



**Report (AY20-21)
LGBTQ+ and Allies Faculty/Staff Affinity Group**

Prepared by Geoffrey Klein, Vice Provost

Background and Summary.

The original purpose of the group was to connect CNU employees to foster a more welcoming and respectful campus community for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer individuals and their allies. Our goal is to build on the work of the Diversity and Inclusion Council and programs such as Diversity Deep Dives and Safe Zone. Much of our work has been modeled after the formation of the Women's Collegiate Network (CWN), a similar Faculty/Staff Affinity Group. This year an Advisory Group was formed to organize, plan, and implement the activities of the affinity group. While most of these activities were offered in the virtual setting, the Affinity Group was able to kick start several programs that will likely become annual events and/or series. Membership grew to more than 125 faculty and staff.

AY20-21 Activities. (Attendance, when available, is indicated in parentheses)

Foundation Document Development Meeting (~10): In September 2020, Drs. Geoffrey Klein and Gina Polychronopoulos conducted a focus group panel to finalize the intention statement of the affinity group. At the conclusion of the meeting, the LGBTQ+ and Allies F/S Affinity Group had completed its intention statements to accompany the purpose statement developed last year (or the group's foundational document). Those statements are as follows:

Purpose Statement

The LGBTQ+ and Allies Faculty/Staff Affinity Group is a community for all employees at Christopher Newport University who are dedicated to ensuring a more inclusive campus community that visibly welcomes, supports, and empowers individuals of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

Intention Statement

The intention of this faculty/staff affinity group is to embrace and support all individuals without judgement regardless of one's sexual orientation and gender identity. We strive, as a group, to encourage active engagement of the diverse constituencies across campus by serving as a resource for LGBTQ+ persons and Allies. We will actively cultivate a campus community

whereby LGBTQ+ persons and Allies are seen, safe, and valued through creating a culture that respects, celebrates, and champions sexual and gender diversity. We aim to promote the visibility and presence of LGBTQ+ persons and Allies as integral members of the CNU community by fostering confidence, agency, resilience, connection, knowledge, and pride. These intentions will be realized through organizing events and activities, social gatherings, mentorship, and other programs.

These statements will drive and inform the work of the affinity group moving forward.

Dinner Dialogue Event (~15): The Affinity Group hosted its first event on November 19, 2020. This dinner dialogue event was a panel of faculty and staff that identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community. The panel focused on their experiences as a member of the faculty and staff at Christopher Newport University. The event description stated the following, “Grab dinner and join the LGBTQ+ and Allies Faculty/Staff Affinity Group as we present a panel discussion on the experiences of faculty and staff that identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community. Panelists will share their stories about navigating their own identity in both their personal and professional lives. One of our many goals for the panel is to provide assurance to students that a supportive community of faculty and staff exists and they have lived similar life journeys.” The panel was moderated by Ms. Hannah Hodges, Class of 2021. The event was recorded and is now available for viewing on the Affinity Group’s YouTube page.

LGBTQ+ Speaker Series (~50): The inaugural speaker series event was held on April 12, 2021. Two LGBTQ+ poets, Julie Marie Wade and Nickole Brown, read from their new books and discussed the writing life and writing LGBTQ+ lives. The event was hosted by Drs. Joanna Eleftheriou and Geoffrey Klein. The video is available via the Affinity Group’s YouTube page.

Out Here Together Program (18): Members of the Advisory Group launched the Out Here Together Program in April 2021. The goals of this program are (1) to facilitate the interaction of supportive faculty and staff at CNU, (2) to create a space where members can have honest conversations with empathetic peers and new friends, and (3) to provide intentional opportunities for members of the affinity group to get to know fellow members. This program was announced at a social hour event in April 2021, with the pairing of 18 individuals. It is the intent of the Affinity Group to run this program every year, with the opportunity for participants to be paired up with different individuals each year.

Miscellaneous Activities: The Events/National Coming Out Committee published the Affinity Group’s first Newsletter that was sent to the campus community on October 11, 2020 (National Coming Out Day). The Advisory Council also worked with OCPR to finalize a logo for the affinity group, see below. This logo was used to produce stickers and label pins that were distributed to members of the Affinity Group.



Finally, while the pandemic presented challenges to collaborate with other groups on campus this past year, Dr. Klein met several times with students expressing concerns over support for the LGBTQ+ community. Information from these meetings were always shared with Dr. Angela Spranger, Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Office. In addition, there were several opportunities to collaborate with colleagues in Student Affairs to support our students that identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, such as the Welcome Picnic and Lavender Ceremony.

The goals for this coming year are to ensure the events discussed above continue, while enhancing opportunities to collaborate with other groups on campus to ensure we welcome, support, and empower individuals of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

Social Media Presence:

Instagram: [lgbtqaffinitycnu](#)

YouTube: [LGBTQ Affinity](#)

Respectively Submitted,

Geoffrey Klein
Vice Provost