on campus. It has been amazing to network with other students and being able to support one another around our campus. Last year, I had a conversation with a student at the Interfaith Center about a club he was trying to create having to do with Interfaith dialogue. This year, I joined the Interfaith Student Coalition, which is the club that this student was discussing with me. It has been great being able to discuss my faith in a space full of respect.

It can be difficult to openly discuss faith on a college campus without feeling judged or ridiculed for one’s own opinions. But the Interfaith Center and the Interfaith Student Coalition has allowed me to freely talk about my faith, values, and opinions in a way that makes me feel heard without being judged. I am very appreciative for the Interfaith Center and the conversations that have stemmed from inside this space.

Student (Senior)
The Interfaith Center has provided me with a place to breathe. The air inside is calm yet lively; walking through the open door, teacups and books litter coffee tables. With three years of involvement with religious groups at UVM, this was brand new to me. The Interfaith Center has been a welcome home since. In the center, I don't have to be Jewish all the time, but I can if I want to be. I can make new friends and work towards learning more about my peers and myself.

At UVM, and colleges across the country, seeking to understand each other is the first step to diffuse dangerous divisive forces that can shape our worldview. Working with the Interfaith Center to create inclusive programming, in addition to leading a weekly interfaith dialogue group with friends, has helped me to believe that students are interested in having hard, meaningful conversations to combat this. I believe that the more we see each other as humans, the closer we come to building a better future together.

On a personal note, it's also been an opportunity to grow as an individual. Laura has helped me to realize my dreams of interfaith programming at UVM. In addition, with help from the
Interfaith Center I was able to travel to an educational conference in Chicago this summer to learn how to be an even better leader.

**Student (Senior)**

Interfaith as a spiritual practice and physical space at UVM is still in its developing stages. New groups and resources on campus such as the Interfaith Student Coalition and the Interfaith Center are leading students, including myself, to discover a previously underground community of like-minded students and faculty as they come together in a more structured and concrete dynamic to discuss and act as a united, pluralistic community. Together we have created a community that seeks to listen in order to understand, not just respond, and in doing so we have created a more united UVM than ever before.

In the span of a year I have seen interfaith at UVM go from merely a concept talked about to having a physical space on campus, creating the foundation of what is to be a long healthy relationship between the religious and non-religious communities on campus. Personally, I have noticed a proliferation of this united mindset in minority-based clubs such as the Muslim Student Union and the Black Student Union. Under the umbrellas of the Mosaic Student Center and the Interfaith Center, people are finding more common space and building tighter community bonds.

To put it simply, Interfaith at UVM is serving to take students and faculty that may never have had a reason to interact or meet before and give them a chance to grow and learn from each other in an emotional and intellectual way. In the end, is not the fact that we are given the constant opportunity to grow and learn why we all love UVM so much?

Time will tell, but I believe the future of interfaith at UVM is an important investment especially in the current political and social climate of our country. The ability to call upon previously formed friendships and understanding made through interfaith work will be important when facing the struggles ahead, both for current and future students. By nurturing this growing movement, we will find that when we do face times of trouble we will have all the support and organization already established to have a timely and impactful response, one of understanding and peace. Additionally, we will simply have a community built on pluralism and not just diversity. That is what I hope I leave UVM with through my work in interfaith.

**LGBTQA Center**

**Student (Senior)**

Before I came to the University of Vermont, my understanding of my sexual orientation was founded on confusion and insecurity. I grew up in a conservative area in upstate New York where romantic and sexual exploration and queerness were smothered by people’s restrictive interpretations of religious texts, unchecked privilege, and fear of the unknown. I tried not to question my sexuality, as it was source of great anxiety and discomfort for me (one passage in my journal from high school reads “I’m just so afraid that I’m gay”). The staff members and students I met at the LGBTQA Center provided an alternative understanding of queerness that helped to heal my relationship with my identity. During conversations in the student lounge, I interacted people who were confident in their sexual orientations and gender identities in a way that I had never seen before. I was inspired to interrogate my fear of being gay and my narrow
understanding of what queer relationships look like—a process that gave me the perspective I needed to come out to myself and my friends and family as a sophomore. LGBTQA Center space and programming foster a supportive community that allowed me to discover my true self and develop into a genuine, confident adult.

Like most eighteen-year olds, when I began my coursework at the University of Vermont, I was unsure of what I wanted to do with my life. I applied to the University of Vermont as a Neuroscience major, but after only a week of classes, found that that field of study was not for me. Thankfully, after only a week into my work study position at the LGBTQA Center, I also found that LGBTQA+ advocacy work was for me. Through my work with the LGBTQA Center over the last three years, I have gained insight into the diversity of injustices that the LGBTQA+ community faces, in both social and legal spheres, and how the combat them through non-profit services. Mentors at the Allen House, like Evan Litwin, challenged me to develop vital professional skills needed to succeed in this field, including the ability to practice self-care. When I was ready to take these skills elsewhere, former Director of the LGBTQA Center Dot Brauer, encouraged me to apply for the prestigious Gay & Lesbian Victory Institute Congressional Internship program—an opportunity I did not have the confidence to pursue on my own, and one that changed my life. The LGBTQA Center staff members’ faith in me gave me the experience and strength I needed to work towards a career in LGBTQA+ public policy and political advocacy work after graduation—and for that, I am very grateful.

The LGBTQA Center plays different roles in different people’s lives. Some students rely on the LGBTQA Center snack corner to carry them through periods of food insecurity, while others meet their closest friends and partners at LGBTQA Center events, like the Welcome Back BBQ. I cannot express (and likely do not yet know) how much the LGBTQA Center has influenced my personal and professional development. I hope that you all will attempt to understand the vital role the LGBTQA Center has played in my college experience and fully support the Center’s efforts so future students can benefit in the same way.

**Mosaic Center for Students of Color**

**Participant in the Summer Enrichment Scholars Program**
“SESP was an amazing bridge program to help me get comfortable with UVM and college life. I took my first college course (and got an A!). I experienced dorm life…I feel comfortable getting around campus and I met so many staff and faculty members who are ready and willing to answer my questions…the Mosaic Center has become my UVM family…”

**Student on the MCSC Listserv**
“Your message reminds me of how special the MCSC community is for so many students here at UVM. For me, it's been a place where I've learned to listen deeply, understand my privilege as a white person, form friendships that carried me through difficult times as I grappled with my own identity as a white person who grew up in a small rural town in Vermont with very little racial diversity. It's been a place where I've felt safe to come and cry when the racial violence around the world and especially in this country is pouring in across the news channels and I can't
It's been a home for me even though the communities I grew up in look a lot different…”

**Women’s Center**

**Alum (Undergraduate)**
I am immeasurably grateful for the Women's Center. I graduated from UVM in 2014 with a B.A. in Classical Studies. Without a doubt, I would have transferred out of UVM after my freshman year if not for the Women's Center. The community I found there made a world of difference during my studies. The staff are inspiring models of what successful women can achieve and I built lasting friendships with the students I met there. Annual programs like the Dismantling Rape Culture Conference foster a healthy, intellectual dialogue among students, faculty and staff about violence on our campus. The Campus Advocate provides resources and support for students who have experienced sexual violence. The WC community sets UVM apart from other state colleges. The work they do showed me that UVM cared about the health and well-being of me and my fellow students.

**Alum (Graduate Student)**
The Women's Center provided me with a place where I could be affirmed and supported for who I am as a queer and nonbinary trans person of color and survivor. The staff at the Women’s Center built relationships with me that showed me that, not only did my experiences and my voice have a place there, but they were valued and honored. At an institution where it was often difficult to feel seen in the multiple aspects of my intersectional identities, the Women's Center created a space that reminded me time and time again that I should never call the validity of my own wholeness into question, and that there are people who will fight for a world where I never have to do so.