DIRECTOR’S WELCOME

Greetings-

It has been quite a semester…quite a year…quite the 20 years! Spring 2013 has been a whirlwind. We sponsored a number of fantastic events, such as *This is What a Queer Family Looks Like* and the *LGBT Center 20th Anniversary Celebration*. Tufts once again sponsored eight students to attend the national *Creating Change* conference, all of whom returned to campus and shared their queer knowledge with the greater Tufts community (see page 9). Speaking of ‘creating change,’ Tufts has recently seen a great deal of change itself. One of the newest changes we are most excited about is that as of next year, the Tufts student health plan will include fully comprehensive trans healthcare (including surgeries) for those who need this benefit (see page 5)!

However these have also been trying times. This semester, many Tufts LGBTQA constituents have expressed strong concerns about a new policy created by the Tufts Committee on Student Life (CSL), which allows for student religious groups (SRGs) to apply for exemption from the non-discrimination policy on doctrinal grounds in elections for their leadership positions. In March, swastikas were spray painted in a field on campus, as well as in various other parts of the greater Medford community. Then on April 15th, we all felt the devastating impact from the acts of terror that took place at the Boston Marathon. However even in the wake of such challenges, Tufts constituents have remained “Boston Strong.” I have personally witnessed so many people coming together to offer support, to help rebuild, and to keep us moving forward. I am continuously amazed by the caring and compassionate individuals who work overtime to help create positive change in this world. That is exactly what the LGBT Center aims to do, as well. Together, we must all continue to fight the good fight. Quite frankly, even in the face of such adversity, it makes me feel proud to be part of such a winning team.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter.

Sincerely,

~Tom Bourdon, LGBT Center Director
HISTORY OF TUFTS LGBT CENTER

Bobbi Knable worked at Tufts from the 1970s through the 90s, becoming Dean of Students. “I graduated college in the 1950s and it was an assumption that everyone we knew was heterosexual.” Dean Knable played a crucial role in the establishment of the Tufts LGBT Center. “The centers were established to provide support for different populations because Tufts values the diversity of our student body. Like other centers, the LGBT Center has become a part of the educational experience of all Tufts students. All Tufts students, gay and straight, are better prepared both to appreciate the benefits and deal with the difficulties that accompany diversity here on campus and later in life because of the existence of the LGBT Center.”

John Orcutt ('89), “That first TLGC meeting saved my life. Soon I was skipping Spanish class to protest government recruiting because they would not hire gays…I was at Avalon the Sunday after Barney Frank came out publicly…We took as many classes as possible from Lee Edelman, Janice Irvine, and Howard Solomon…I’m proud of a lot I did at Tufts, but increasing our $400 budget [to $14,000] definitely wins hands down.” John spoke about how he participated in the fight to get a part-time LGBT director position and build a network of LGBT alumni to become Pride on the Hill. “I want to thank all of the queer Jumbos that came before me. I want to thank you for securing that crappy little room on the third floor of the Hayes House. I want to thank you for inventing Blue Jeans day. I want to thank you for creating a safe space for me to come out in. And I want to say thank you to the students and the staff and the professors and the LGBT directors who came after me and my classmates. What you’ve accomplished here has absolutely moved me to tears.”

Looking to the 90s. On the right, Aimee Ricciardone ('92), stepped in to read a written account of the LGBT Center’s first director, Heather Wishik. In the middle is Anthony Meyers ('93) and below Aimee is Carl Sciortino ('00), who is currently serving as a Massachusetts State Representative. Heather said, “The Center existed in name, but did not have a fixed functional location…we created a lending library of LGB related books and scrounged furniture for comfortable places to sit…Work study students and student volunteers helped staff the Center since I was only half-time, 9 months of the year.” Heather talked about violence and AIDS being a constant point of terror for students but also the new space providing them a space to feel safe. She talked about offering LGB workshops with various campus offices. Anthony Meyers referenced, “visionaries from my year like Wally Pansing, Ellen Wong, Sharon Wexler, Aimee Ricciardone…people lobbying and rallying like Jim Sheridan, Andy Seltzer…I was also in bringing speakers like Essex Hemphill, who was legendary for the black gay movement. I didn’t have those figures when I came here.” Carl Sciortino shared, “The 4 years I had here at Tufts were formative to me in thinking what it means to part of a community and what it means to be an activist.” Carl worked with Dean Knable to pursue a full-time director position because, at the time, the LGBT Center was the only center with a part-time director. Carl shared about making TLGBC into TTLGBC, “because we didn’t have any out transgender students but we knew we had our closeted trans brothers and sisters in the room, we made sure we gave a voice to them as well.” He also shared how the community reacted to the murder of Matthew Shepard, “What it meant to have a community here at Tufts is that we could find our voices as activists…that we needed to fight and move forward but we also had a community that protected us when we needed security and support.”
From 2003-2008, Dona Yarborough was the Center’s director. During her time there, some significant changes occurred not only with the Center but also in the state. She talked about Stacy Ulrich and Tyler Duckworth becoming the first openly queer home-coming king and queen elected in 2003. In 2004, MA became the first state to legalize same-sex marriage. Dona recalls going to the Cambridge courthouse at midnight with friends and ran into her students who were cheering on Tufts faculty/staff coming out of the courthouse, newlyweds. She spoke about the formation of the discussion group Queer Students of Color, and David Wu as the first facilitator. In 2005, Dona taught the first Intro to Queer Studies course through the Women’s Studies department. After many years of hard work by Calvin Samborne and Sam Stiegler, gender identity and expression were added to Tufts’ nondiscrimination policy in 2005. See pg. 6 for more specific memories shared by Dona.

Below is current LGBT Center director, Tom Bourdon, who began in October 2008. To the right, Benjamin Serrano has been at Tufts since 2009, hailing from Chicago. They both spoke about recent changes and additional services through the LGBT Center. Benjamin participates in the longstanding groups Team Q and Queer Peers, both student driven organizations providing support and education to fellow students. He also partook in the Confidential Coming Out group which allows students to explore their identities in a safe, private environment. Benjamin helped in co-facilitating the Men’s Group on campus. New developments with the center include Team Q responsibilities expanding to include Safe Zone trainings where students educate various groups and offices on what it means to LGBT at Tufts and how to make their spaces safer. Last year, the Lavender Letter Campaign was launched by Mark Tyson (’14) where allies can voice their support for the LGBT community. The past four years, a group of students have attended the National Task Force’s Creating Change annual conference (see pg. 7). As Tom said, “The 4 letters in the name will never fully capture all the identities we serve.” And best put stated by Benjamin, “If I had to define the LGBT Center, define its main aspiration, it is to help you become you, whoever that may be. And today, the conversation on becoming you is stronger than ever.”

**MUSICAL PERFORMANCE**

Featured in our Spring 2012 newsletter, Aliandro Brathwaite (E’14) shared about his passion for music. During 8th grade, he expressed a dislike of how mainstream music was “too materialistic and misogynistic,” to which his friends responded, “If you don’t like it, make your own.” Since 2007, Ali has recorded three albums and we were fortunate to have him perform two songs at the 20th Anniversary celebration; “Letters from a High School Jail Cell” and “Diamonds.”

“...freedom BURNS FOR ALL! Not the select few!/It’s not love thy neighbor IF, it’s LOVE ALL and that’s true/
Believe we can exist and this idea, ordain/
At the 20th Anniversary event, Senior Director of Health & Wellness Services Michelle Bowdler announced a change in the student health care plan. “[W]e have a new health insurance coming at the end of August. We had a really competitive bid this year and we added, as of this coming year, transgender benefits including surgery [with no cap on the costs]”

The New York Times reported in February 2013 that Brown University was the 36th college to change their student health insurance to include trans health benefits, making Tufts the 37th. But of those 37, the majority (25) only cover the cost of hormones. It is extremely exciting for Tufts to help in growing the number of schools offering fully comprehensive health insurance for transgender students. Tufts Daily recently published an article about these changes, as well...click here to check it out!

Tufts first-year, Erin Dimson-Doyle, responded to this announcement:

“For many, changing their sex to match their gender is an obvious solution to a painful problem. For many, this is not just a want, it is a necessity. Gender sadness, gender dysphoria, can be all-consuming. I have known people so crippled by their assigned gender that they cannot bring themselves to leave their home. Today, Tufts has taken a stand [to help].

“This policy reminds me why I choose Tufts. I am impressed by how universally I have been accepted here, with no fuss about preferring female pronouns. Whether it be friends or classmates, professors or administrators, everyone has, without objection or comment, used my preferred name. It is not always easy being a Tufts student and a transperson, but this new policy has reminded me that Tufts is trying to fix that.

“I spend most of my time out of class working on issues of social justice and oppression, and sometimes it can be disheartening. So many issues seem to have no solution in sight, at times it can feel like our work is for nothing. But it’s achievements like this that remind me why we fight so hard. Today we won one. Today we have shown that progress is possible. We deserve to revel in our success. But there is still so much more to do. Tufts has come a long way, but there is still a long way to go. But today I am reassured that Tufts is moving in the right direction.”

Additional Tufts Students’ reactions:

Tabias Wilson (‘13): “I’m very excited about this change. This a great step toward making visible one of the least acknowledged existences within the LGBTQ community. There is nothing more personal and affirmative of one's humanity than the acknowledgement of the importance of and investment in their health, and the fact that the Tufts plan is taking that basic, first step will send important signals and tangible changes to the trans community on campus.”

Mark Tyson (‘14): “I think this is fantastic news and I hope it will help draw focus to trans-issues on campus as they are too often put to the wayside by gay and lesbian issues on campus.”

James Mulder (English doctoral candidate): “I think the increased insurance coverage is a resounding, clear step toward supporting transgender students in this community. This change represents something more than passive acceptance of trans identities and experiences; it is a victory that took action and dedication in solidarity with the trans student population.”

Brent Abel (‘13): “I hope this change will allow more students to be able to afford the medical care that they need.”

Finn Gardiner (‘14): “I’m incredibly excited about the new health insurance offered here at Tufts, because providing health care that specifically is open to transgender students and their needs dovetails with Tufts’ ethos of acceptance and nondiscrimination. An exclusionary policy isn't in keeping with what Tufts stands for, and I applaud Health Services and the administration for choosing to contract with a company that respects the individual need of transgender people.”
**PRESIDENT MONACO’S ADDRESS**

Tonight, I want to congratulate and thank all the many people who have been so committed to making Tufts a welcoming place for members of the LGBT community. You should be very proud of what you have achieved...I especially want to thank the many people who have helped make the LGBT Center so successful. The Center and its programs have made a huge difference in the lives of our students for two decades. Thanks to all of you for your dedication and hard work. It has been essential for our community.

Tufts is frequently recognized as an especially welcoming campus for LGBT students. And surveys show high levels of satisfaction among our LGBT undergraduates and graduate students.

But of course we must continue to move forward. The national debate over marriage equality shows that social and legal acceptance remains a challenge. And we know that even here on campus students do not always experience the level of support and acceptance that we would like to see. As many of you know, last year I established a university-wide Council on Diversity. I chair the Council, and Joanne Berger-Sweeney, Dean of Arts & Sciences, serves as Vice Chair. The members include an extraordinary group of faculty, administrators, and students...I do believe that working together we can make Tufts an even more inclusive and supportive community.

In my first year, I was asked to fly the rainbow flag during [Coming Out] week. I’ll never forget at the end of that week, a member of my staff came in and said, “Ok it’s time to take the flag down.” And I said, “No, I don’t really think that would be a good idea because it should be up all the time.” I know that many students walk by Ballou Hall on the way to classes, but more importantly, I know that all the tour guides take the students by Ballou Hall and I want to make sure that any student who is thinking of coming to Tufts knows that in the president’s office and the provost’s office, we support the rainbow flag and all it stands for for LGBT students at Tufts.
ALUMNI: LIFE AFTER GRADUATION

John Orcutt (’89): “I am a lawyer for the City of New York. Since graduating from Tufts I was a pre-school teacher, a manager of A Different Light Bookstore in both San Francisco and New York, an occasional performance artist in San Francisco, a computer programmer and the author of a series of queer travel books.” Favorite LGBT moment from Tufts: “Sitting around or driving around talking and laughing with Jere and Wally or Wayne or Tom or Jim or Ellen or Evelyn or whoever else was with us. Usually we were gossiping or ‘reading people’s beads’ or ‘reading someone to filth’. We did a lot of reading that was not on the syllabus.”

Wayne Hoffman (A’91) attended NYU for grad school and has been living in New York City for the past 20 years, working as a magazine editor and novelist, publishing books including Sweet Life Sugar. Wayne tells us he’s “published a couple of books, edited several publications, got married, traveled the world…gained weight, watched my hair turn gray…the usual!” Wayne’s favorite LGBT moment from his time at Tufts: “Two things: Battling with the administration over LGBT issues -- from harassment to banning ROTC on campus. And doing drag at party after party, back in the day when I could still fit into a dress.”

Stacy Ulrich (’04): “Since leaving Tufts, I worked in Boston and California in outdoor education. Now I live in NYC and work in student affairs at NYU. I enjoy traveling and dancing—I teach a hip-hop class for girls in East Harlem. I have a corgi-rescue mix, Shorty.” Memories of Tufts LGBT: “So much fun! Great climate. Enjoyed the Coming Out Day chalkings we did.” Favorite one: “Dip me in chocolate and throw me to the lesbians!”

Bill Barnert (G’05) was recently appointed to the City of Cambridge GLBT Commission.

Elizabeth Field (’10), “Since graduating, I have been working at Waltham House, a group home for LGBTQ adolescents under The Home for Little Wanderers, as a direct care counselor and therapeutic crisis intervention trainer, and I just got promoted to supervisor. I am also working part time as the LGBT Liaison to the City of Somerville. In the fall, I will be starting a PsyD in clinical psychology at the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology.”
At the end of former LGBT Center Director Dona Yarborough’s part of the Center’s history, she told the audience about making a Facebook status asking alumni to share their favorite stories. She received these responses:

Stacy taking a bath in the center when it had that weird bathtub... When Dona finally figured out what we did at the center after hours... Coming Out stories 2008, hearing Sophia Nelson’s story helped this Christian girl begin to deconstruct my heterosexist values and started on the path to becoming an ally for open and affirming churches (student who is now in seminary)... When Samuel Delany came to campus and got grilled on how it’s physically possible to sleep with that many people... Being hired as the token straight ally and the coming out to you six months later... Queer Theory class and the vagina puppet... Estelle coming out at national coming out day her freshman year as a queer pansexual radical slut, that really kind blew my mind... All the missing “L Word” DVDs... Team Q retreat and seeing Dona start it off with a fierce, “This is a political statement: pow!”

Favoritë Moment at the 20th Celebration

Bill Barnert ('05): “It was great to see old faces again, especially Dona & Chris, and to meet Chris' partner finally! It was also great finally putting a face to the name ‘Tom Bourdon’! And I really enjoyed meeting some new friends, and having my picture taken holding a sign that said ‘Liberty, Equality, Siblinghood’.”

Elizabeth Field ('10): “My favorite moment of the event was either chatting with Robyn Ochs (Robyn Ochs!) about activism in Boston or finding Steven Elsesser's face on a piece of confetti.”

John Orcutt ('89): “A tie: Getting a shout-out from another alum speaker who graduated more than a decade after me and the lesbian who is in her 3rd year at Yale Law School who approached me after my speech to say she wanted me to be her new best friend.”

Wayne Hoffman (A’91): “John Orcutt’s speech, of course! But also hearing what the current president of the university had to say -- so different from how things were during my time at Tufts.”

Advice from LGBT Alums to Current Jumbos

Elizabeth Field ('10): My advice to current LGBTQ Tufts students is get excited about Waltham House! We're hiring, we're looking for interns and volunteers, and it's a great place to be if you want experience working with queer youth. Drop me a line at efield@thehome.org if you want more information.

John Orcutt ('89): Don’t be too upset with each other if you think folks should be more politically active or less vocal or more or less out of the closet. Over the years you will be surprised to discover how much people change -- including yourself. So even when you feel other folks are not seeing things from your perspective or that you have little or nothing in common with them, treat them with kindness and civility. You can always look back on that with pride.

Stacy Ulrich ('04): Be yourself and enjoy it!

Wayne Hoffman (A’91): “Two things (related to above): First, be loud, be proud, stand up for what you believe, learn about queer history, and fight for your brothers and sisters. And second, have FUN, for Pete's sake: you're young, you're cute, you've got tons of energy and all your friends live nearby. Make all that worth it. Be fabulous, be outrageous, and be nice to each other.”

Anthony Meyers ('93): “As I look forward, I realize that I have grown so much from being here at Tufts. Don’t take for granted those who are here now. Don’t take for granted your outness and your pride. There were those who were hiding, there were those who were nervous in LGBT meetings about speaking up and being active. Really understand that there’s a long line of people. The trajectory of gay experiences is so wide and varied.”
Click to see the video of the main event, all pictures, and a commemorative video.

Links can also be found on our website, ase.tufts.edu/LGBT
Each Spring, a few weeks before Tufts’ formal graduation ceremony, the LGBT Center hosts Lavender Graduation where we recognize and honor LGBTQA seniors who have helped or participated in awareness, education, and support for the community. This year’s speaker was Corey Yarbrough, Exec Director of the Hispanic Black Gay Coalition. Dean Karen Gould was also honored at the event as she will be moving on from her position as a dean. Below are student responses from an email shout out asking for their favorite memories and plans for the future:

Tabias Wilson’s academic focus has been on American Studies: U.S. Institutions of Power, checking out the intersections between race, law and sexuality. “I’ve mostly been writing about HIV criminalization and the ways in which the law regards or disregards queer bodies of color. My best time with the LGBT center was definitely my roll in programming and event creation: the LGBTQ Intercollegiate Dances, Ally Soul Food Dinners, and more. Next year I’ll be teaching high school history in Miami with [Teach for America]. Afterwards I plan on going to law school on the west coast, teaching law and later becoming a member of the Supreme Court — baby steps, right?”

Katie Hegarty is a double major in Child Development and Women’s Studies. Next year, she will be moving to DC and working in social justice. Her favorite memories of the LGBT Center include being a center intern for 3 years, going on the PTown trip 3 times, and participating in the Guess the Straight Person orientation event.

Grainne Griffiths (2014) presented “Contextualizing the Queer Young Adult Literary Canon: A History”
Ryan Parigoris (2015) presented “LGBT Suicide and Minority Stress”
Taylor Strelevitz (2015) presented “The Queerness of Childhood”
Aliandro Brathwaite (2014) presented “Creative (In)Visibility: The LGBT Community within the Hip Hop Spectrum”
Kate Hegarty (2013) presented “Critical Desire: Analyzing Queer Desires”
Michael Kareff (2015) presented “Born This Way” Reconsidered”
Jay Dodd (2014) presented “#OUT: Social Media as a Lens to Rethink the Coming Out Discourse”
Darius Izadpanah (2013) presented “Covertly Queer: Feliz Gonzalez-Torres & Post-Mapplethorpe America”

For the fourth time, Tufts students went to a national LGBT conference, Creating Change, in late January. The events is organized by The National Task Force, a grassroots organization geared towards activism and spreading awareness of LGBT topics. This year it took place in Atlanta, Georgia, and hosted nearly 3,000 attendees. Two staff members and eight Jumbos went together to attend LGBTQ workshops. For events in the month of GAYpril, each student did a presentation on something they learned:

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Maya Grodman is a Drama and Peace & Justice Studies double major. Her favorite memories include, “going to speak to 7th grade students at the Winchester Unitarian Universalist Church with Team Q my sophomore year... it was especially meaningful to have a positive discussion about LGBTQ identities and issues in a religious setting. Being a co-leader of Bisexual/Pansexual Students Group has been incredibly rewarding. We've built a family with the people who come to group...one of my favorite experiences at Tufts in general.” Maya plans to move to San Francisco and go into the world of social justice theater, continuing to focus on the LGBTQ community within her work."

Brent Abel majored in Biology and Community Health. His memories with the LGBT Center include organizing a panel on bisexuality and pansexuality, attending Bi/Pan group sophomore year to plan the panel, the Team Q retreat his freshmen year, and participating in Men’s group his freshmen year. Next year, he plans to work at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland.

Good luck to all 2013 seniors!
You will be missed!

The programs and services of The LGBT Center support the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and ally students, faculty, staff and alumni of Tufts University. The Center is available to anyone on campus interested in learning more about LGBT-related subjects or issues of sexual and gender identity. The Center is committed to maintaining LGBT visibility on campus and providing campus-wide education on sexual and gender identity and the effects of homophobia.

Our services include advocacy on behalf of LGBT students; counseling and referrals to students in need; information about resources available to LGBT people on and off-campus; research assistance with topics relating to sexuality; a student outreach and education team (Team Q); a peer-support network (Queer Peers); trainings and workshops for faculty, staff, or student groups; email lists networking people affiliated with Tufts University; and programming that reflects the diversity of students at Tufts.

The LGBT Center works collaboratively with many groups on campus, including the Dean of Students Office, the Women’s Center, the Asian American Center, the Latino Center, the Africana Center, the International Center, Greek Life, the Office of Residential Life and Learning, the Hillel Center and the Tufts Chaplaincy.

Drop by the Center and enjoy a comfortable and safe space dedicated to supporting and celebrating lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer identities.