Letter from the co-chairs

We are the President’s Commission on Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation and we are very excited to begin sharing all of the good news and happenings at SRU. Through this newsletter and all the rest to come, we hope to keep you informed on the progress that Slippery Rock University has made and continues to make in the realm of social justice.

SRU’s lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer communities are thriving and bringing more awareness and celebration of LGBT+ issues to classrooms, to campus meetings, and everywhere in between.

The 2015-2016 academic year was extremely successful. GISO began the academic year by visiting FYRST seminar classes to lead an experiential activity, Coming Out Stars, which simulates the coming out process for first-semester students. This activity is well-received by both students and faculty, and the number of requests to conduct this programming has expanded so much that the Pride Center now has to help manage the scheduling. This is a good problem to have!

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Letter from the co-chairs (cont. from page 1)

In October, GISO kicked off LGBT history month showcasing 31 LGBT icons in the Student Center. The rest of October continued the celebration as GISO held multiple events:

- For our National Coming Out Day event, 77 people signed a banner to be hung in the Pride Center;
- Robyn Ochs, educator, speaker, award-winning activist conducted a workshop on the changing landscape of sexual identity and a presentation, open to the entire campus, on gender;
- For Spirit Day, people throughout campus wore purple in a stand against bullying & to show their support for LGBT youth; and
- We also supported RockOut’s Pride Week, including a movie night, a candid conversation about identity issues, a candlelight vigil for LGBT victims, a bonfire party, and the EXTREMELY SUCCESSFULLY AND POPULAR Drag Show.

In November, we memorialized those who have been murdered as a result of transphobia and to bring attention to the continued violence endured by the transgender community as part of Transgender Day of Remembrance. To do so, GISO hosted an educational event memorializing those we lost, but also highlighting the role of race in the violence against the transgender community. As part of Transgender Remembrance, we also showed the documentary “Laverne Cox Presents: The T Word” and the film “Tangerine.”

Then in December, before the end of the semester, GISO participated in an AIDS-awareness performance called Red Ribbon Monologues and also hosted an activity to educate students on the number of pills an individual with AIDS must take on a weekly basis.

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In the spring semester, GISO worked to increase the sense of community among LGBT and ally faculty and staff by hosting a reception. This is the second year for such an event, and we had over 27 LGBT and allied professionals in attendance.

In March, we hosted an event for International Transgender Day of Visibility, an annual holiday dedicated to celebrating transgender people and raising awareness of discrimination. As part of this event, we showed Beautiful Boxer, a film on the life of Parinya Charoenphol, a famous trans Thai boxer.

Lastly, at our annual Night Out Celebration, GISO celebrated 8 seniors at the lavender graduation ceremony, and we recognized people or organizations who improve campus climate by confronting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity expression. Those recognized are highlighted in this issue.

As you can see we are a very busy group passionate about raising awareness, educating others, and improving the campus climate for the LGBT+ community. We are looking forward to continuing our efforts in the Fall!

Sincerely,

Deb Schell, co-chair
Tim Oldakowski, outgoing co-chair
Emily Keener, incoming co-chair
Student Leadership Award Winners

Every year at A Night OUT, we recognize students who exemplify outstanding leadership either within the campus LGBTQIA communities or within other communities, inspiring their fellow students to work for positive change on our campus. These are this year’s winners:

Morgan Scott
Nomination from Emily Keener:

“I consistently see Morgan stepping up—he always impresses me! I first met Morgan in my Intro to Psychology class and to be honest, he looked terrified. I remember really feeling for him. However, you would never know this of Morgan in this way now. He is a true leader making a huge difference on this campus. I can think of several examples of Morgan stepping up and making me proud to know him. However, I’ll focus on the time he and I worked together on “coming out stars.” Morgan came to my Fyrst seminar class and did most, if not all, of the speaking. He walked the students through the activity like a pro. During the discussion, his willingness to share his own experience was brave. There is no doubt in my mind that he made an impact on those students.”

Gabriella Lyons
Nomination from Kevin McCarthy:

The French philosopher Denis Diderot is quoted as saying, “All things must be examined, debated, investigated without exception and without regard for anyone’s feelings” and Gabriella has made sure this is true on campus. These past few months, SRU, like so many other colleges and universities, has begun having a vocal, healthy debate on campus climate, institutional decision-making, and symbolism. While many students, faculty, and staff have been a part of a discussion that predates the present debate, it was Gabriella’s opinion piece in The Rocket in February that brought greater attention to these matters. Since then, Gabriella has remained an advocate for students of all colors, ethnicities, sexual orientations, genders, and military status. In her advocacy, she showcases social awareness, civic responsibility, communication competency, and an understanding of global interdependence, all of which are hallmarks to a Slippery Rock University education. For taking a leading role in continuing this vital conversation, we recognize Gabriella Lyons and her contributions.”

Rebecca Dietrich
Nomination from Thomas Flynn:

“Rebecca Dietrich is a junior from Pittsburgh majoring in, Communication Emerging Technology and Multimedia. She has been working as a photo editor of The Rocket Newspaper for the past three years. Rebecca has won a total of thirty-one awards nationally and locally for her photographs. She is a recent a winner of Breaking News Photography from the Society of Professional Journalist for a photo about LGBT issues addressed on campus. She has represented the newspaper at national conferences in Philadelphia, PA and Austin, Texas. Rebecca will continue her work as the Photo Editor of The Rocket during her senior year. Her hopes are to take her passion for photography and multimedia into a career in the future.”

Congratulations to all of our student award winners!

Your hard work and passion for social justice make SRU a home for all students, faculty, staff, and alumni, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
Our Newsfeed

We are news fanatics! Here are some of the celebratory and some of the concerning things we’ve been reading this semester.

WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

Pine-Richland schools face questions about transgender bathroom practices (WTAE)

SRU’s GISO launches two LGBT affinity groups (Slippery Rock University)

Pittsburgh Public Schools to unveil transgender policy (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette)

SRU student photojournalist takes 2nd place in news photo category of PA student journalism awards for this photo (Slippery Rock University)

ELSEWHERE

Everything You Need to Know about the Wave of 100+ Anti-LGBT Bills Pending in States (Huffington Post)

NYC St. Patrick’s Day Parade rings in new era of inclusion (Yahoo! News)

‘We were just burning’: Georgia man poured boiling water over gay couple as they lay in bed, police say (Washington Post)

5 ways to support your trans friends when they come out (UpWorthy)

There may be some truth to the ‘gay jobs’ stereotype (LSE Business Review)

Coming out trans: 1 man’s experience (Scientific American)

Researchers studied the mental health of 73 trans kids. This is what they found. (Upworthy)
Breaking the Silence Award Winners

Dr. Cindy LaCom

Nomination from Kevin McCarthy:

“Dr. LaCom is a professor at SRU and the Director of the Gender Studies Program. In addition to her roles teaching, advising, and mentoring students, Cindy is a stalwart advocate for social justice in all of its forms. We rely on her clarion voice to provide insight and perspective to campus matters, particularly those surrounding gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Her dedication to the University is outmatched only by her dedication to our students. For giving voice to those who need it, it is only appropriate that Cindy receive the Breaking the Silence Award.”

Dr. Christine Pease-Hernandez

Nomination from Catherine Massey:

“Dr. Christine Pease-Hernandez is a Rock Star!! Christine rallied and provided guidance to students concerning the potential move of the minority student groups from the Student Smith Center to the Student Success Center. Christine is a stalwart in ensuring that student voices are heard, and that this campus has equity across diverse groups. She does not hesitate to step up regarding multicultural issues and strives to make this campus a welcoming place for ALL. Thanks Christine!!”

Ellen Pontius

Nomination from John Press:

“John Press and the Commission would like to honor Ellen Pontius, a library assistant, with the Breaking the Silence Award for her display of LGBT texts in the library during Pride month last October. According to Ellen, ‘Bailey Library’s vast LGBTQ collection has been acquired over many years...and it is one of [Ellen’s] duties to showcase them in ways that faculty, staff, and students can become familiar with what we have to offer.’”

Amber Cannon

Nomination from Haley Barnes:

“As [Amber] is the Campus Life Editor for The Rocket, I have personally watched her do so much work for the LGBT+ community this year and if there is anyone who deserves an award, it is her. Amber wrote a three-part series on what it means to identify as trans, features on Morgan Scott and Gigi Gregory and finally a feature on Atticus. Through that series she not only educated people on the lives of trans students, but proved that The Rocket can in fact be a diverse newspaper. Amber also wrote an excellent piece on the drag show, which I believe is the first time a journalist from The Rocket ever covered the drag show. Amber interviewed Brandon, the student queen, and shed a lot of light on his story as a queen, while also shedding light on the other queens. She is a very strong ally and speaks out against any hate against the community, which for that reason she is a wonderful role model for students to look up to. She brought so much diversity to the paper this year, not just only with the LGBT+ community, but with the black community, women and several other minority groups. I am proud to call a person like this my best friend.”

BREAK IT DOWN

The Breaking the Silence Award was established to recognize people and organizations that improve campus climate by confronting discrimination based on sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression at SRU.

Awardees are announced and celebrated at the annual A Night OUT celebration.
Upcoming Events — Fall 2016

October is GISO’s month!

Be on the look out for GISO-sponsored programs throughout October 2016! In honor of all things LGBT+, we hope you’ll also join us in celebrating RockOUT’s Pride Week, which will kick off on October 10.

National Coming Out Day

Tuesday, Oct 11: As part of National LGBT History Month, we will be celebrating National Coming Out Day.

LGBT+ Workshops

Schedules are still being finalized for Fall 2016. If you have any interest in the following educational programs or workshops, please contact Jodi Solito, director of the Pride Center, Jodi.solito@sru.edu.

- Safe Zone training (for staff, faculty, administrators, student leaders)
- LGBT 101/201 (for students, faculty, staff)
- Coming Out Stars (for FYRST Seminars and classes which include a focus on diversity)