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Dean of the College Division

Fall 2017

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Colgate University. Office of LGBTQ Initiatives

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This September, I traveled to the Philadelphia Trans Health Conference and had the amazing opportunity to meet with other trans people and find community in our similar identities. Workshops focused on healing, medical transitioning, and finding and creating support networks in intentional and informative ways.

I recognize how incredibly fortunate I was to attend this conference, which had workshops specifically tailored to transmasc individuals. Through the transmasculine caucus, top surgery workshop, and simply meeting other trans men, I discovered a sense of community I had been lacking. I returned from Vermont with new insights into gender identity versus expression and a list of top surgeons and important details on their bedside manner. Most importantly, however, I met other trans men, who, like open books, gave me guidance and discussed my recent medical transition with me. To me, conversations such as these are rare and highly impactful. While I am used to navigating my transition largely on my own, the Translating Identity Conference provided me with a space in which I felt free to seek support and community.

Yet, my favorite experiences were attending the People of Color caucus and, later, the events that focused on Latinx intersectionality. We live intersectional lives, and the need to create queer spaces for people of color became evident as the 2016 election unraveled. Queer and Trans People of Color (QTPOC) at Colgate was created to address the issues that are often neglected by the gay community. It was created for people like me, someone who is proud to be queer and who is proud to be a person of color.
This year, LGBTQ Initiatives conducted a fundraising campaign that helped clarify, and focus our mission to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and all students, staff, and faculty through intellectual/leadership development, community building, and outreach/visibility. More than gathering donations, we learned that money is not the sole way you can help achieve that mission. Current and former students wrote letters, passed along informative Facebook links to friends and loved ones and recorded videos of their testimonials! (In fact you can find a link on the back page of this newsletter). And you can still help by emailing and letting us know what’s important to you and what you’d like to see from Colgate around LGBTQ+ inclusion!

There is no doubt that the LGBTQ Studies program is strong, with a vibrant and steadily expanding curriculum, robust enrollments, a record number of minors, and a dynamic and mutually enriching relationship with LGBTQ Initiatives. The NY6 workshop conference that gathered in September at Hobart and William Smith Colleges also demonstrated that it stands out among Colgate’s peer institutions and is widely viewed as a model of a successful academic program.

My latest research project examines how teachers, administrators, and policy makers implement practices and policies supporting transgender and gender variant children into New York City K-12 public schools. In New York, state and federal policies—New York State’s Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) and Title IX—protect transgender and nonbinary students from discrimination based on their sex, gender identity, and expression. In New York City, the Department of Education has issued guidelines for creating safe and supportive school environments for transgender and nonbinary students, but implementation of these guidelines is at the school’s discretion. In my research, I found a range across New York City schools: from those that added all-gender bathrooms and facilities without question; those that implemented practices like allowing students to change their name and pronouns in their system; to those schools that told me flatly, “we don’t have those kinds of students here,” and refuse to make any changes to support potential or existing transgender and nonbinary students. Out of this work emerged a clear need for curriculum that centers critical analysis of the gender binary, that celebrates transgender and nonbinary lives, and that honors gender diversity, which my colleague Lee Airton and I are now working on compiling for teachers’ use.