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1-3-2012

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Recommended Citation
Santiago, Joseph A., "A Partial Timeline of GLBT Centric Events while Acting as Director of the GLBT Center" (2012). *Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Center.* Paper 20.
http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/glbtc/20

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A Partial Timeline of GLBT Centric Events while Acting as Director of the GLBT Center

Joseph A. Santiago

At the end of the December 2011 semester, I was surprised to look back and see that it has been approximately one year since I have been fulfilling the role of Director of the GLBT Center in absence of Andrew Winters, the previous Director and the Assistant VP on LGBTQ in Student Affairs. This report will share a rough timeline of recent events that have happened in the URI-LGBTIQQ community. I am writing this to inform and update the new Director of the GLBT Center and the broader community with a general overview of the events and experiences I have had leading the GLBT Center.

The report will be divided into three parts: a timeline of events, the Resident Program Coordinators' recommendations for next semester, and a summary of the 360 Degree Evaluation dealing with the GLBT Center concerning myself, student staff, and our programming. A 360 Degree Evaluation, or feedback model, collects and provides feedback on an individual(s) work performance and/or feedback on programs and services from knowledgeable sources and stakeholders. 360 degree feedback is useful for understanding the opinions and experiences around a program or an individual.

May 2011

- I prepared and presented a Strategic Plan for the Summer AY 2010/11 for the Center to Kathryn Friedman.
- One GLBT Center staff member Matt Silva was awarded The Mary B. Connelly Award in Psychology for his work in the URI community with Transgender awareness.
- I became the Advisor for the Gay Straight Alliance Student group.
- The GLBT Center hosted an Ice Cream Social event to network with different parts of campus.
- I applied and received a grant from the URI Diversity Fund to get one hundred copies printed of the November URI Community Diversity Project 2010 to give to contributors of the project.
- I chaired the search committee for the GLBT Assistantship in the Office of Community, Equity & Diversity.
- I got an article published in Options News Magazine: Contrasting the Culture of Polyamory and Monogamy.
- The LBTQ Women's Group raised $10,200 from 16 departments on campus for the It Gets Better at URI: Coming Out For Change video.
- The LBTQ Women's Group filmed 85 faculty, staff, students, alumni, and administrators from across campus for the It Gets Better at URI: Coming Out For Change video.

June 2011

- The Center staff received leadership and facilitation training with Robert Vincent and got to meet with all the Cultural Center Directors to get information about their programs.
- We began benchmarking for the design of the future GLBT Center and we contrasted areas of programing, policies, procedures, and maximal space utility.
- The GLBT Center staff completed The Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies Certification for Level One Trainer.
- The GLBT Center staff took part in Rhode Island Pride Festival.
- We sent one member of the GLBT Center to the Campus Pride Leadership Camp.
- Through the summer, the GLBT Center staff attended several Student & Family Orientations, created brochures, talked with parents and incoming freshman about their experiences at URI, and prepared programs for the following academic year. We did this again in October for another University family event.

July 2011

- The groundwork was laid with Robert Vincent, the Director of the Leadership Program, and Paul Bueno de Mesquita, the Director of the Center for Peace and Nonviolence, to create a State-wide conference that would establish GLBT programing that combines leadership and nonviolence training.

August 2011

- The GLBT Center joined the Consortium of Higher Education GLBT Resource Professionals to compare and create a uniformity of practices and policies with the GLBT Center and on campus.
- The GLBT Center began offering Work Study positions to students. Two female students were brought on as paid staff.
- The GLBT Center became involved in URI's Common Reading Program to begin to network the Center staff with the incoming freshmen class before starting the fall semester at URI.
- The GLBT Center website was used by a class at Brown due to the exceptional collection of information on scholarships, general GLBT resources, and best practices for supportive friends, family, and educators. http://www.uri.edu/glbt/links.html.
- We worked with Health Services to start a public drop-in hour once a month for GLBT students where anyone can discuss sexual health practices in an intentionally GLBT-friendly environment. The Center staff and I got updated about the issues and policies surrounding transgender students and we suggested different improvements to their forms.
- I established The Community, Equity, & Diversity Collections. The collection is steadily growing and I now administer The Center for Nonviolence & Peace Studies, Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Center, Multicultural Center, Office of Community, Equity, &

Diversity, Rainbow Diversity House, Student Affairs Digital Community Development, and The Women's Center's digital community space.

- I presented the Equity Council with the Digital Commons concept as a unifying force for the community. I sought participation in the project and to help choose the name for the future of the Digital Commons Cultural Collections. Later in the month the concept's name officially became "The Community, Equity, & Diversity Digital Collections" (CEDDC). As of January 1, 2012 our programs and reports on the CEDDC were downloaded 2358 times.
- The Center staff worked with URI 101 Staff to get our Center programming information and an introduction to LGBT 101 into freshman's hands.
- HRL brought in Kathy Obear and Jamie Washington for a day-long diversity training with the RA's and other interested campus student leaders.
- I worked with HRL to get all of the Gender Neutral Floor Plans put into The Community, Equity, & Diversity Collections.

September 2011

- The GLBT Center facilitated hour-long RA training on LGBTIQQ issues.
- HRL and Student Affairs refurnished and upgraded the GLBT Center in Adams Hall.
- The LGBTQ Commission, a subcommittee of the Equity Counsel, became a President's Commission on LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) issues.
- A subcommittee of the President's Commission on LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) issues read and analyzed all URI Union Contracts for discrepancies in benefits for LGBT faculty and staff; proposed sample language to the President who supported all of our requests. These requests were also brought to the respective Unions.
- The GLBT Center had its Welcome Night for the start of the AY 2011/2012 and received approximately 200 students.

October 2011

- The GLBT Center and the Women's Center cosponsored the event Coming Out Day Presenter Robyn Ochs - Beyond Binaries: Identity and Sexuality.
- The GLBT Center went to Provincetown, MA with 131 students from multiple universities.
- I facilitated LGBT Community in the Workplace: Status of Legal and Organizational Policies for Diversity Week.
- The GLBT Center staff cosponsored with the Center for Nonviolence & Peace Studies, and the Rainbow Diversity house to have a Dinner Social for Gandhi's Birthday.
- I applied for a grant for Re-imagining The DigitalCommons Collections At The University of Rhode Island: Innovative Approaches Using Technology to Advance the Student Experience.

- The GLBT Center and the GSA set up a booth for National Coming-Out Day. The booth shared program and event info for the GSA and the Center while giving students an opportunity to get their picture taken "walking out of the closet".
- I applied for a grant with Katrina Dorsey, Dan Graney, Chad Henderson, Tripp Hutchinson, Bobbi Koppel, Carol Pegg, Pamela Rohland, Robert Samuels, Jarso Saygbe, Robert Vincent, and Melvin Wade, called "Think Big—and THINK Before You Speak!" The grant's purpose was to create trainings and workshops that would focus on creating sustained dialogues that would increase a participant's understanding of their own and each other's cultural, ethnic, racial, gender and/or religious identities. The title deliberately plays off of the University of Rhode Island's new branding campaign slogan "Think Big. We Do."
- The *It Gets Better at URI: Coming Out For Change* video had its premiere, and Edwards Auditorium was filled to capacity with a total attendance of 920 people.
- URI had its first Faculty and Staff LGBT social at the University Club.
- I wrote a proposal to the Honors department hoping to establish a gifted & talented center at URI.
- I served as the Information Architect/Web Master for the Office of CED which is the main diversity page for the department.
- I participated in redefining the General Education requirements for undergraduates.
- I became a Systems Administrator within the Digital Commons framework with the rights and privileges to train and establish new trainers to maintain the CEDDC, Division of Student Affairs, and that includes the Office of Student Life.

November 2011

- I facilitated the 3G Summit. The Summit sought to bring students together from multiple universities to create collaboration across diversity groups in the New England area. I also hoped to reinvigorate the "I Am U" URI group with this event and became its Advisor.
- The GLBT Center cosponsored an Anime Night with the Anime Club at the Center and 31 students attended the event.
- I created and presented a blended environment model linking multiple systems, departments, and people together that could be integrated into the culture of how we already live work, and learn. Further, this model highlighted mechanisms within said blended environment that would support students who might feel isolated or disconnected when they first get to URI. Presentations were made to Tom Dougan (Vice President for Student Affairs), Chip Yenson (Assistant to Vice President for Student Affairs and Director HRL & Student Affairs), and the University Social Media Committee.
- The GLBT Center and the GSA hosted the URI community as well as South Kingston High School and East Greenwich High School for our annual Transgender Vigil.

December 2011

- The GLBT Center hosted a fundraiser and holiday party at Rhody Joe's in Wakefield that 42 students, 2 alumni, and 1 URI staff member attended.
- Dean Lynn McKinney and I donated approximately five hundred dollars worth of books to begin reestablishing the GLBT Resource Room in Adams Hall.
- By the end of the semester, the GLBT Center had 15 student volunteers that helped the Center run its programs, network with other groups, and keep the Center occupied so that there was always someone present to welcome newcomers.
- At a meeting of the Board of Governors, President Dooley presented each member with a copy of the *It Gets Better at URI: Coming Out for Change* DVD.

GLBT Center Resident Coordinators' Plans for the Future

Justin Willner, Brian Sit, Riley Davis, and Kevin Cruz

Start

- Outreach to other students
  - Visit Students - have meetings with them about integrating
- Cosponsor more events with other groups
- Advertising more outside our community
- Holding unstructured socials
- Programs outside the GLBT Center and URI (i.e.: community service/outreach)
- Written protocols for responsibilities available within the Center at all times
- GLBT Center Newsletter (uriglbt.tumblr.com)
- Rewards system for staff & volunteers to encourage learning and expanded involvement
  - modeled on CMA reward system
- Calendar in the Center with upcoming events
- Volunteer meetings
- Symposium committee
- Holiday party
- Use the D-house (in its last year) to connect to the Greek-life communities
- Place a whiteboard in the Center
- Identify Polyamory group in the community to attend/support
- Make the Center more alluring (i.e.: new curtains, new trashcan)
- Expand resources (i.e.: the Resource room, book collection, and accessible computers)
  - Get a Center Netflix account

Stop

- Allowing people to leaving things in the Center (i.e.: laptops)
- Using the recycling bins as extended trash cans

Continue

- The great work!
- Student-run conversation groups
- Welcome Night & First Night
- Collaborating with different campus groups
- Utilizing communication and electronic storage (i.e.: Dropbox, Google docs)
- Staff presence in the Center at all times

360 Degree Feedback Summary

- Have more social nights that incorporate other groups on campus.
- Have a reward system for both volunteers and staff.
- Have more up all night events in the Center.
- Have a Staff member in the Center to help transition between shifts, and be present to assist and/or support students, welcome students with a consistent face, and help keep the drama down; this has been important for the feel of the GLBT Center.
- Have additional trainings for student staff members requested in facilitation, difficult conversations, and defusing tension within groups.
- Ensure the GLBT Center stays a relaxing and safe place to come and have student staff prepared to welcome new people as they come in.
- Having free community coffee pot in the Center. This makes many people happy and makes the space more welcoming.
- Sell small snacks in the Center for fundraising.
- More publicity for the conversation groups.
- More publicity for the GLBT Center.
- Always have space where people can do homework and socialize even when meetings or events are going on.
- The GLBT Center has become a second home for many.
- Branch out to other organizations and invite other organizations to come into the Center and work together on programing.
- Keep identifying community programs and groups to work with.
- Get more magazines from the LGBT community for the Center.
- Request for a 24/hr Center space.
- Have overnight trips like Provincetown planned over all semesters that students could go on.
- More programs on Trans-issues and relationship forms.