the journey is ours to take
WHERE WE’VE BEEN. WHERE WE ARE. WHERE WE’RE GOING.
Virginia Commonwealth University’s Division for Inclusive Excellence, established in 2012, focuses on nurturing a dynamic environment in which people of all life experiences and cultural backgrounds are valued and supported. In August 2015, the appointment of the special assistant committed to LGBTQ issues recognized the need for an individual who is dedicated to provide ongoing assessment of programs needed to increase awareness and support for LGBTQ campus constituents and who promotes best practices for LGBTQ diversity initiatives.

The special assistant works with a broad range of people and units at VCU as we all come together in coordinating our efforts and maximizing our energy to foster inclusivity in our workplace and the climate at VCU.

Folks from Equality VCU, the Humanities Research Center, the VCU Libraries, and LGBTQ Initiatives in the Division for Inclusive Excellence are working to put together a series of public events for October 2016 marking the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of the Gay Student Alliance at VCU, following a bitter and public battle that ended up being resolved through court order. We will commemorate this important milestone on the path toward realizing inclusion at VCU with:

• an event that tells the story of the struggle to gain recognition for this student group
• a visit by a major scholar of LGBTQ history, Marc Stein, who will give a talk putting that local struggle into a larger national context
• an exhibit at the newly renovated and expanded Cabell Library of documents and images to illustrate the history of LGBTQ activism at VCU
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That’s why Schall, director of the Virginia Autism Resource Center at Virginia Commonwealth University, and her partner, Mary Townley, decided to join the lawsuit contesting Virginia’s ban against gay marriage. The 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals struck down that ban on Monday, rendering marriage bans unconstitutional in not just Virginia, but also North Carolina, South Carolina and West Virginia.

“The marriage equality decision is but a milestone in the enduring struggle to ensure everyone can exercise the freedom to be and love whomsoever they wish, free from fear of any discrimination or violence.”

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The Campus Pride Index is an overall indicator of institutional commitment to LGBTQ-inclusive policy, program and practice. In 2015, VCU improved its overall score to 3.5 out of 5 stars. VCU has also developed a plan for continued improvement that involves 17 action items, including a Lavender Housing option and gender non-specific restroom facilities.

The Campus Pride Index is a vital tool for assisting campuses in learning ways to improve their LGBTQ campus life and ultimately shape the educational experience to be more inclusive, welcoming and respectful of LGBTQ and ally people.

LGBTQ+ History Month
October was LGBTQ+ History Month. Thank you to all who joined in the month-long celebration of VCU’s LGBTQ+ community.

Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDoR)
Transgender Day of Remembrance is a day to honor those who have been killed through transphobic violence. The Office of Multicultural Student Affairs hosted a Transgender Day of Remembrance Reflection Walk. On the self-led reflection walk participants learned more about Transgender Day of Remembrance, those killed due to transphobia, and supported those who are still combating transphobia in their daily lives.
Initiatives Continuing:

**Pride Games**
OMSA and Athletics was very excited to partner together for VCU’s first ever Pride Games! These special sports events were held to show support for LGBTQ+ students and student athletes. Miss a Pride Game? Pride Games will be happening again with spring sports.

**LGBTQ+ Discussion Group**
This weekly discussion group was open to all LGBTQ+ students. It serves as a safe space for conversation about topics important to LGBTQ+ students. This group will be taking place in the spring on Monday afternoons, from 2pm to 3:30pm in the Metro Room.

**Queer Coffee Hour (QCH)**
QCH took place every first Tuesday in the OMSA Office.

Initiatives to Come:

**Pridefest**- a week of pride activities including the Spring sports Pride Games

**Queer Mentorship Program**- third and fourth year LGBTQ+ students guiding and supporting first and second year LGBTQ+ students

**Transgender Student Group**- Student organization focused on gender nonconforming students.

**Queer Students of Color Collective**- Student organization for LGBTQ+ students of color.

Stay informed about their specific initiatives on Facebook:
- Out in STEM
- Queer Action
- Rainbow Educators
- LGBTQIA and Allied Social Work Group VCU
appointment of special assistant

Please welcome our special assistant for LGBTQ initiatives, Paris Prince.

In concert with the Division for Inclusive Excellence and campus-wide advisory groups, departments and organizations, the special assistant for LGBTQ initiatives works to promote awareness of the lives of LGBTQ individuals and to challenge bias and intolerance.

major initiatives have been engaged as we work toward a more inclusive future.

VCU is officially implementing gender-neutral and accessible restroom facilities on its Monroe Park Campus. The implementations made will be in three buildings: the Academic Learning Commons, University Student Commons and the James Branch Cabell Library.

In Fall 2016, we will open Lavender and MOSAIC housing for students involved in the on-going intellectual exchange about culture, diversity, and sexual identity, and those who wish to expand their cross-cultural understanding. This project is co-led within the Division for Student Affairs.

BIAS AND HATE CRIMES REPORTING SYSTEM

In Progress: It will address policy, the types of bias crime to be reported, how to identify a hate crime and guidelines for reporting hate crime.

INCLUSIVE RESTROOM SIGNAGE

Project completed in collaboration with The Division for Inclusive Excellence, The Office of Equity and Access and Facilities Management.

LAVENDER HOUSING

Strategic Partners in these efforts include The Office of The Provost, The Division for Inclusive Excellence, The Division for Student Affairs, Facilities Management, University Police and The Office of Equity and Access.
The Provost’s Office allotted funding to send a group of students to the Creating Change Conference.

The National LGBTQ Task Force sponsors and organizes the Creating Change Conference. 2016 marks the 28th gathering of this unique national conference, the pre-eminent political, leadership and skills-building conference for the LGBTQ social justice movement. Since 1988, Creating Change has created the opportunity for thousands of committed people to develop and hone their skills, celebrate victories, build community, and to be inspired by visionaries of our LGBTQ movement and allied movements for justice and equality.

The Creating Change conference will be held at the Hilton Chicago in Chicago, Illinois, January 20 – 24, 2016.

Jaminet was honored as the student recipient of the 10th annual Burnside Watstein Award, which rewards the efforts and accomplishments of those influencing VCU’s LGBTQ staff, faculty, students and the community.

The Burnside Watstein Award was created by Equality VCU at a time when contributions of the LGBTQ community and its allies often went unrecognized. The award — which now honors what the university considers history in the making — is named for Sarah Watstein and Christopher Burnside, two former co-chairs of Equality VCU who made great contributions to VCU’s inclusivity.

Jaminet is in good company. His fellow recipients are R. Dale Smith, coordinator of undergraduate advising in the Department of English in the College of Humanities and Sciences who teaches LGBTQ literature, and community member Shan Davis, who coordinates the organization Black Action Now.
unraveling gender event and reception

LGBTQ Initiatives, Division for Inclusive Excellence, Equity and Access Services, the Humanities Research Center, and the Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies proudly presented Dr. Jen Manion to an overflowing audience. Dr. Manion is a leading scholar in U.S. Trans History and a national leader in LGBT campus services and inclusion, and they visited Virginia Commonwealth University to discuss “Unraveling Gender from the Classroom to the Restroom,” part of the many structural and educational initiatives taking place at VCU that strengthen our commitment to LGBTQ inclusion.

lavender graduation

VCU recognized 45 graduating lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex seniors during the fourth VCU Lavender Graduation on April 24, 2015 at the Harris Hall Auditorium.

Lavender Graduation is a special graduation ceremony that honors the achievements of graduating gender and sexual minority students on campus.

The keynote speakers were Carol Schall, Ph.D., assistant professor in the VCU School of Education, and Mary Townley, supervisor of transitional programming at the Health Diagnostic Laboratory, who served as plaintiffs in “Bostic v. Schaefer,” the Virginia marriage equality case.

Schall and Townley were married in California in 2008 and renewed their vows in Richmond on October 6, 2014, after the Supreme Court let stand the Fourth Circuit Court’s ruling that found Virginia’s ban of gay and lesbian marriages was unconstitutional.

Schall and Townley spoke of overcoming adversity and challenged the graduates to never accept the status quo.
queering the curriculum

exciting new LGBTQ courses offered at VCU

The undergraduate curriculum at VCU is expanding to include more courses dealing with LGBTQ issues.

Spring Semester, 2016:

GSWS 391 – 002 (33010) INTRO TRANSGENDER STUDIES
3:30 pm - 4:45 pm TR MPC Academic Learning Commons 2107 Myrl E Beam

GSWS 391 – 903 (33655) BLACK QUEER POLITICS
4:00 pm - 6:40 pm T MPC Academic Learning Commons 2100 Ravi K Perry

GSWS 391 – 904 (29945) QUEER CINEMA
7:00 pm - 9:40 pm W MPC Academic Learning Commons 1102 Elizabeth R Canfield

GSWS 491 – 001 (34053) LGBTQ HEALTH and ILLNESS
Class2:00 pm - 3:15 pm TR Hibbs Building 0260 Bethany Coston

GSWS 491 – 003 (30258) TRANSGENDER & QUEEREXPRNCE
Class12:30 pm - 1:45 pm TR 701 West Grace Street 2310 Elizabeth Griffin

for more information, please visit:
GSWS.VCU.EDU

RAINBOW RAMS

VCU Alumni is proud to announce the formation of Rainbow Rams, a new group for LGBTQIA and ally alumni. Connect with fellow Rams, raise funds for scholarships, network and have fun. However you want to come out, we welcome you! The Rainbow Rams are going to the 1pm, February 14, 2016, VCU Women’s Basketball Game against the Richmond Spiders. We have a limit of one ticket per Rainbow Ram Member (tickets first come, first served). You are welcome to bring a guest; additional tickets will cost $7 per ticket. Additionally, we’ll be meeting for brunch at 11am at The Pig and Pearl. We hope you can join us for either or both events!

When you join VCU Alumni, please also choose to become a part of Rainbow Rams.

For more information, contact Diane Stout-Brown, Senior Director, VCU Alumni at (804) 828-7020 or dstout@vcu.edu
LAUNCH OF THE TASK FORCE FOR LGBTQ EQUITY AND INCLUSION

The Council for Inclusive Excellence and Equity (CIEE) has recently formed to create VCU’s 5 Year Diversity and Inclusion Plan of Action. A LGBTQ Task Force is being formed by LGBTQ Initiatives and the Division for Inclusive Excellence to advise the CIEE on LGBTQ issues, and a final report from this group is intended to be incorporated into items considered by the CIEE next semester.

The LGBTQ Task Force met for the first time on December 7, 2015.

They discussed LGBTQ life and inclusion at VCU, identifying challenges and more concrete opportunities to note the ways in which VCU can advance.