

LGBTQA Services

'06 – '07 Accomplishments

Goals and Objectives for '06 – '07 included:

1. Developing new outreach/education position, and recruiting and training new staff member
2. Pursuing community outreach/programming possibilities re: expressions of masculinity and femininity
3. Develop social gatherings to build community: “chat” series? L-chat, G-chat, ?
4. Continuing Police Services collaboration
5. Pursuing partnership with Athletics

I Outreach/Education Position

I started the process for developing and filling our new position in March of '06. The timing presented multiple scheduling challenges that we managed to overcome with help from other parts of the Diversity & Equity unit and some creative approaches to the process. Diane Gaboriault's careful and prompt attention to administrative details moved the process for creating a new position quickly and efficiently. Her assistance enabled me to **circulate advance notice** of the upcoming position prior to finalization, allowing me to reach people's inboxes before the end of the spring semester. This step increased the chance of attracting a reasonable candidate pool despite our relatively short, low-activity, summer timeframe. **Intra-unit collaboration** allowed me to resolve questions regarding the makeup of the position through input from other Diversity & Equity offices via email and phone conversations, and I was able to post the position without having to convene a formal search committee.

Although we did not have a budget for advertising the position we were able to cross-post to numerous lists through HESA, the LGBT Consortium, and other email lists, and run an ad in one edition of the local Seven Days weekly paper. We were pleased with our resulting **pool of 39 applicants**, that included people from five states and Canada, representing race, gender, and sexual-orientation diversity. Staff members from offices (ASC, Women's Center, and Student Life) that would work closely with this position agreed to review resumes and ranked candidates on specific, agreed-upon factors. Via phone and email conversations, this “virtual” resume review committee was able to reach consensus in assigning all applicants to one of three tiers: 1st) eager to interview; 2nd) possible interview, with some questions, or 3rd) doesn't meet minimum standards for position.

Our final innovation was to use a **“tag-team”** approach, asking a close colleague of our first round of volunteers to participate in the interview process, in order to avoid burnout and vacation scheduling problems, while facilitating personal conversations about the

resume review process between the two representatives of particular offices. Our interview committee of undergraduate students, LGBT Equity Commission members, Diversity & Equity staff members and LGBTQA Services staff members conducted group interviews with six strong finalists and arrived at consensus on a top candidate. Through collaboration and innovation our office completed a successful search and made an offer to our first choice candidate before the end of September.

All three pre-existing members of the LGBTQA Services staff have dedicated significant time to the orientation, training, and supervision of our team's newest member throughout this year.

II Community Outreach and Programming

Recent trends on campus and nationally suggested an opportunity and a need to address issues of masculinity within and beyond the LGBTQ community. We had hoped to collaborate with other parts of campus: the Women's Center, Men Advocating Change, the Student Programming Board, Women's and Gender Studies, etc., on some innovative community based programming in the form of forums and discussions on the subjects of masculinity and gender norms. Some pressing concerns and some opportunities diverted our resources and put this idea on hold. Among the pressing needs and concerns in the fall were the **late resignation of our graduate assistant, Michelle Gardner-Quinn's death**, and the orientation and training of our new Outreach/Education Coordinator. Among the opportunities were interest from campus affiliates in **gender identity and expression** trainings and briefings on the results of the **campus climate survey**, and interest among various affiliates in fostering community among gay and bisexual men, and among queer People of Color.

Our redirected efforts resulted in providing presentations on the campus climate survey findings to **160 campus affiliates including four campus-wide committees/commissions two undergraduate classrooms and one student services office**. Our staff also helped advance campus trainings in gender identity and expression by assisting in the coordination of the **GI&E training team**, by co-leading three of this year's trainings, and by actively promoting the availability of the trainings with departments across campus.

During the 05 – 06 academic year budget realities forced us to discontinue the type of major programming our office had produced on campus during the previous three years. We were aware that our programming activities had helped foster rich connections and collaborations between community members across generations, identities, and areas of campus, and were not surprised when the 05 – 06 school year saw a decrease in this kind of networking, with problematic cliques forming within the student leadership community and anecdotal reports of isolation among staff and faculty members. We set a goal for ourselves to find alternative ways to **build LGBTQ community** with the limited resources available to us during the 06 – 07 school year.

One of our approaches was to focus time and attention on fostering small, informal gatherings aimed at social support, which I will describe more in the next section. We dedicated our limited programming resources to assisting with programming efforts of others that also served our community. One example of this was our contribution of staff time and funding to a **joint AASU (Asian American Student Union)/ LGBTQApril**, event with slam poet Stacey Ann Chin. A second example is the assistance we provided a recent graduate to host a **community discussion responding to transgender bias** she had observed on a popular television program. A collaboration with Alumni and Parent Relations involved traveling to Boston to **co-host the first ever LGBTQ alumni regional event**.

We continued to do outreach by participating in all of the campus orientation and information fairs, and providing **50 presentations** (by invitation) in classrooms, staff meetings, and at local conferences on LGBTQ issues including: the UVM's **30th Anniversary Trio** conference, the **Outright Vermont GSA** conference and UVM's **Dismantling Rape Culture** conference.

Finally we encountered an opportunity/challenge in the form of a successful grant application to the **David Bohnett Foundation** for a fully equipped **cybercenter**. The grant came in the form of pre-purchased equipment that does not conform to typical UVM network configurations, which led to significant technical complications in establishing stable networking. Advance work also involved condensing other workspaces and acquiring new furniture in order to convert one of our five rooms to a full time cybercenter with up to eight fully equipped computer workstations. Eli Clare and one of our student staff members worked steadily for many weeks before we were able to open our cybercenter for use by our students just in time for spring semester finals. Students have only begun to learn about the new resource. We plan to host the official opening celebration for the cybercenter in conjunction with our LGBTQ Family Cookout in September.

III Social Gatherings/Building Community

We continued to do outreach to our communities through events that have become expected traditions including: hosting a **LGBTQ Reunion** reception in the spring and a **LGBTQ Family Cookout** in the fall; supporting and promoting the **Homecoming Diversity & Equity Jazz Brunch**; the **National Coming Out Week Speakout** and other NCOW events, along with **LGBTQApril** events; producing the **Awards and Rainbow Graduation Celebration**, and sponsoring campus affiliate attendance at Burlington's LGBTQ community center annual dinner.

One of our approaches to community building this year was to play a more active role in existing groups. Our graduate assistant, Chris Purcell worked actively with a graduating senior to revive the **Linemen** group for gay and bisexual men. Within two months the

group decided to meet weekly rather than monthly and attendance at meetings increased from 5 to between 12 and 25, and remained there for the rest of the year. A fall practicum student, Akirah Bradley focused her efforts on **QPOC** (Queer People of Color) and **graduate students**. She held three community dinners for these populations, all drawing over 20 participants and receiving resounding positive feedback. We did not have a practicum student in the spring and our efforts to continue these gatherings were not successful. Other social gatherings we helped facilitate this year included two **faculty/staff potlucks**, and a Free to Be student club retreat.

We experimented working with our expanded student staff on **peer hosted social mini-events**. One of our students hosted several meetings of heterosexual men who are allies to the LGBTQ community. Another two students hosted “dinner and a movie” events. At the end of the year we worked with our student employees to plan and produce a larger community social event that resulted in the highly successful and well-attended “**Beach Bash**.” All of our efforts throughout the year led to dramatic increases in the usage of our offices by LGBTQA students.

IV Partnerships/Collaborations

This is an area where our office excelled this year. As Director, I continued to serve **Police Services** in their candidate interview process. This exposure to Police Services’ current personnel and candidates gives me valuable insight into Police Services and provides me with opportunities to offer informal training and feedback on diversity issues. I have also built positive working relationships with a department that is critical to the safety and wellbeing of the community I represent.

In the fall I joined Kathryn Friedman from AA/EO and Dennis DePaul from Student & Campus Life in a training session with staff members from the local **Red Cross** chapter in response to multiple complaints brought by affiliates regarding blood drives on campus. I continued my outreach to **Athletics**, which led in part to my participation in a highly successful day of staff training with invited speaker Pat Griffin of It Takes A Team. Following a bias incident at the **College of Medicine** in November of 2006, I have worked actively with students, staff, faculty, and administrators there to improve climate and LGBTQ students’ staff, and faculty members’, COM experience.

In January I collaborated with Sherwood Smith of **CCP** (the Center for Cultural Pluralism) to present a daylong staff training for the Registrar’s office on various diversity issues affecting their work on campus. I joined two members of the SAGIS faculty, Val Rohy and Paul DesLandes to present one of a series of **Faculty Mentoring** programs for Peg Boyle-Single. Eli Clare and I worked with **Human Resources** and **Blue Cross/Blue Shield** to improve access to health care and health insurance reimbursement for UVM’s transgender employees. I worked with **AA/EO** to help promote and coordinate the **Gender Identity & Expression training team**. Members of our staff worked with **Raja Bhattar** and **DAR** (Development and Alumni Relations to

develop a new project to capture and promote the impact of ALANA and LGBTQ student activism on the history of UVM, and to raise the visibility of LGBTQ and ALANA issues in the **Vermont Quarterly**. I joined the offices of AA/EO and Student & Campus Life to work on the **Bias Protocol**. I partnered with AA/EO, our **Victim's Advocate**, **Residential Life, Student & Campus Life, and Police Services** in responding to LGBTQ students targeted with **physical and sexual assaults as well as bias incidents**. In the spring I partnered with Derek George of the **Counseling Center** and Carol Fournier of the **Interfaith Council** to respond to an out of town anti-LGBT protestor who stirred up religious controversy on campus. I was invited to participate as guest faculty for two **HESA students' comprehensive defenses**, and was invited by two medical students to serve as a **technical advisor** on a successful Schweitzer grant project to improve Vermont LGBTQ adolescents' access to health care.

Our new **Outreach/Education Coordinator**, John Mejia joined our office after seven years with the ALANA Student Center. John arrived at our offices on October 1, with many prior commitments to collaborative work including: co-leading anti-racism trainings with Sherwood Smith for the **Burlington Police Department**; co-leading the **ALANA GEAR** outdoor adventure program and co-presenting at a national conference in November with John Abbott of Student Life; co-leading two weekend long **Racial Aikido** workshops and a national conference presentation with ALANA Student Center staff; co-leading a workshop for the **Dismantling Rape conference**; organizing and leading an **Alternative Winter Break** trip;

Our graduate assistant, Chris Purcell managed all of our office's collaborative work with **Student Life** sponsored **National Coming Out Week** programs throughout an ambitious and highly successful week of events. He coordinated collaboration between multiple student clubs for a highly successful alternative Valentine's Day dance. In March Chris coordinated across campus to compile a list of community building events for the month. He planned and hosted two **dinner for LGBTQ student leaders** and initiated our department's involvement with the Stacey Ann Chin event and worked actively through the spring semester to foster the creation of a **collaborative program planning committee** within the Diversity & Equity unit.

Eli Clare continued to serve on Unit-wide committees including the Jazz Brunch Planning Committee and the **Search Committee for the Director of ACCESS**. He also continued to provide key logistical support to the Jazz Brunch and other collaborative programs like Stacey Ann Chin and QPOC programming. In the fall, Eli served as a consultant to the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force Creating Change Conference Committee on the topic of disability activism.

I anticipate the possibility that the level of collaboration and outreach staff members were involved in this year will not be sustainable in the coming year because of financial hardships I will discuss later in this report.

IV Professional Accomplishments

LGBTQA Services has been blessed with extremely talented and dedicated staff. Over the years our office has accomplished more than could be expected given our modest personnel and financial resources. The response of the UVM community has been consistently positive in terms of the critical role we play and the quality of the support and leadership we provide. This year our staff received recognition from a variety of sources.

Eli Clare received a **leadership award of \$5,000** from the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force for his work on disability activism in the LGBTQ community. He was invited to speak at Oberlin and Spellman colleges on disability issues in Higher Education. He also submitted a final **manuscript** for a new book of poetry to a publisher this May.

John Mejia received the Living Learning's 2006 – 2007 award for **Outstanding Student Program Advisor** for his work with the No Boundaries suite. He also won Student Life's award for **Outstanding Advisor** for his work with Alternative Winter Break.

I submitted a completed **manuscript** by invitation for a collection of essays on experiences of LGTBQ higher education professionals who were first generation to college. I completed editing and compiling an eleven-page **Tips for Teachers** document detailing ways faculty at UVM can improve classroom climate for LGBTQ students.

Chris Purcell was the first student in his cohort to be offered a post graduation professional position. In August he will begin his new job as **Assistant Director of the LGBT Resource Center** at Duke University. Chris was also one of two invited speakers to present remarks to 150 UVM affiliates who received him with a standing ovation at the annual **Awards & Rainbow Graduation Celebration**.

IV Goals and Challenges for 07 – 08

It is impossible for me to articulate our program's goals for next year at this time because of the uncertainty of critical budgetary concerns dire enough to determine whether LGBTQA Services will be able to continue to meet everyday demands for services to the UVM community. The ongoing needs are more than evident. For each of the past three years the number of LGBTQ faculty members leaving UVM has outpaced the number of new LGBTQ faculty arriving. Five students have signed up for the new Sexuality and Gender Identity Studies Minor, but with such a continuous talent drain how will required courses be staffed? Who within UVM's academic leadership is paying attention to this trend, much less doing anything to change it? This year reports of sexual and physical assaults on LGBTQ students added to the usual reports of bias incidents. Each year our office receives more requests for trainings and presentations in classrooms and offices across campus, and more phone and email inquiries from parents of potential students or potential students themselves wanting advance information about the climate of our campus for LGBTQ students. Offices across campus have continued to struggle to fully understand the issues facing LGBTQ students, staff, and faculty and key administrators

have failed repeatedly to recognize situations and circumstances that can and do make climate feel hostile to LGBTQ people.

As the demands on the office have grown I have made formal requests each year for additional funding support from the administration. **In the six years I have held this post, UVM's central administration has not granted a single permanently funded increase directly to LGBTQA Services.** This situation has been hidden from the UVM community by extraordinary generosity of other offices that serve UVM's minority communities. These offices have watched the critical work being done by LGBTQA Services and have given funds from their own budgets so that LGBTQA Services could grow. The UVM community has watched with pride and excitement as LGBTQA Services has expanded from a ½ time position and one attic room in 1999 to an office with four employees (none full-time, including the Director's position), and five rooms. The UVM community has assumed that this growth reflects a serious commitment on the part of administrative leadership to the needs of LGBTQ students, staff, and faculty members. This misperception does a disservice to the real sacrifices made by other offices so that reasonable levels of LGBTQ support and advocacy could continue on our campus. These offices have acted out of their commitment to equity within and between communities of marginalized people, but their sharing of the sparse resources UVM has been willing to dedicate to diversity initiatives does not take place in a vacuum. The result is a decrease in the resources available to other marginalized communities, a price that has been kept from the public eye until now.

Every year, administrative leadership has turned a cold shoulder to the needs of LGBTQ Services and the community affiliates we serve. Every year, LGBTQA Services has ignored the insult and put our shoulders to the important work of supporting what we know is a wonderful and important part of the UVM community. This year, the budgetary process has been the most disturbing of my career with not only a continuation of the pattern of denial, but with broken promises and looting of the budgets of the offices that surround LGBTQA Services. These offices' budgets will be so severely affected that the kind of generosity that has kept LGBTQA Services afloat in prior years will be impossible. I have suffered the irony of serving an administration that both ignores our needs for essential resources and then takes credit for the good work we do, but this year's financial raid of the Diversity & Equity Unit has crossed a line in a way that demonstrates not only neglect, but contempt for the contributions of the seventeen dedicated people who work so hard to make this institution a better place.

This year's budgetary debacle compels the need to point out to an administration whose priorities have been made crystal clear that the work of the Diversity & Equity Unit is not window dressing or empty jargon. The work of these offices affects the lives of real UVM students, staff and faculty members, in positive and powerful ways. An administrator would need only to talk with members of these communities whose UVM experiences have been affected by the work of our offices to know this. Instead, the voices of these communities and of these offices continue to be kept out of the most important conversations, relegated to the margins. The predictable result is that our offices are starved for resources.

This budget process forces me to contemplate how I might free up urgently needed cash to pay the stipend for our incoming graduate assistant and to purchase supplies and pay for our phones by taking unpaid leave for some number of weeks throughout the year (in addition to the month of unpaid leave currently built into my appointment). What I am no longer willing to do myself or to ask my staff to do is to sustain the Herculean efforts we have made for years to function at a level beyond our capacity. This office will also not remain complicit in the fiction about what part of this institution is genuinely committed to addressing the needs of UVM's LGBTQ affiliates.