Lively June 2017 Reunion Gathering

DenisonPride hosted a large group of returning alumni and allies at its Reunion Weekend gathering on Saturday, June 3, 2017.

More than 30 alumni, faculty, current students, recent grads, straight allies and friends of the groups gathered for socializing and discussion of campus issues in the Faculty Common Room of the Burton D. Morgan Center. Brian Allen ’17, Jeffrey Masten ’86 and Valerie Mockus ’94 co-hosted the event. Jeff, who had received a Denison Alumni Citation earlier Saturday in part for work in the late 1980s co-founding the Denison GLBT Alumni Association (now Denison Pride), facilitated the discussion.

President Adam Weinberg and Vice President for Student Development Laurel Kennedy joined us with updates and discussion of the campus climate. We also welcomed Alison Williams in her role as Associate Provost for Diversity and Intercultural Education.

Across the country, the post-presidential-election period has been a particularly challenging time for LG-BTQ and other minority communities on college campuses. Alums were glad to hear from Dr. Kennedy and others that there continue to be strong support systems in place at Denison.

Vice President for Institutional Advancement Julie Houpt ’75 helped the gathering remember the life and Denison legacy of Life Trustee and longtime DenisonPride supporter Joe McMahon ’62 [more elsewhere in this issue]. Julie emphasized Joe’s early work on the Board of Trustees advancing a diverse and inclusive Denison, and she led the group in a moment of silence in his memory. Prof. Robin Bartlett (Economics/Queer Studies) noted that Joe had hosted gatherings for LGBTQ and other Denisonians in his home during earlier gay and lesbian Marches on Washington and the display of the AIDS Memorial Quilt on the National Mall.

Outlook — Denison’s group for LGBTQ students and allies — was well represented by incoming president Rhea Patil ’19 and others. Rhea reviewed Outlook’s program of activities this year. In 2017-18, Outlook plans to continue its “intersectional” work, collaborating and meeting with the full variety of other student groups on campus — helping all understand how our identities and communities are overlapping and related.

Several faculty members joined the discussion, with Prof. Warren Hauk, director of the Queer Studies Program, reviewing some of QS’s courses and events this year. Queer Studies inaugurated the Quest Awards, new program prizes for queer writing and scholarship, established by John Tindale ’72 (for more, see the Quest Awards here).

Professor Sheila Wilson (Studio Art) and Sara Hartsock ’18, encouraged alums to participate in the Expanding Archives Project, a Mellon-supported initiative to document LGBTQ history at Denison. To see or contribute materials or interviews in the project, go to http://expandingarchives.org/

Alums, allies, and students participated in a lively discussion of campus issues. Outlook leaders and current students emphasized how useful they would find a dedicated space for LGBTQ students and allies to gather and hold meetings. Meanwhile, as Dr. Marci McCaulay (retired director of the Center for Women & Gender Action) noted, the Center space has been a resource for LGBTQ students and many other organizations.

Outlook members also stressed the importance of the alumni-supported Outlook Fund, which helps with program...
Thanks to all those who participated in the Denison-Pride 30th Anniversary Celebration Survey – and thanks to Patrick Hewitt ’10 for putting it together and making it happen! Those who responded ranged from current students and faculty to alumni from all of the past five decades. Your answers and feedback will help provide us with direction as we plan the weekend of events to celebrate the history and future of our group.

In total, 66 Denisonians responded to the survey. Here are some of the findings:

- 87.8% said they would be interested in attending the weekend of events
- 75.0% said they would be interested in serving on a panel
- 70.3% said they would be willing to contribute to the event
- Respondents were most interested in social events, panel discussions, meetings with students/faculty, and entertainment.

Thanks for taking the time to respond. We look forward to seeing you back on The Hill!

ON CAMPUS
The Queer Community and the Campus

Update on Outlook
Rhea Patil ’19
Outlook President

After the Trump presidency began last year, it was a hard year for LGBTQIA+ students on Denison’s campus. With hate crimes running rampant nationwide, queer students were definitely afraid for their wellbeing on campus. This being said, Outlook has attempted to provide a safe space on Denison’s campus by building that community for all identities to make sure that — at least for an hour — students can de-stress with other students who attempt to empathize and share those experiences.

Outlook started the academic year by collaborating with the Religion Department, Black Student Union and Denison Film Society. For Coming Out Week, we celebrated alumni and past queer students who fought for the resources and support that we have today by going through Queer History at Denison with Dr. David Woodyard accompanied by various other community-building as well as activism events. After this, we celebrated Trans Awareness Week in November with events such as Trans Awareness Vigil, TransOhio Panel as well as a film screening of “Boy Meets Girl” with Dr. Michael Morris (Visiting Assistant Professor for Dance, Queer Studies and Women’s & Gender Studies).

An important goal for Outlook this year was to bring back Safe Zone Ally Training as well as move away from the notion that Outlook is a “white space” to be more inclusive with intersectional identities including queer women of color and non-binary identities. We were able to achieve both those goals successfully by having collaboration with La Fuerza Latina through a film screening of “I Am the Queen” as well as introducing more discussion on diverse identities such as Asexuality, religion and queerness.

As the year was coming to an end, we were all awaiting the exciting and iconic “End of the Year Drag Show” hosted by Nina West (a.k.a. Andrew Levitt ’01). Just check out the photo!

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Thursday afternoon, March 29, through dinner on Saturday, March 30, 2019

Save the Date – Watch for Details

Thanks to all those who participated in the Denison-Pride 30th Anniversary Celebration Survey – and thanks to Patrick Hewitt ’10 for putting it together and making it happen! Those who responded ranged from current students and faculty to alumni from all of the past five decades. Your answers and feedback will help provide us with direction as we plan the weekend of events to celebrate the history and future of our group.

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Thanks for taking the time to respond. We look forward to seeing you back on The Hill!
Jeff Masten ‘86 Honored with Alumni Citation

At the Alumni Convocation during the June 2017 Reunion Weekend, Jeff Masten ‘86 received an Alumni Citation from Denison President Adam Weinberg. In presenting the award, it was noted that: “We Honor Jeffrey A. Masten for his academic and personal leadership, and we celebrate a long history of service with, and to, our Denison community. And now, Jeff, we look forward to your future contributions, for as we have learned from Shakespeare’s The Tempest: ‘What’s past is prologue.’”

After graduating from Denison in 1986, Jeff went on to earn both his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania. He was an Associate Professor in the Humanities at Harvard University before moving on to Northwestern University’s English Department in 1998 where he has been honored for both teaching and research. From 2005-08 he directed the university’s Gender and Sexuality Studies program.

Jeff’s research focuses on early English literature, including Shakespeare, women’s writing and the history of sexuality. He is the co-author of numerous works on Renaissance drama and the author of Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama and Queer Philologies: Sex, Language, and Affect in Shakespeare’s Time. In the course of his research, he discovered a previously unknown copy of Marlowe’s 1594 play Edward II, a key document in the early history of homosexuality, which was published in the London Times Literary Supplement.

In 1988 Jeff co-founded Denison’s Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Alumni Association (now DenisonPride). His work to build LGBTQ alums’ connection with the college included a controversial 192 Denison Magazine essay on the group’s first Homecoming gathering. He continues to serve on Pride’s steering committee and was recently reappointed to Denison’s Board of Trustees.

Brian Allen ‘17 Appointed Recent Student Trustee

Excerpted from Denison posting, November 9, 2017

Denison University announces the appointment of Brian Paul Allen ‘17 as the college’s 2017 Recent Student Trustee. Allen graduated from Denison with a major in anthropology and sociology and a concentration in Queer Studies. He was widely involved as a leader on campus, including as captain of the varsity men’s swimming and diving team, a senior interviewer in the Office of Admission, an orientation staff member and as president of Outlook. Allen’s contributions to Denison were recognized through his election as a Distinguished Leadership Award winner and a President’s Medalist, the highest honor the college bestows on its students.

Brian currently is pursuing a Master of Arts in higher education and student affairs at the Ohio State University. His Denison education prepared him well for graduate studies. “One of the greatest pieces of Denison that I brought with me to Ohio State is my ability to think critically,” said Brian. “From day one of grad school, I have felt that the challenges I have faced have been met with a superior ability to think through them in a critical way.”

Each year, a recent student trustee is appointed to the Denison board of trustees to serve a two-year term. Recent student trustees are asked to maintain a connection with and represent the current student body.

“I am really excited to bring a diverse and unique perspective to the board,” he said. “During my time at Denison, I really understood the cultural nuances of the student body, and I was able to interact with students from across the entire campus. This in turn will allow me to bring unique perspectives from many different student voices, to challenge the board to think in new ways. That feels exciting.”

Check out the Denison rainbow T-shirt at only $14.99

Men’s T-shirts
Women's T-shirts
Remembering Joe McMahon ‘62

A Message from President Adam Weinberg

We are saddened to share with the community that Life Trustee Joe McMahon, a member of the Denison Class of 1962, has died at the age of 76. Joe served on the Denison Board of Trustees for 28 years, until his election to Life Trustee status in 2000.

Joe began his career as an attorney and public policy advocate in 1962, when he interned for the Civil Rights Division in the U.S. Department of Justice. Following graduation from law school, he worked as an assistant to Attorney General Edward W. Brooke of Massachusetts; after Brooke’s election as the first elected African American to the United States Senate in 1966, Joe joined the Senator’s staff. He then served as chief of staff to Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor Frank Sargent.

In 1969, Joe became vice president of the Bedford Stuyvesant D & S Restoration Corporation, founded by Senator Robert Kennedy as the nation’s first community economic development corporation. In 1974, Joe joined the corporate world as a director of Washington relations for Westinghouse Electric and then in 1978 as vice president of corporate affairs for Federated Department Stores in Cincinnati.

He was appointed by President Gerald Ford as a member of the National Council of Economic Opportunity; and, in the 1980 presidential election, Joe served as director of national business for the Reagan-Bush Election Committee. He worked toward progress on cutting-edge issues such as alternative energy, organic agriculture development, microenterprise development and full respect and equality for the LGBT community.

In an April 26, 2017, posting on Facebook, a friend shared that Joe had died peacefully in his sleep on Friday, April 21. He added to Joe’s life story that in 1981 he opened McMahon and Associates, a Washington DC consulting and research firm whose focus was public-policy/nonprofit and corporate issues, especially in the areas of alternative energy, agriculture development, microenterprise development and full respect and equality for those openly lesbian and gay. He served on numerous boards of directors including: Executive Director of The Get-Ahead Foundation/USA; End Hunger Network; Cincinnati Urban League; Luther Institute (Washington, DC); Rodale Institute, Lutheran Lesbian and Gay Ministries and the outreach board of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. From 2001-2007 he was Vice President of Public Policy for Covenant House.

Throughout his life, Joe was a tireless advocate of equality for all people. While in later life Joe focused on equality for LGBT individuals, he never lost his concern and advocacy in the fight for racial and sexual equality in America, sometimes taking to task corporations he was aligned with for their paucity of women and minorities on corporate boards.

His work on behalf of the LGBT community focused on LGBT participation in the military, LGBT participation in the church and LGBT participation in public office, and to those three areas he gave generously of his time, wisdom and financial support. As a leader in the early days of the LGBT political movement, Joe was an early organizer of Log Cabin Republicans, The Victory Fund and Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN) — an organization that represented over 12,000 service members during the era of DADT to leading the fight to repeal DADT. He remained active over the years in supporting political organizations advocating for LGBT rights.

Joe’s Lutheran faith was an important part of his life. He was a founding member in 1995 of the Lutheran Lesbian and Gay Ministry and a passionate Board member for 15 years also serving for an important period as Co-Chair. The organization was ultimately successful in changing the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America policy in 2009 to accept LGBT people as pastors in their church. Joe had a significant voice during these difficult years, and his financial generosity was critical to the movement at key points. Other organizations that Joe took an active part in include Camp Rehoboth which strives to celebrate diversity, build a strong sense of community, and create a more positive environment for all people, gay and straight in Rehoboth Beach, DE, and Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Miami.

A memorial service was held on May 11 at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral and was attended by several Denison alums. In the homily and remembrances shared, there were words of a life of extraordinary generosity, service and commitment to building a more just society with civil rights for all. It was emphasized how much Joe lived his deep faith and a very rich life.

In 2011 with its Alumni Citation award — Denison’s highest alumni honor — it was stated:

“We honor Joe McMahon ’62 for his enthusiastic participation in the political processes, for his commitment to a better America, and for his courageous insistence on equal rights for our African American and GLBT populations.”

The Winter 2018 DENISON Magazine devoted most of an entire page to his career and service, https://denisonmagazine.com/article noting comments from several Denison Pride members about his many contributions to Denison and society at large.

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The 2017-2018 academic year has brought some challenges and opportunities to the Queer Studies Program. In the fall semester we taught three sections of Introduction to Queer Studies and one section of Queer Theory. This spring we have two sections of Intro to QS, one section of Queer Theory and our Senior Seminar -- the final jewel in the crown of the concentration. Enrollments have been robust, with waitlists on both Intro to QS sections for the spring semester and Queer Theory enrolled to nearly to capacity. Of the 19 declared QS concentrators, six are seniors and expected to graduate in May.

In the fall semester, Queer Studies hosted an information table at the Licking County One World event held at Bryn Du mansion in Granville. We answered questions from community members and enjoyed visiting tables sponsored by other Denison groups as well as from the local community. Professor Marlaine Browning invited Lori Gum, a queer activist and community organizer from Columbus, to dialog with her two sections of Intro to QS. The students found Lori to be an inspiration and a knowledgeable resource for community activism.

Queer Studies’ big event of the spring semester was a campus visit and public presentation by Jim Obergefell (photo), lead plaintiff in the Supreme Court's Obergefell v. Hodges same-sex marriage case of 2015. Jim Obergefell is a native Ohioan and lived in the greater Cincinnati area for much of his life. He told the powerful and compelling story of his own “accidental” path toward activism in this landmark civil rights case. Nearly 90 students and community members attended and feedback from all was glowing. The event was co-sponsored by several departments and individuals: Communications, Education, Political Science, History, Women’s & Gender Studies, Dean David Woodyard, Associate Provost Alison Williams and the Provost’s Office.

In March (organized by Professor Michael Mayne) we had a campus visit by Julia Serano, author of Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity. Queer Studies along with the Department of English, Women’s & Gender Studies and the Lisska Center were asked to co-sponsor Serrano’s visit to Prof. Mayne’s theory class.

Queer Studies has updated the brochure we designed for the Office of Admissions to distribute to prospective students and their families. We hope that increased visibility during the admissions process will draw more queer students and allies to Denison.

On a sadder note, this spring will be Professor Robin Bartlett’s final semester teaching as part of the Queer Studies Program. Robin served as director of the program from 2008 to 2014, and shepherded the revitalization of the program. Through her 42 years at Denison Robin has been a leader, friend, teacher, activist and spokesperson for queer students, faculty, and staff. We are hugely indebted to her and will miss her dearly!

Last year the Queer Studies Committee developed categories, criteria and procedures for the first Quest Writing Awards. The award (sponsored through a gift from a Denison alum) recognizes excellence in writing in the categories of senior research writing, junior/senior writing, first year/sophomore writing and creative writing. A total of six students received awards for their submissions. This is the second year of the awards and submissions were due March 30. We are looking forward to reading this year’s submissions of queer writing!

Scholarship among Queer Studies faculty is booming. Here are some recent publications/scholarship by Denison QS faculty:

+ Hollis Griffin is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication, where he teaches and conducts research on media technologies and issues related to sexual desire and identity. His new book is titled Feeling Normal: Sexuality and Media Culture in the Digital Age (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017). Feeling Normal examines the fantasies of freedom and belonging perpetuated by media made for sexual minorities. Where a good deal of research on cinema, television, and online content made for sexual minorities often takes these objects to task for their ideological limitations, to critique the way they perpetuate hierarchies of gender, race, and class. Feeling Normal pushes that conversation further by elaborating on the relationship that the ideological limitations of these media have with the pleasures of consuming them. Even though cinema, television, and new media often feature restrictive, even oppressive ideas about sexual identity, many people find them no less compelling for that. In fact, many people find these media sustaining and important. I argue that such media content constructs a

continued on next page
political vision that is often comforting to minority audiences because of, not in spite of, its shortsightedness. These media offer sexual minorities visions of “the good life” without forcing them to reimagine what it might look like. Hollis’ book was named an “Outstanding Academic Title” for 2017 by CHOICE, the publication of the American Library Association [see more on page 7].


+ Charles St-Georges is Assistant Professor of Spanish and has made contributions to Queer Studies and Latin American and Caribbean Studies, as well as serving as faculty advisor to the historically Latina sorority Sigma Lambda Gamma. His queer book (currently scheduled for release in mid-April) is titled Haunted Families and Temporal Normativity in Hispanic Horror Films: Troubling Timelines. Lanham: Lexington Books. His queer articles include: “Mexicanidad as Race, Gender, and Neoliberal Ideology in Patricia Riggen’s La misma luna/ Under the Same Moon (2008).” The Latin Americanist 62.1 (March 2018). “Brazilian Horrors Past and Present: José Mojica Marins and Politics as Reproductive Futurism.” Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies 25 (2016): 555-70. His queer talks include:


“LGBTQ Latinxs at Rural Midwestern SLACs: Navigating Alphabet Soup (and Caldo).” Summit of Ohio Latinx. Invited by student organizers. Ohio Wesleyan University. 22 Apr. 2017

+ Sheilah Restack [formerly Wilson] received a Howard Foundation Fellowship from Brown University to continue work on her collaborative project, Strangely Ordinary This Devotion (SOTD), with Dani Restack [formerly Leventhal]. The first part of the project, the video SOTD premiered at the Whitney Biennial in April of 2017. It has gone on to show at festivals such as Toronto International Film Festival, Iceberg Projects, Seonju International Film and Video Festival, Bucharest International Film Festival, Berwick International Film Festival and Anthology Film Archive among others. Critic Andrea Picard calls the work, “By turns affecting and unsettling, Dani Leventhal and Sheilah Wilson’s Strangely Ordinary This Devotion connects associative threads (including rocks, blood, motherhood, and queer representation) into a dazzling, web-like whole: a defacto treatise on radical intimacy.”

Go to https://denison.edu/academics/queer-studies to view a brief Student Spotlight video about the Queer Studies program.

Faculty Notables and More

The Winter 2018 issue of DENISON magazine was chock full of LGBT-related news. On page 38 you’d find the plug for DenisonPride -- what we used to call the LGBT Alum Association -- noting that we work to “connect alums with the College and to cultivate a diverse Denison where all students thrive.”

Then on page 19 we spotted Andrew Levitt ’01 (aka drag queen Nina West) who has donated more than $1 million to Columbus area charities [read more about Andrew/Nina elsewhere in this issue]. We learned more about the late Joe McMahon ’62 on page 53 and his distinguished career [read more about Joe on page 4 in this newsletter].

And how about all the faculty research and publications with an LGBT theme? Here are some that caught our eye in the “Faculty Notes” section because of the topic or the LGBT-supportive faculty members:

• Communication prof Suzanne Condray’s talk on “The Rhetoric of Alienation” regarding the 2016 election and Hollis Griffin’s book, Feeling Normal: Sexuality and Media Criticism in the Digital Age [see below]
• Dance prof Michael Morris’ presentation, “Transgender Studies Beyond the University: How Else Might We Tell Our Own Stories”
• In Economics, Robin Bartlett’s book chapter, “Queering McCloskey’s Feminism in Location and History”
• The Education Department’s Karen Graves’ presentation, “The Church That Sinned Boldly: A Baptist Education in Gay Rights”
• In Modern Languages, Melissa Huerta’s paper on “Generation Sex and Participatory Theatre: Traversing Platforms and Reclaiming Sexualities through Social Media”
• Ron Abram in Studio Art with “Intimacy, Empathy and The Human Touch: A History in Printmaking”

Thanks to the folks at DENISON magazine for throwing the spotlight on these Denisonians.
Professor’s Book Gets High Marks

Communications Professor Dr. Hollis Griffin’s recent book, Feeling Normal: Sexuality and Media Criticism in the Digital Age, recently was recognized by the American Library Association as “Outstanding Academic Title” for 2017. Sounds pretty impressive to us! Congratulations!

Here’s a bit about how Hollis explains this work:

Feeling Normal: Sexuality and Media Culture in the Digital Age [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017] examines the fantasies of freedom and belonging perpetuated by media made for sexual minorities. Where a good deal of research on cinema, television, and online content made for sexual minorities often takes these objects as task for their ideological limitations -- to critique the way they perpetuate hierarchies of gender, race, and class -- Feeling Normal pushes that conversation further by elaborating on the relationship that the ideological limitations of these media have with the pleasures of consuming them.

Even though cinema, television and new media often feature restrictive, even oppressive ideas about sexual identity, many people find them no less compelling for that. In fact, many people find these media sustaining and important. I argue that such media content constructs a political vision that is often comforting to minority audiences because of, not in spite of, its shortsightedness. These media offer sexual minorities visions of “the good life” without forcing them to reimagine what it might look like. To put that another way: cinema, television and online media court sexual minorities by highlighting shared experiences of injustice but then animate similar dynamics of power in spite of themselves, especially regarding gender, race and class.

Feeling Normal breaks with much of the literature on media and sexual minorities in an effort to highlight how ideological critique is most powerful when it can provide some insight as to why audiences are so often drawn to media content that seems so problematic at first glance.

Way to Go, Denison

Wall Street Journal Ranks Denison in Top 30 of Nat’l Liberal Arts [Excerpt of posting by Denison on October 4, 2017]

The Wall Street Journal, in conjunction with Times Higher Ed, has ranked Denison University in the top 30 of national liberal arts colleges. The recently released rankings place an emphasis on financial outcomes, campus engagement among students and professors, and the campus environment, including racial, ethnic and financial diversity. In all, 15 measures go into calculating the overall ranking.

The Wall Street Journal rankings confirm what we believe — that Denison is a great liberal arts college,” said Denison University President Adam Weinberg. “Our students develop close mentoring relationships with their faculty, who challenge them to achieve. Our career exploration strategies were just recognized for their innovation and thought-leadership. Global learning is infused across the curriculum. More than 80 percent of our students engage in study abroad, internships, and seminars that include off-campus experiences. And in 2018, we are opening the Eisner Center for the Performing Arts, building on our strong foundation in the arts. Denison does an outstanding job of unlocking the potential of our students. I am proud to be a Denisonian.”

The Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Ed Ranking measures the performance of all national colleges and universities, including public universities and those with graduate programs. Within the complete list, Denison rose seven places this year, from #91 to #84. When categorizing the list by peers, Denison ranks #29 in the nation among its peers in private, liberal arts baccalaureate colleges with an arts and sciences curriculum.

Denison a Top College for Sports Lovers [Posted by the college, May 16, 2017]

Denison University is a top college for sports lovers, according to Money magazine. Money partnered with Sports Illustrated to compile a list of great colleges and universities for students who love sports — but who also want a high-quality, affordable education that positions them for career success. Denison is No. 9 in the nation for Division III schools and tied for the No. 41 when combined with Division I schools.

Denison Leading the Way in Graduating More Low-Income Students

Back in 2017, the Hechinger Report asked, “How do they do it? A few wealthy private colleges have found ways to serve many needy students without jeopardizing their financial health.” The Report noted that “Generally, despite their prosperity, rich colleges don’t give many students of lesser means a shot at an elite, private education. But there are private institutions that buck this trend.”

The story, which also appeared on the “PBS News Hour,” noted that “Four elite private colleges are leading the way in graduating more low-income students.” Denison was one of the “four high-flying colleges with large endowments (together totaling more than $9 billion) that have high Pell-recipient enrollment rates and high completion rates…[which] can provide a blueprint for well-heeled institutions that currently enroll low percentages of low-income students.”
Teaching and Diversity in the Classroom

[Adapted from Message from the Center for Learning and Teaching,” February 9, 2017]

Last February the Center for Learning and Teaching held a Lunch and Learn Conversation on “Teaching and Diversity in the Classroom.” It was facilitated by Alison Williams (Associate Provost for Diversity and Intercultural Education). Prior to the event, attendees were asked to complete the on-line Kognito module, LGBTQ on Campus for Faculty & Staff. This is a 30-minute interactive learning experience that assists institutions of higher education in creating a safe and supportive campus community by: 1) increasing awareness and empathy for the challenges faced by LGBTQ students, and 2) building the skills of faculty and staff to model respectful behavior, including managing classroom discussions that may include bias comments or attitudes or handling an LGBTQ-related issue.

The conversation reflected on how Denison's teaching can be modified or focused in order to create inclusive learning environments, addressing challenges and opportunities to help students, faculty and staff better understand the ways that inclusive teaching can be supported at Denison.

Lee Bostian: Remembering a Pathfinder

Dr. David Woodyard
Professor of Religion and Queer Studies

Lee Bostian is to the GLBTQA movement at Denison what Martin Luther King was nationally to the Civil Rights movement. While many struggle to keep the memory of King alive, the memory of Lee in our community has been eclipsed by neglect.

Lee was the Chair of the Music Department, a husband and the father of four children, a prominent figure in the governance of the College, and an organist and choir director at a local church. Professionally and personally, our lives overlapped. He coached me into becoming a recovering homophobe. One sad day, I preached the sermon at his funeral.

About three decades ago, he did the most courageous thing I have known in over half a century here. In an era when gay was seen as unambiguously perverse, he “came out” at a faculty meeting. Boldly and unequivocally, that act initiated a transformative journey in the College. Other faculty began to feel safe and lived publicly their identity. Straight faculty opened their homes to social gatherings for students, allies and faculty. Gay alumni from former times returned to populate a lecture series on their life experiences. Soon a vibrant queer studies curriculum surfaced. Among interdisciplinary programs, it is prominent. Recently in their home, the marriage of two faculty/staff women was solemnized. Students who are “out” are honored; our campus concept of normality has expanded even if it is not yet all-inclusive. “Free at last,” almost! There are still incidences in the residence halls. However, it is difficult to imagine the remarkable progress independent of the courageous act of Lee.

Lee Bostian was the Shepherd of a movement prominent in the fabric of Denison now. And one of the most remarkable features of the movement is that it did not become an enclave for the marginalized. Straight, white, males are welcomed and affirmed as allies. Some conspicuously straight students have engaged with Queer Studies courses. And normality has been liberated from exclusivity. The failure to honor — much less remember — him is a moral deficit. It could be rectified by the creation of the Lee Bostian Chair in Queer Studies. That would honor the journey of so many and surface the credibility the discipline deserves.

OUT AND ABOUT
What’s Happening With Our DenisonPride Members

A happy grandfather, Clay Van Batenburg ’80 is planning a 60th birthday celebration with his two closest friends from freshman year.

Catalina Esparza ’16 works at a federally qualified health center and patient-centered medical home, wearing many different hats but the one project about which she’s really proud is making the work space more LGBTQ-friendly. She is the lead for the LGBTQ initiative to make the clinic more welcoming (creating a safe space, bringing awareness to its areas of service, etc.). After attending multiple conferences/participating in initiatives in Michigan, she was invited by the Michigan Primary Care Association to serve on the planning committee for Michigan’s LGBTQ health summit, her second year on the committee. “Woo!” she writes. “Thank you, Denison!”

Geoff Kerr ’81 reports that he “finally” married Dan Flanagan after having lived together for 11 years and having already combined families. They took the plunge on October 21, 2017, married on a cliff in the Marin Headlands overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

A consultant living in Granville, Courtney Baxter ’11 will marry Phoebe Myhrum ’11 there this September.
A Special Everyday Hero

Andrew Levitt ’01, who performs nationally as drag queen Nina West, has quietly given more than $1 million to nonprofit organizations, mostly to those that benefit children in the LGBT community. A theatre major, he was honored with the 2017 Columbus Human Rights Campaign Equality Award. It noted:

It is hard to separate the creation from the creator and in this moment we are excited to honor Andrew Levitt/Nina West as the 2017 Columbus Human Rights Campaign Equality Award recipient. Levitt has been a resident of the greater Columbus area since completing his degree at Denison University. His art and drag persona, Nina West, has been an unofficial spokeswoman and champion of Columbus’ local businesses, social entrepreneurs and, in this moment, most importantly a champion and fighter for the LGBTQ community, Nina’s genuine love and respect for this city has earned her an unprecedented number of fans in both the LGBTQ and straight ally communities.

In recent years Levitt has extended his reach beyond Columbus and Ohio by helping, as Nina West, to launch a national campaign called “On Fridays, We Wear Pink.” The movement, in which LGBTQ individuals and their allies are encouraged to wear pink in solidarity toward equality—even to this day! To date, Levitt/West has helped raise over $1.5 million for local and national individuals, grassroots activists and impacting organizations.

Andrew has given of his time to support not only the efforts of the Human Rights Campaign but also of the local Columbus community. The work he has done has not gone unnoticed by those around Columbus and the Nation. It is our hope that with this acknowledgment of his past, and future, work he, and the community, will understand the richness of his contributions.

For more information, visit Columbus HRC Equality Award

Here is the link to an article by Gary Seman, Jr., titled “Everyday Heroes: Drag Queen Gives to LGBT Charities So Others Don’t Have to Feel Alone” which appeared in the August 24, 2017, Columbus Dispatch. Check this out to see John “in action” as a primary care physician (https://www.facebook.com/clarkhoward/videos/1015799258089572/)

Aleks Panovska ’10 (right in photo) married her wife, Kelley Ashford, in a beautiful backyard ceremony at Kelley’s parent’s home in Washington state. They had a reception a few weeks later in Columbus, where they will be moving this spring. Aleks just finished her grad program in security policy studies at George Washington University in D.C.

Brian Paul Allen ’17 is completing a summer internship at The American University in Paris with Kevin Fore ’94, where he is on staff.

Kim Cromwell ’81 co-authors a weekly blog, “News We’re Following,” with links to all sorts of current political info. If you’d like to get on the mailing list, contact her at tkcromwell@me.com.

Dean Hanssell’s ’74 work as a Superior Court judge was recently featured in the California Daily Journal, the state’s daily legal newspaper.

After 40 years with the same company, Joseph Eisel ’77 retired at the beginning of 2018. He reports that in 2017 he daily legal newspaper.

Alumni Council Representative: Patrick Hewitt ’10

Susan Sayre Batton ’81 lives in San Jose, CA, and is celebrating 28 years with Maja Thomas.

Things in John Hong’s ’88 life have “calmed” down, especially after his “bad experience” with his “America’s Got Talent” audition in New York City. It made him realize “the media sucks” as “the judges were horrible to me.” He and his spouse, Christopher Zitnay, MD, have been together 25 years and they practice together at Cape Regional Physicians Associates in Cape May, NJ. Check this out to see John “in action” as a primary care physician (https://www.facebook.com/groups/160020328041)

Joseph Eisel ’77 moved and proud of what the LGBTQ Denison community has achieved.” Joe and his partner of 30 years are now beginning to plan their marriage.

Angel Lemke ’00 began teaching at the Columbus College of Art & Design in fall 2017 where she is Adjunct Faculty teaching CORE Liberal Arts (Writing, Literature & Philosophy).

Christie Maillet ’12 lives in the DC area where she works in communications.

Susan Sayre Batton ’81 lives in San Jose, CA, and is celebrating 28 years with Maja Thomas.