



Vol. 2, Issue 1, Spring 2014

Adrienne Gibilisco, Editor

**UPCOMING EVENTS**
**10th Anniversary Alumni Reunion**
**HISTORY PANEL**

 May 2nd, 3:30-4:30 pm  
**FREEDOM FORUM**
**ALUMNI MIXER**

May 2nd, 5-7 pm

**TOP OF THE HILL, BACK BAR**
**RECOGNITION BANQUET**

May 3rd, 12-2 pm

**CAROLINA INN,**
**CHANCELLORS' WEST BALLROOM**
**LAVENDER GRADUATION**

May 4th, 4-6 pm

**SASB NORTH, UPENDO**
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In celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the LGBTQ Center, the following feature details the events leading up to the establishment and subsequent impact of the Center on UNC-Chapel Hill and its community. We hope you find it an enjoyable read.

## History of the LGBTQ Center

**By Adrienne Gibilisco**

growing needs and rights of the LGBTQ community. This long roar for acceptance dates back to the early 1970s, when the cultural climate was far different from what we experience today.

**The Backstory:**

Cecil Wooten, Professor of Classics and Chairman of the Classics department (now retired), remembers the campus climate from the early 1970s as being gentler for faculty than it was for students. "When I was hired here, my colleagues knew I was gay and there was absolutely no problem with that. But professors are in a very privileged position. It's easy for faculty – we can do just about anything we want to. But for staff and students, it is a problem. Every now and then, there would be an incident of some sort, a nasty letter written in the Daily Tar Heel. I gather from what students have said over the years, they found the environment – certainly in the '70s, but even in the early '80s – quite hostile."

This year, the LGBTQ Center celebrates 10 years of educating for equality at UNC-Chapel Hill. It's been a decade of incredible growth – not only for the Center, but for visibility and acceptance on campus, in our community, and beyond. From a tiny office in the basement of Steele building, operating on a shoestring budget with a skeleton staff, to a flourishing operation with rich and diverse programming and outreach based out of SASB North, the LGBTQ Center has become a vital source for education, direct services and resources, and advocacy. Safe Zone trainings, Trans Talk Tuesday brown bag lunch sessions, Social Justice Yoga classes, Q Group discussions, Welcome Back gatherings, Coming Out Week and Transgender Awareness events, GSHAH graduate meetings, the Graduate Speaker Series, the Triangle Resource Fair, Lavender Graduation and more fill our calendar. Those events and greater outreach and support are made available through the hard work of staff and volunteers to ensure achievement of our mission statement of fostering a safe, inclusive environment for UNC-Chapel Hill community members of all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions.

However, the Center's status as the hub for all things LGBTQ-related didn't occur in a vacuum. Indeed, it came about as the culmination of many years of advocacy from students, faculty and staff for change that would reflect the

That would be an understatement. Many students faced repeated confrontations and roadblocks to navigating a harassment-free scholastic experience. LGBTQ students reached out to each other and rallied by forming their own organizations to help them discuss their needs and issues that affected them. In 1973, undergrad Dan Leonard started a Gay rap (discussion) group. Later that year, the Carolina Gay Alliance (CGA), co-founded by

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# Letter from the Director



PHOTO BY DAN SEARS

This year we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of the LGBTQ Center (nee LGBT Office). The Center was commissioned in 2003 by then-Provost Robert Shelton. Since that time, the Center has provided programs, resources and services to more than 25,000 people and has influenced several policy changes within the University.

We are recognizing and celebrating the 10th anniversary of the LGBTQ Center with an Alumni Reunion weekend to be held May 2-4, 2014. I have had the pleasure and privilege of working with many fantastic students (undergraduate, graduate, and professional), staff, faculty, alumni, and community partners during the eight and a half years I have been here. I am hopeful that many of them will return to help celebrate the successes and progress that were made possible through their investment of time, effort, talents, and energy. I am also hopeful to have the pleasure and privilege of getting to make the acquaintance of some of the alumni and former university employees whose efforts made possible the ultimate creation of the LGBTQ Center.

We will start the Reunion weekend with an eye-opening History Panel on Friday, May 2nd from 3:30-4:30 pm at the Freedom Forum Center, followed by an informal mixer to be held at Top of the Hill's Back Bar from 5-7 pm. On Saturday, May 3rd from 12-2 pm, we will gather in the Chancellor's West Ballroom at the Carolina Inn for a catered celebration banquet. We will conclude the weekend celebration with the recognition of the newest Carolina alumni during the Lavender Graduation Ceremony at Upendo.

Lavender Graduation will take place on Sunday, May 4th, from 4-5 pm, with a catered reception following the formal ceremony. Registration for all of these events is available on the General Alumni Association website ([alumni.edu.unc/lgbtq](http://alumni.edu.unc/lgbtq)). There will be a nominal fee for the Friday night mixer and Saturday banquet in order to cover the majority of the cost for the event. We have made it possible for people to contribute additional money to sponsor registrations for current students who might otherwise not be able to attend due to financial limitations. I hope that people will support this effort to the extent they are able to do so.

The LGBTQ Center's motto is "Educating for Equality." This phrase emphasizes and makes visible the primary purpose behind the majority of programs and services offered through the LGBTQ Center. I hope that you will join us at one or more of the events held May 2-4, 2014 as we celebrate 10 years of Educating for Equality and as we applaud the work done by those who made the existence of the Center possible.

**Terri Phoenix**

# Administrative Review

By Terri Phoenix

**W**ithin Student Affairs at UNC-Chapel Hill, each department completes an administrative review every five years to identify areas of strength, areas for improvements, and to clarify direction for the next five years. During the 2012-2013 academic year, the LGBTQ Center underwent an administrative review process. The Administrative Review Committee worked diligently and I very much appreciate the time, energy, and expertise they committed to the process. Thank you to Ben Bolling, Rebecca Balter, Kevin Claybren, Addison Potter Evans, Chloe Hopper, Robert Pleasants, Christopher Putney, and Sharon Thomas for your participation.

I've never met two people more devoted to inclusivity and more willing to stay open-minded/heARTed to learning.

Multiple types of data were gathered or reviewed during the fall and early spring. The committee reviewed the previous five years of Annual Reports that had been submitted by the LGBTQ Center. Focus groups were conducted with undergraduate students; graduate and postdoctoral students; staff and faculty; and, the Provost's Committee on LGBTQ Life. All focus groups were transcribed in entirety and analyzed through an open coding process. Additionally, there was an online survey open to everyone and publicized through multiple means that 35 people completed. Finally, the committee reviewed the self-analysis that the LGBTQ Center had completed just prior to the administrative review. The committee reviewed all data keeping the following three questions in mind:

1. Is the LGBTQ Center providing programs and services appropriately?
2. Does the LGBTQ Center provide programs and services efficiently?
3. Is the LGBTQ Center sufficiently resourced in terms of staffing and funding?

## RESULTS

**T**he full report plus all supporting documents and data is available in the LGBTQ Center and may be reviewed by anyone upon request. The report is also available on the Center History Page on our website, lgbtq.unc.edu.

Some excerpts from the report are provided below:

The current staff of the LGBTQ Center are seen as culturally competent and provide much-needed contributions to the campus culture.

The Center is a haven for LGBTQ undergrads at Carolina, who find it to be a "safe, welcoming, and affirming" place on campus. Some representative quotes from focus groups include "Both staff members are not only excellent resources to our LGBTQ community but are outstanding resources to all identity groups as well," and "I've never met two people more devoted to inclusivity and more willing to stay open-minded/heARTed to learning."

The current programming offered by the Center, in particular Safe Zone training, is viewed as integral to creating a safe and inclusive campus environment.

The survey and focus groups showed that the Center provides crucial education in the form of awareness-raising initiatives. When asked "How important do you find the following pro-

gram or services?" the highest-scoring programs or services in percentage included: Advocacy for Equitable Benefits and Policies; the Safe Zone Program (Education and Visibility Program); Educational Presentations for UNC-CH faculty, units, or student organizations; and, Drop-In Support Hours.

The current visibility of the LGBTQ Center does not adequately meet the needs of our campus community in location and outreach (publicity)

**The Center does commendable and important work in advocacy and education in spite of its limited staff and resources**

The focus groups were in unanimous agreement that the Center's current location in the Student and Academic Services Building is unsuitable; this South Campus location is inconvenient for Center constituents, the 5:00 p.m. "lockout" on the third floor of the SASB makes evening programming there impossible, and the general remoteness of this site is an impediment to the Center's visibility on campus. Several focus group participants suggested that the Center ought to publicize itself and its services better. It is worth noting that a number of focus group participants did not know where the Center is located, and seemed uncertain about the services it provides (and to whom). Furthermore, a number of participants were surprised to learn that the Center serves not only undergraduates, but also staff, faculty, and graduate/professional students, and five of them indicated that they did not even know that the Center existed. The committee noted that part of the lack of visibility was out of the control of Center staff (e.g., location on campus, monetary resources to increase publicity efforts) but that the Center should consider increasing their collaboration with various organizations and groups on campus.

There is a need for additional resources to strengthen and further develop the work of the LGBTQ Center.

The Center does commendable and important work in advocacy and education in spite of its limited staff and resources; however, in order for the Center to meet its mission to serve the entire campus community, more resources (i.e., staff, location, money) are needed.

## LGBTQ CENTER & UNIVERSITY RESPONSE TO REVIEW

In response to the review I took a number of actions that would address key concerns of the report. First, I requested the addition of two staff members. One of these would serve as an administrative support specialist and the other would be a program coordinator. The university did create the administrative support specialist and the hire was completed in October 2013.

Second, I submitted to the Facilities and Grounds Committee a proposal to relocate the LGBTQ Center back on the main academic campus. That request has not been granted though the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs has repeatedly stated that he is supportive of the move pending the availability of space.

Third, I asked for additional money in the program and operations portion of the LGBTQ Center budget. This additional money would be used to better publicize existing programs and services (e.g., ads on social media, newspaper ads, radio ads, posters), pay contract employees (e.g., peer support and discussion group facilitators, Speakers Bureau participants), and equitably collaborate with other campus groups and organizations. The university did not allocate additional funding for 2013-2014 but I will again submit the request in my 2014-2015 budget.

On the whole, the review was very positive and affirming of the work being done by staff of the LGBTQ Center. The places of concern identified have and will continue to prompt action. I again thank the members of the Administrative Review Committee for their service as well as all of the individuals who made time in their days to reflect and provide their feedback.

# GNH Update

By Adrienne Gibilisco



UNC LGBTQ Center Director  
Terri Phoenix (Left) and  
Gender Non-Specific Housing  
Coordinator Kevin Claybren

Last spring, when the Board of Trustees voted unanimously to support Gender Non-Specific Housing at UNC, we thought that the battle to provide safe housing for all UNC-Chapel Hill students had been won. It was a long fight that began several years earlier, with then-Chancellor Thorp's initial advice to educate stakeholders about the benefits and necessity of GNH on our campus. Outreach conducted by LGBTQ Center Director Terri Phoenix and undergraduate Kevin Claybren found the backing of the Student Congress and, ultimately, Chancellor Thorp and the entire Board of Trustees, who found merit in the proposal.

A pilot program was planned for Fall 2013 that put aside 32 rooms – just 1/10 of one percent of the entire residence hall space allotted on campus – for students wishing to take advantage of this new policy. However, just a week before the semester kicked off, the NC Legislature introduced a bill that banned the policy and the Board of Governors voted behind closed doors to veto the plan.

This exceedingly unfortunate and short-sighted development was a great disappointment. However, failure to institute the program at UNC-CH for 2013-2014 does not mean that the battle is over. We shall continue our advocacy for Gender Non-Specific Housing so that all students will feel safe and comfortable in their campus housing.

Please check our website, [lgbtq.unc.edu](http://lgbtq.unc.edu), for updates.

# Ally Week/Triangle Resource Fair

By Danny DePuy



The LGBTQ Center display of numerous resources, including Safe Zone trainings, brochures, stickers, pins...and more!

The LGBTQ Center's annual Ally Appreciation Week is held during the last week of January with the intention of cultivating visibility, and both supporting and recognizing folks who are already visible allies. We recruit campus and community businesses to offer a discount to folks wearing Ally buttons for the duration of the week, thus fostering stronger community ties while simultaneously helping to support affirming local businesses. In 2013, we had 17 businesses on board, offering discounts. The event was so successful that, for the first time, business owners started reaching out to us – unsolicited – because they'd heard about the week and wanted to join in!

Needless to say, Ally buttons were in high demand. The day we planned to be out in the Pit for distribution of buttons, the skies opened up, threatening to drench our plans. But we're accustomed to thinking on our feet – and quickly came up with Plan B: Over the lunch hour, LGBTQ staff members headed over to Lenoir to greet the long line that forms at noon with a Tupperware full of buttons. Hundreds of buttons were handed out as folks moved through the line entering the dining hall. Many students eagerly grabbed buttons, saying they'd wanted one for a while but hadn't known where to get one (all are welcome to visit the LGBTQ Center at SASB North to pick up pins throughout the year).

As the week progressed, excitement built in anticipation of two phenomenally engaging events that we had planned. The first was a performance about Ally Development by Interactive Theater Carolina (social justice theater), that we co-sponsored with SAGA (Sexuality and Gender Alliance) and DHRE (Department of Housing and Residential Education). If you haven't witnessed Interactive Theater Carolina (ITC), you're missing something wonderful. Through the powerful medium of live performance, ITC engages audiences in dialogue around complex personal and social issues. The particular scene performed during Ally Week focused on microaggressions. Audience members were engaged with a "day in the life of" someone who experiences heterosexism. By presenting realistic scenarios on stage drawn from actual student focus groups, audience members were able to relate the issue in question to experiences from their own lives.

Vendors share a laugh during the 2014 Triangle Resource Fair.

PHOTO BY PHOEBE CASTELBLANCA



Particularly inspiring was when audience members jumped up to participate by demonstrating how amazing and supportive allies can be. What a great way to practice Ally strategies in a supportive and collaborative environment! At the end of the event we handed out our new Ally T-shirts to the 55 people who turned up on that cold January night, and encouraged folks to wear them the next day for our final special event of Ally Week.

The next day, the LGBTQ Center staff braved the wintry winds as we headed over early to set up for the 7th Annual Triangle Resource Fair. Local organizations and businesses are invited by us to participate in the Resource Fair to provide a fantastic networking opportunity for students seeking resources, internships and/or employment. The Fair was held at the Graduate Student Center, a beautiful building - formally a church - with lovely stained glass windows enhancing the space and cultivating a little warmth even on an otherwise chilly day.

We arrived early so we could set up an inviting and comfortable flow to the room. Luckily, we had volunteers to help us set up because arranging the tables to accommodate all the organizations was like a game of Tetris. After many permutations of table arrangements, and much discussion, we finally settled on a flow that seemed logical. Outside, the wind made hanging our signs challenging, but thankfully we'd brought copious amounts of duct tape in vibrant purple, blue and tie dye.

Despite the inhospitable weather, it wasn't very long before the whole room was bursting to the seams with folks talking, visiting and making connections. The energy in the room was high and the warmth contagious. When asked about how the experience of attending the Resource Fair folks said:

- "This is an amazing way to increase solidarity!"
- "Learned a lot about what is 'happening' on UNC Campus to support community! Thank you!"
- "I loved it! Made me feel warm & fuzzy!"
- "This fair makes me and my church (Binkley) feel happy, motivated, and inspired!"
- "This has been really enlightening and coming from Methodist, it was great to see so many allies."

As the Fair came to a close, signaling the end of another fabulous Ally week, we packed up already planning for what we'd like to do next time!

**U**pdate: Ally Week and the Triangle Resource Fair in 2014 was a terrific success, with 16 businesses, a huge turnout, great relationships forged...and gorgeous weather!

# Graduate Lunch & Learn Speaker Series

By Adrienne Gibilisco and Sarah Chi



PHOTO: LAUREN DU GRAF

Ben Bolling, creator of the Lunch & Learn Graduate Speaker Series

Last spring, the LGBTQ Center co-sponsored the new “Lunch & Learn Graduate Speaker Series” along with the Graduate School, Graduate & Professional Student Federation, and Program in Sexuality Studies.

The brainchild of English PhD candidate Ben Bolling, who recognized the need for a forum to provide graduate students doing LGBTIQ-related research with an opportunity to share their findings, the series focused on the work of three students. Each talk attracted a small but very engaged group of attendees.

Bolling’s topic was “Queer Conversations: LGBTIQ Consumer/Producer Interface at Comic-Con International and the Intransitive Writing of Comics.” In his presentation, he shared his observations on Comic-Con International and the role of communication between comic book fans and producers in affecting LGBTIQ representation in comic books. Questions he addressed were how the unique communicative exchanges between comic book fans and the producers of their texts play out and whether they actually affect the ongoing production of comics. “The Q&A was incredibly helpful,” he recalls, “as I edited the piece for publication in a forthcoming collection I’m editing with Professor Matthew Smith from Wittenburg University, *It Happens at Comic-Con: Ethnographic Essays on a Pop Culture Phenomenon* (McFarland Press, 2014).”

Joseph Lee, a PhD student in Health Behavior, lectured about disparities in smoking prevalence in the LGBT community and the corporate influence on the LGBT tobacco epidemic. In his presentation,

which was co-sponsored by the Health Sciences LGBTQ Alliance, School of Medicine Queer-Straight Alliance, and Health Behavior Department, he addressed the 50% higher smoking rate in this population, allowing his audience to question what this reveals about LGBT health promotion efforts. Bolling recalls that the Q&A following Lee’s talk was memorable because “a number of folks in attendance had anecdotal accounts of their encounters with tobacco marketing – in bars, through viral advertising, and via all sorts of media. Joseph’s presentation was truly interdisciplinary, piquing the interest of folks working in public health, rhetoric, communications and a host of other areas.”

## UNC LGBTQ Center presents... March 2014 Graduate Speaker Series

### "The Substantive Representation of Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals in the U.S. House of Representatives "

*Eric Hansen, PhD Student in Political Science*

**Wednesday, March 19, 12-1 pm**

**Student Union Room 3102**

Co-sponsored by the Department of Political Science

### "Maricaribeñas: The Staging of Puerto Rican Queens on RuPaul's Drag Race"

*Thomas Phillips, PhD Student in Romance Languages*

**Wednesday, March 26, 12-1 pm**

**Student Union Room 3407**

Co-sponsored by the Department of Romance Languages



919.843.5376 | lgbtq.unc.edu | lgbtq@unc.edu | CB #5100, Chapel Hill, NC 27599 | Suite 3226, SASB North

Paul Gilbert, a PhD candidate in Health Behavior, talked about his dissertation research for "Coping Strategy or Social Behavior?: Findings from a Mixed-Methods Study of Alcohol Use Among Immigrant Sexual Minority Latinos in North Carolina." As a "hidden" and "hard-to-reach" sub-group that includes gay men, men who have sex with men (MSM) who do not self-identify as gay, and gender variant or transgender persons, these findings are important in understanding alcohol use in this population. "It was fascinating and totally accessible to somebody outside the discipline," said Bolling of Gilbert's presentation.

"I'm just thrilled with the dialogue this series has created and honored to have been a part of it," raved Bolling, who noted that this early success has led to interest in continuing the series. To that end, our graduate intern, Sarah Chi, has expanded on the initial series and reached out to varied departments for additional presentations since coming on board with the LGBTQ Center in Fall 2013.

**D**uring the Fall 2013 semester, two additional graduate students presented as part of this series, with each talk garnering over 30 attendees. Cassandra Hartblay, PhD candidate in the Department of Anthropology spoke on "Kveer with a Russian Accent?: What the Mainstream Media is Missing About LGBTQ Activism in Russia." Of her experience with the Graduate

Presentations from the series covered a diverse array of topics.

Speaker Series, Hartblay said, "The sense of community that the event engendered was amazing, and it was really inspiring to realize that the UNC community is interested in hearing about what I have observed during my research about LGBTQ issues in Russia."

Christopher Bowen, PhD candidate in the Department of Music, gave a talk later on in the semester, entitled "What a Wonderful Kiki: Performing Music and Queerness at Mixtape, a Washington, DC Gay Dance Party." Bowen echoed Hartblay's enthusiasm for the Graduate Speaker Series, saying, "I wanted to share my master's thesis research into gay club cultures and music in order to show the wide variety of gay and queer experiences in music and also to help bring some of my discipline, musicology, into a public forum. The Graduate Speaker Series was a fantastic format in which to do that, and I'm really glad that such a series exists at UNC."

**T**he LGBTQ Center is grateful to the speakers, sponsors, and attendees who have made this series so successful and looks forward to future presentations. For the Spring 2014 semester, we currently have eight students from the Departments of English, Sociology, Journalism, Political Science, Communication Studies and Romance Languages, as well as from the Schools of Education and Public Health, scheduled to present their unique and insightful talks.

Please check our website, [www.lgbtq.unc.edu](http://www.lgbtq.unc.edu), for detailed information on upcoming lectures.

# End of Year Party

By Danny DePuy and Adrienne Gibilisco



Clockwise, L-R: Kevin Claybren, Laura Baker, Adrienne Gibilisco, Terri Phoenix, Funmi Solar, Danny DePuy

Inside. Outside. Inside. Outside. We refreshed weather.com by the second. With threats of rain, either in minutes or hours, we had to determine whether to set up for our End of Year Party outside in the Plaza in front of SASB North, or commandeer the break room inside SASB North. As we debated our choices, droplets turned to torrents, forcing us inside. We scrambled to decorate, posting signs and rainbow-colored streamers to help folks find us.

Even with the rain, we couldn't even begin to imagine the turnout. People poured into the hybrid institutional/dinette-style break room and, before we knew it, we were out of seats. Folks started spilling out into the halls of SASB North, occupying every last bench, chair, and seat available. Kevin Claybren and Chiraayu Gosrani staffed a table outside of the break room, educating everyone about the next options regarding GNH and encouraging folks to contact their representatives to express their own opinions.

With finals looming, the unabashed frivolity was the perfect release for exam anxiety. Students de-stressed and celebrated the near-completion of the semester with burgers from Buns (get them while they're piping hot!) as an upbeat music mash-up created by Adryen Proctor kept the room pumping. Colleagues, friends and family joined us to share in the festivities.

At first, the Classic Carolina photo booth sat unused, looming auspiciously amidst the food and festivities. Once the first group had a photo printed (followed by much laughter and enthusiasm), a very civilized line formed as folks donned wigs, glasses, capes, you name it -- and the booth was busy, non-stop.

Which begs the question: How many people can you fit in a photo booth? The magic number was seven when the Center's Professional Staff members Terri Phoenix, Danny DePuy, and Adrienne Gibilisco, graduate staff student Laura Baker, and work study students Adryen Proctor, Kevin Claybren, and Funmi Solar clad themselves in wacky costumes and crammed into the photo booth during the revelry.

There were lots of new faces and many folks commented on how delicious the food was, and how we should have the photo booth more often. "The Buns veggie burger was my favorite veggie burger, totally!" raved one student. "Everybody getting together for a good chance to get lasting memories of our friends was great," said another. Despite the unforeseen location change on this humid spring day, we considered the event a huge success and can't wait to have another photo booth party!

# Lavender Graduation

By Adrienne Gibilisco



L-R: Graduate Students Chelsea Kolander, Laura Baker, Derrick Matthews and Brian Adams celebrate under a rainbow of balloons post-Lav Grad.

**T**wo Thousand and Thirteen Lavender Graduation was a spectacular event: Chancellor Holden Thorp and current Purdue University vice president (former UNC-CH associate vice chancellor and dean of students) Melissa Exum each regaled the audience with stories about their experiences with politics and pushback surrounding the establishment and continued operation of the LGBTQ Center. Exum revealed that her trademark response to folks disgruntled about our Safe Zone training was, "Help me to understand this: Why wouldn't we want to support ALL of our students???"

Thorp, on the other hand, let slip that his secret strategic weapon when dealing with dissension was indulging in Sly and the Family Stone to help him focus. LGBTQ Center director Terri Phoenix acknowledged his status as a staunch ally, recalling how in his second semester as chancellor, Thorp signed up for a regularly scheduled Safe Zone training because he

wanted to be able to say, "If the Chancellor could find time to participate, then everyone could!" It was the beginning of a strong friendship that reminded us all how much he will be missed at UNC.

Next, traditional lavender roses, rainbow-colored tassels and a copy of Dr. Seuss's Oh, The Places You'll Go were given to each graduate as their self-penned witty bios were read aloud in Chancellor Thorp's trademark low-key comic delivery. "Listening to Chancellor Thorp introduce the graduates made it impossible not to be in awe of their accomplishments, to say nothing of the power of being visible," said graduate student Derrick Matthews, one of the winners of this year's LGBTIQ Advocacy Awards (Swati Rayasam earned the undergraduate award).

**B**ringing the event to an emotional close was a special slide show of our students set to a medley that included Lady Gaga's "Born This Way" and other popular tracks (prepared by assistant director Danny DePuy) that had everyone wiping tears of joy and pride.

Afterwards, the party spilled out onto the Upendo lobby, where celebrants grooved to the live music of Casey Toll & Friends and indulged in the delicious food buffet. Under a massive rainbow balloon arch, grads and their loved ones laughed, hugged and mugged for photos as they bid their days at Carolina a wistful goodbye.



L-R: Addison Evans, Assistant Director Danny DePuy, Funmiyalo Solar, Kevin Claybren and Meshell Sturgis in gleeful celebration

# Featured Alumnus Spotlight

By Adrienne Gibilisco



2011 Graduate Lee Storrow, currently serving on Chapel Hill's Town Council, hopes to expand services and bring a better quality of life to the community surrounding his alma mater.

In each edition of *Aluminate*, we feature an article highlighting the adventures and accomplishments of a randomly chosen graduate. This edition's featured alumnus is Lee Storrow (2011)

Often, the students we work with are involved in LGBTQ-related causes, fighting for equality, advocating for marginalized populations, and bringing change through outreach, activism and visibility. When Asheville resident Lee Storrow came to UNC as a first year in 2007, it was with a keen interest in politics guiding him to exactly those issues. During his undergraduate years, he plunged fully into the depths of political involvement, becoming the president of the Young Democrats, co-chair of the Carolina United program (which he planned with LGBTQ Center director Terri Phoenix) and worked closely with GLBT-SA .

Upon graduation, he took his engagement one step further by running for Chapel Hill town council and winning a seat as council member. Now in the second year of his four year term, he is also putting his experience into action by serving on the board of directors of the American Legacy Foundation, the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Campaign of North Carolina, and Youth Empowered Solutions...all while serving as the managing director of the North Carolina Alliance for Health, where he works on the policies surrounding tobacco and obesity issues in North Carolina.

Although his office at Town Hall is tiny and stark, save for a giant map of the city that looms over his desk, Storrow's ambitions for accomplishing improved lives for his constituents are plentiful and colorful. As he settles in to share his memories of life during and post-UNC, we get a glimpse of the possibilities...

## What are some highlights of your political activism experience at UNC?

When I was president of the Young Democrats, we planned a really exciting joint lobby trip with the Gay Rights

group (GLBT-SA) and the Campus Y to Washington, DC, focused on the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and Employment Non-Discrimination Act. It was a nice way for us to all come together as students interested in these social justice issues and have an impact. Sarah Isaacson, one of the students who we took on the trip, came out as a lesbian in JRTC [Junior ROTC] and was kicked out of the program and told she’d have to pay back the \$79,000 in scholarships that she’d gotten for three years. We took 50 students on vans and spent the whole day on Capitol Hill, meeting with a couple dozen offices, including Richard Burr, our U.S. Senator, who is a fairly conservative Republican. We had a long meeting with his staff and talked about issues around military readiness and the challenges of the policy. “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” was repealed within a year of our trip and he was one of the small numbers of Republicans who voted for it. So I would like to think we were a small part of influencing that decision. I was really proud of my time as president of the Young Democrats. 2010 was a difficult year for Democrats, but we put together a strong team, volunteered for candidates across the state, and had some fun too!

**Were you always politically involved? Did you know you’d go into politics?**

If you had told me when I was a first year at Ehringhaus that I would be running for Town Council, I would have thought you were crazy. I mean, I LOVED politics and following and volunteering on campaigns, but [it took me] four years of being involved with different groups at UNC and the community that gave me the skills and confidence to run. I really enjoyed that process. If I had come to UNC saying, “I think I’m going to be a politician one day,” I don’t think I would have had as much fun just exploring and learning. I think people elected me because hopefully they saw something that was genuine based on my work and experiences that may not have been typical town government stuff, but did qualify me for council.

**As a student, what sort of work did you do directly with the LGBTQ Center?**

When I was a co-Chair with Carolina United, we worked very closely with Terri Phoenix and Terri Houston, who was with Multicultural and Diversity Affairs. That program takes a diverse group of about 80 students out to a retreat center a week before classes start. Terri and Terri were really fundamental in helping my co-Chair, Katie Byerly, and I think about how we wanted to train the rest of our leaders who were leading that program. We were the co-Chairs of Spirit and Training. We had a leadership group of about 20 of us and we took ownership for training them in terms of language issues [such as] “How do we speak about complex issues?” “How do we work to foster dialogue amongst our peers and get to issues that some people have some concerns about?” Terri Phoenix is always amazing to help facilitate those conversations and open people’s eyes a little bit to the challenges of everyday life and the challenges of some of the



Storror, lobbying for gay rights in our nation's capital.

social justice issues we all work with.

**How have you implemented your experience at UNC in your current work?**

One thing I definitely learned from my conversations and dealings with gay students and lesbian students and marginalized students was that we shouldn’t ever make assumptions about how people want to communicate. So I’ve tried to keep that same mindset coming to work at Chapel Hill, that we provide public comment before every Council meeting, [but] it can be really intimidating for a lot of people and a really scary way to interact with government – we’re all up there in front wearing suits, there’s one microphone, it’s in the center of the room, you’re on a timer. So I try to be really cognizant of providing a lot of other outlets. I’ve done some open office hour events at different coffee shops in Chapel Hill and Carrboro, I’ve made Facebook events, I’ve put up signs at bus stops, I have an email listserv that I share information on with different residents of town....so I try to use as many communication cells as I can.

**You’ve accomplished a lot in just under three years on the Council. What are you most proud of?**

I’m really proud of helping to pass changes to our food truck ordinance, along with my efforts to get the budget changed in 2012 to re-open the community center pool during the daytime on a couple of weekdays. We’d closed the pool during the daytime because of budget cuts, and I had several community members express disappointment with that decision. [I was also instrumental in] changing our single family storm water ordinance. There was a policy that was passed about 10 years ago that if you disturbed a certain



Lee Storror with Billy Klutz, former co-chair of GLBTSA

amount of square footage on your property in building a new home or expansion, you had to go through a very extensive process in terms of mitigating the storm water impact that often – for some families – meant upwards of \$10-15,000 on retention ponds. So I pushed to get that policy re-examined and implemented so that it's a lot more creative now -- you can make a splash pond so that as water comes off your roof, instead of going straight into the ground, it's distributed over a series of rocks or other substances. It was a small thing, but it had a huge impact.

#### **Any gay rights issues that you're working on currently?**

We've had our Triangle-wide Pride Festival every September. Traditionally, Crook's Corner hosts an official brunch for Pride on Sunday, but I think our community can do a little better and ratchet up our involvement. Orange County voted against Amendment 1 at a higher percentage than any county in the state and higher than San Francisco County voted against Prop 8. San Francisco County is massive, but there are proportionately more people who want to say, "No, we don't want Amendment One" in North Carolina than were willing to say that in, you know, home of the Castro. We have a gay mayor in Chapel Hill, in addition to me, on the Council; Carrboro has two openly gay folks on their board. So I think we, as a community, can step up our public acknowledgment of the importance of Pride...and throughout the year, too. So we talked about trying to have an event on a Thursday or Friday evening or claiming a specific night that's really Chapel Hill's. We've been talking about wine tastings [as

well as] something that's not purely alcohol-based, like a concert. Sometimes, you just gotta get the ball rolling.

#### **Do you have some favorite memories of your UNC days?**

I was a Drama major and I loved working with the Drama department. I stage managed two productions at UNC and directed a piece in my senior year, which was really fun. It was called "Metamorphoses" and was inspired by Ovid and Greek and Roman mythology. It was a simple piece that we did in one of the studio classrooms with 10 actors all played different parts. It's an eccentric piece with characters speaking in a kind of classical language but then jumping into modern-speak. I told my cast that I want to tell a story that was about being at UNC and Chapel Hill in 2011. We did a kind of gender play, so several actors played parts that were not of the gender that they identified in, we paired some couples together who were male couples and female couples, and just try to loosen up what those expectations are. It was more about exploration and less about the final product. It was written and theatrically produced in New York in 2001, the year of the September 11th attacks. When we did it, it was heralded as a piece that was taking classic stories and making them relevant to our time.

Another favorite memory was when I was an RA my sophomore year. It was a real blast – I was on the third floor of Stacy on lower quad. I had a floor of all guys, almost exclusively of first years. We would compete against other floors in events throughout the year. Two other RA's and I found a trophy that we bought at the PTA Thrift Shop in Carrboro. We called it the Stacy Cup and in the spring, every month, we had a trivia or Jeopardy type of competition. We did a Safe Sex information trivia game that was really fun. So whoever's team floor won, got the trophy. It cost only 75 cents, but it became so important to the bonding of the whole building. It was awesome.

#### **Looking back, what is the one thing you wish you would have known when you were a student that you know now?**

I came out as gay at the end of my first year at UNC. I sensed that that was my identity in high school, but I decided that in my first year, I would focus on academics and building a support network of friends and finding my niche there and then I was going to go through the process. I was lucky to have friends and family who are very supportive and not face some of the hardships that a lot of people do. I knew that the process wasn't going to be difficult, but you never really know until you do it, you know? Even though I knew that the change wasn't for me going to be "We're kicking you out of the house" or "we're disowning you," I just thought it might be different. I don't know that I would have even changed the time that I did it because I think it was really authentic to me.

## You're just over halfway through your Council term. What's next for you?

I'm hoping to serve on the Visitor's Bureau Board for Orange County, which has a couple of elected officials and then some business leaders and hotel owners, so I can think about how to market this whole region, which would be really cool. I really love my job at the Alliance -- it allows me to have the flexibility to do my Council work. But I've also been thinking of looking into the graduate program at Gillings at the School of Health over the next couple of years. A focus on Health Policy or Health Education is something I'm interested in. And I would love to go back to UNC.

### Sounds like you can't get enough of Carolina!

Well, my parents met at UNC. My Mom was an undergrad and Dad was in grad school. So we're the sort of Tarheel-born, Tarheel-bred family. And my sister is a senior now, so we have Carolina Blue in our blood!!!



Storror believes in open communication with his constituents to ensure that every voice is heard.

Tarheel-born, Tarheel-bred family. And my sister is a senior now,

## STAFF TRANSITIONS

By Adrienne Gibilisco



L-R: Mary Tongel, Danny DePuy, Ping Nguyen, Terri Phoenix, Kevin Claybren, Kim Brummell, Adrienne Gibilisco (not pictured: Kayla Harrelson, Whitney Sewell, Sarah Chi)

for their final year with us, as well as graduate assistant Sarah Chi (who'd worked with the Center as an undergraduate). They joined social work intern Whitney Sewell, and work study students Kayla Harrelson, Kim Brummell, and Hoang My Huu "Ping" Nguyen, who came on board with us this year.

What brought these dedicated individuals to the LGBTQ Center? "I wanted a job that would be interesting and also allow me to potentially make a change in our campus community," notes Harrelson. "The Center has helped many of my friends learn to accept and love themselves and I wanted a chance to be a part of that."

The LGBTQ Center is a tiny department that creates huge results. Comprised of only three full-time staff members (Terri Phoenix, Danny DePuy and Adrienne Gibilisco), the Center relies on its student support to accomplish all of the programming that we provide throughout the year for students, staff, faculty and the community.

When our staffing folks enter our doors, their energy, creativity and passion keeps our office humming with laughter and a sense of purpose. Last spring, we sent off graduate assistant Laura Baker, and work study students Adryen Proctor, Meshell Sturgis, Funmilayo Solar and Tim Armstrong after they walked down the aisle at the Lavender Graduation.

Although we were sad to see them go, we are extremely fortunate to welcome back work study students Mary Tongel and Kevin Claybren

Sewell's decision to join the staff was also rooted in advocacy. "As a Safe Zone facilitator, I received support, mentorship, and education that inspired me, challenged me and encouraged me," she says. "I thought to myself, 'Wouldn't it be great to receive this all the time as part of my field practicum?' As a staff member at the Center, I am awarded the opportunity to engage in regularly scheduled supervised one-on-one time with the director."

The joy of being engaged in work that is critical both to the campus community and beyond is something that all of these devoted individuals share. Claybren, in particular, has spearheaded projects in conjunction with the LGBTQ Center that have had immense impact. "I absolutely loved having the opportunity to conduct research on Gender Non-Specific Housing throughout the nation, crafting a proposal with Dr. Phoenix and leading a Coalition to make it a reality at UNC-CH [Ed. Note: Although GNH was approved by the Board of Trustees to begin its pilot program in Fall 2013, it was later overturned by the Board of Governors in a closed door session just prior to the semester]," he says, adding, "It has been very rewarding to co-facilitate Safe Zone trainings and be on the panel, both of which are opportunities that have allowed me to educate others about ways of being allies to communities that I care deeply about."

Brummell, too, feels that her participation will impact both herself and others positively. "Working at the Center has increased my visibility as a member of the queer community," she acknowledges. "In my experience, there's a definite lack of visibility of queer people (women particularly) on campus, which can feel isolating. [Here, I can] increase the visibility of queer women on campus more effectively."

The experience of these ardent staffers often carries over into their private lives in ways that will enhance

their future livelihood. Chi, for instance, can utilize her training as she embarks on her career in education. "As a K-12 educator, I work to support all students, with a particular emphasis on student populations that have been marginalized and/or underserved historically," notes Chi. "In that sense, I see my work at the Center carrying over directly into my work as an educator."

As a social worker, Sewell also sees a direct link between the work she does here and how it integrates into her future plans. "I have learned so much about myself, my identity, ally-ship and advocacy beyond the campus and in my personal life," she says. "That's something that no course has been able to provide me."

Ping volunteered at the Center during his first year as a transfer student and found the experience so enjoyable, he wanted to be able to give his services back to the Center. "They've done so much for me and all the students here at Carolina," he says. "I love working here. The LGBTQ Center provides a safe space for all students, particularly me. It is a place where all my intersecting identities are cherished and celebrated. As such, my work space provides me with a strong sense of confidence and acceptance."

Ultimately, the unique focus and personality of the LGBTQ Center sets it apart from other University departments because the people who comprise the facility share a unified sense of purpose, enforced by a familial sensibility. "My co-workers and supervisors have my back," notes Tongel. Indeed, we do! The rapport we build with our student staff lasts long beyond when their employment here ends. Like many families, we support their dreams and take pride in their successes. So, for the new crew, we welcome and salute you!

## What do you enjoy most about your work at the Center?

"I enjoy talking with visitors who come into the Center. Sometimes they're looking for specific resource and sometimes they just want a friendly face to talk to, but in each case, I enjoy learning about who they are and what brings them in." – Kim Brummell

"It is wonderful to be able to work with such a caring and supportive staff, all of whom are as passionate for fighting for equity and justice as I am." – Sarah Chi

"I enjoy our staff meetings the most. It's really interesting catching up with people and discussing queer issues on campus." – Kayla Harrelson

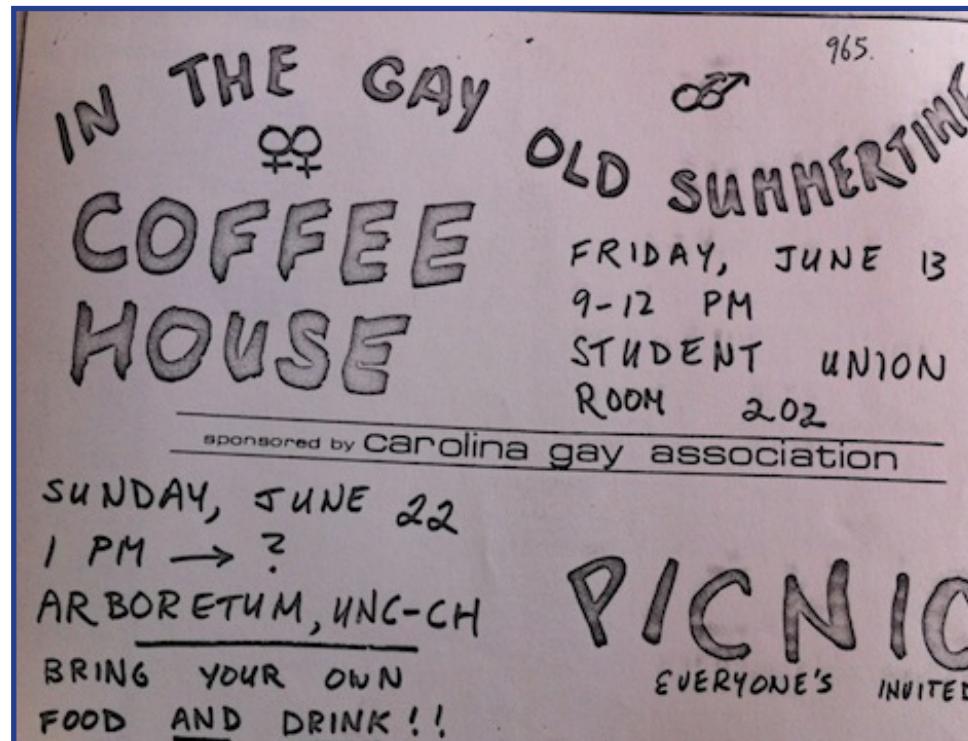
"I enjoy the research component. I believe that the Center is intentional about ensuring their programs and initiatives are backed by community-based research and in the future I hope to have that same commitment to research and community building." – Whitney Sewell

"I enjoy working with the Safe Zone program as a panelist and by processing Safe Zone information. The program helps create a more welcoming environment for LGBTQ students on campus." – Mary Tongel

"The people -- ranging from all the staff to all the students! I have never enjoyed work so much! – Hoang My Huu "Ping" Nguyen

## History of the LGBTQ Center

(Continued from page 1)



A late 1970s CGA flyer promoting a coffeehouse and picnic. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Leonard and originally called the Triangle Gay Association, was finally recognized by the Dean of Students Dean Boulton. Within its first year, CGA quadrupled from 25 members to nearly 100.

However, the pushback was immediate and forceful. Although the Campus Governing Council appropriated only \$535 out of \$250,000 for CGA, the paltry amount still provoked fiery debate about the organization's right to exist. When Student Congress member Besse forged a campaign to recall CGA funding (which covered costs for the production of their publication, Lambda), the Daily Tar Heel was profoundly biased in its reporting, running editorials criticizing CGA for "promoting immorality and perversity," with headlines screaming, "Homophobes persecute Besse." CGA fought back with a lawsuit and won.

By the mid-1980s, the campus climate continued to reflect the national climate – one steeped in homophobia intertwined with fear of contracting AIDS. In their struggle for gay civil rights, students expressed concern that the powers-that-be were using AIDS to discriminate against the gay population. By 1985, pressure from anti-LGBT groups grew to defund CGA, which had adopted the more inclusive acronym CGLA (Carolina Gay and Lesbian Association). CGLA prevailed and, emboldened by their success, held a "Kiss In" in response to anti-gay views spouted by local politician Jesse Helms.

The media attention brought with it a myriad of reactions, some positive, but many increasingly negative. In 1990 a report on violence, discrimination, threats, and harassment against gay men, lesbians, and AIDS-affected people in North Carolina showed that there were 1,530 reported cases of anti-gay harassment, the highest in the U.S. Concern was growing on the UNC campus and by 1992, students formed B-GLAD (Bisexuals, Gays, Lesbians, and Allies for Diversity) to encourage LGBT visibility and rights. The harassment continued, with homophobic slurs and threats of violence addressed to B-GLAD after an August 1998 email was sent to the entire student body to advertise the organization's first meeting of the year.

I gather from what the students have said over the years, they found the environment - certainly in the '70s, but even in the early '80s - quite hostile.

**I**t is at about this time that serious consideration by the administration at UNC-Chapel Hill was focused towards establishing a program designed to bring awareness to the students, faculty and staff. Safe Zone training was already proving successful at other campuses, so when Dean Blackburn began his position as Live-in Community Director in Housing and Residence Life in 1996, he and the new Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Susan Kitchen, began discussions about implementing a similar program here. “At the time, I was one of only two out LGBTQ persons I knew of in Student Affairs, and this was at the end of former Senator Jesse Helms’ reign, and no one had really thought about doing it before,” recalls Blackburn. He then collaborated with Michelle Cofield, from the Dean of Students office, and Wayne Thompson, from Residence Life (both of whom have since left the university), to coordinate and present an LGBT 101 education course for Student Affairs staff. “That got more and more folks engaged in understanding LGBTQ needs and the need for greater resources on campus,” Blackburn says of the precursor to what would eventually become Safe Zone training, though it would be several years until that pivotal program would be implemented.

“That was the groundwork that led to the development of the first LGBTQ-related position,” he continues. “Sue Grey, then the director of the Wellness Center, identified some high risk populations – first year students, athletes, fraternity/sorority members and LGBTQ-identified persons – who were at higher risk for issues like substance abuse, stress, and sexual health issues. So she wanted to hire a position that would spend 25% of the time addressing those four communities.”

Enter Marcie Fisher (now Fisher-Borne) who, in 2000, became the first hire with any formal LGBT responsibility at UNC. As the High Risk Program Specialist, she quickly realized that the need was for a 100% focus. “When I came on board, there were just two mechanisms for support,” she says. “One was the undergraduate group, called Queer Network for Change. A lot of things were getting funneled to [them]. [For instance], there was something called the suicide ideation call, when people who were looking for emotional support, they [would call]. They had a phone number in the Union.”

The only other formal University support service came via a therapeutic group that met at the Counseling Center. When Fisher-Borne walked into her office for the first time, she saw a list of issues. “It said, ‘Eating Disorders –CAPS, Gay-CAPS...’ For me, that was like, ‘Wow...’ Being LGBT, there are lots of other resources we need to know about besides counseling for sexual orientation.”

One of her first tasks was organizing a Safe Zone Committee, which included student leader Rudy Kleysteuber [who, in an ironic twist, has gone on to become one of the lawyers currently representing Fisher-Borne in a landmark court case seeking the right to obtain second parent adoptions in same sex marriages], Dean Blackburn, and Student Union Assistant Director Jonathan Curtis, among others. To get the program started, Fisher-Borne reached out to Duke and other area universities to learn how their curriculum and presentation were done and then began to train facilitators with the help of an MSW graduate intern named Traci Wike, who worked 25 hours a week on Safe Zone and trainings.

Fisher-Borne also created Rap Group (now called Q Group) to provide support in a social setting for LGBT students. As the only other opportunity besides QNC for LGBT students to gather, this was an incredibly popular arrangement for students who weren’t necessarily looking for clinical therapy or political involvement. “We would have 40 people showing up every week. It was HUGE. We actually ended up dividing the groups up every week because we just couldn’t handle the size of the group,” she recalls in awe.

Clearly, this proved the need for more social programming in a safe, inclusive setting, for LGBT students on campus. Furthermore, it was during these gatherings that it became clear that LGBT students felt marginalized and unsupported by the University as a whole. Lack of a centralized space or recognized services or staff to handle crisis situations (harassment, isolation and physical violence) endured by LGBT students due to their sexual identity put them in an unsafe position. Adding insult to injury, many students who participated in LGBT organizational activities were suffering academically, finding themselves with lower GPAs and cut off financially by their families. Yet these students had minimal support in such distressing situations.

Concerned, Fisher-Borne organized several Town Hall meetings to help define specific needs. “One of the first things that came out was that they hated my title. They didn’t consider themselves a High Risk group. So my title changed to Diversity Advocacy Research & Training Coordinator. They called me ‘The DART’,” she laughs. But most other issues were of a far more serious nature and became the impetus for the creation of the Chancellor’s Task Force.

With that need in mind, Fisher-Borne (with the help of Graduate student Glenn Grossman) galvanized a group of people to form the Resource Center Coalition with

an eye towards establishing a Resource Center. At their first meeting, on February 27, 2001, Fisher-Borne instructed folks to rally professors, organizations and staff to write letters requesting a Chancellor's Task Force to investigate and make recommendations on issues. These issues included campus climate and appropriate support services for LGBT students, educational and training programs for the entire university community, an institutional statement that bars discrimination based on sexual orientation, an official policy regarding harassment and violence towards LGBT students, and other matters affecting the lives of LGBT students on campus.

As a result of all these efforts, Provost Shelton convened the Provost's Committee on LGBTQ Climate in the fall of 2001. This committee was tasked with gathering information about the climate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer members of the University community and developing recommendations on matters related to campus issues affecting the LGBTQ community. There were six specific areas addressed by the committee: Academic Issues, Student Learning and Support Services, Employee and Faculty Benefits, Public Service and Training, Development Objectives, and Institutional Structure and Policy.

Karen Booth, Associate Professor of Women's and Gender Studies, points to that moment as when the paradigm shift occurred between the focus on LGBTQ issues being that of the students to becoming something important to faculty and administration as well. "A more institutionalized approach began where they started to think of LGBTQ people as a sort of constituency who should be represented in the curriculum. Among the recommendations of the Provost's Committee was the establishment of an Office of LGBTQ Life and Study that would "consolidate the campus support and academic resources pertaining to LGBTQ concerns" (Provost's Committee Report, 2002, recommendation 7.5). The office was envisioned to be a place for students to come, a place out of which advocacy could be organized, as well as the home for the Program in Sexuality Studies. The Committee felt that the two really needed to be linked to fight the climate issues and heterosexism on the campus.

Headed up by Pamela Conover, and including staff, faculty and students, the committee worked on developing what they initially called the Center for LGBT Life and Studies. "We worked really hard on planning this large project for at least a year solid and then got word from the administration that a joint entity [of student services and an academic unit] was not going to happen," recalls Booth, disappointment still clinging to her voice so many years later.

"We had to decide if we were going to be an advocacy/

student services organization OR an academic group," she continues. "That was really very difficult and frustrating because we'd been operating on the belief that we were heading towards this blended program that was going to be consistent with many of the things that the university does and it was also going to be innovative. It would have been one of the only programs that were organized this way – that brought academic and student services together."

Politics had a part in all of this, too. "The faculty who were involved [were] all 'out' Queer and we felt that we had to gain acceptance for faculty who were out Queer and also not out. We felt that because we're Queer faculty, we're not taken seriously or allowed to run something. In hindsight, it's hard to say if that [was] the case, but that's how we felt at the time – really marginalized."

Also informing things was UNC's view that programming and activism should not be united. "This campus, like most other campuses, doesn't promote activism in its programs," Booth laughs wryly. "Programming is not supposed to be about activism, or radical social change, so that whole notion of a Center that would be about change wasn't going to fly. So there was a lot of strain and tension between the Student Services people and the faculty who were trying to make this happen. There was a lot of anger and suspicion because many of us [on the committee] were really concerned that Student Services would get its LGBTQ Center that would focus on therapy for unhappy students and have nothing really to do with changing the climate, and that the academic aspect wasn't going to happen – or it would be a very small part of it...which is what happened, essentially."

After several years of the committee's deliberations, both a Sexuality Studies minor and the LGBT Office were created as separate entities. Former Assistant Dean of Students Melinda Manning remembers that disagreements continued – this time, about where exactly the LGBT Office would be housed. "The sad thing was there was infighting about the Center. There were some folks in Academic Affairs who thought it should be an Academic Office, [but] it was the Division of Student Affairs that stepped up and said, 'Hey, we will support this, we will create this, we will PAY for this!' Nobody in Academic Affairs did that."

Student Affairs prepared for a backlash, but was pleasantly surprised. "We thought we would be getting phone calls and pushback from the State Legislature and things like that, but it really didn't happen like we expected it to," Manning says. "It was really met with a lot of people who were extremely supportive of the office being established."

Fisher-Borne remembers that there was great unhappiness about the decision to move forward with the Center without the benefit of the Academic unit. “I got a lot of flak for supporting the decision, but I felt that the need was so great, that even if we got less than what we’d hoped for, it was better than nothing...and it would be a lot easier to make a case inside of the system than it would outside of either Student Affairs or Academic Affairs,” she recalls of that difficult time.

“People REALLY wanted it to be an academic unit and that opportunity wasn’t there. So do you wait and really push for it or do you say, ‘okay, we’re [being offered] these two small rooms within the Dean of Students Office and we’ll take it’...with the promise that this will just be a stepping stone to more?” Which is where Fisher-Borne landed - a decision that wasn’t popular at the time, but ultimately led to the formation of the Center.

### The Establishment of the Center

According to Blackburn, Melissa Exum, who had transitioned from Dean of Students to Associate Vice Chancellor, knew Kitchen from a previous working relationship. “They were both savvy enough in the conservative South to know that they needed to start out with a full-time coordinator and LGBT programming as a ‘program’ of the Office of the Dean of Students, using only private funds, to help shelter it from pushback or attack from anyone,” he says.

Initially, Fisher-Borne was hired in a half-time capacity to start the office while training a volunteer coordinator to take over. By the summer of 2003, with Exum’s blessings, the office opened under the Dean of Students as the LGBTQ Office, with Stephanie Chang as Coordinator and only full-time employee, assisted by a graduate student and, eventually, a work study student and student volunteers, known as “peer mentors.”

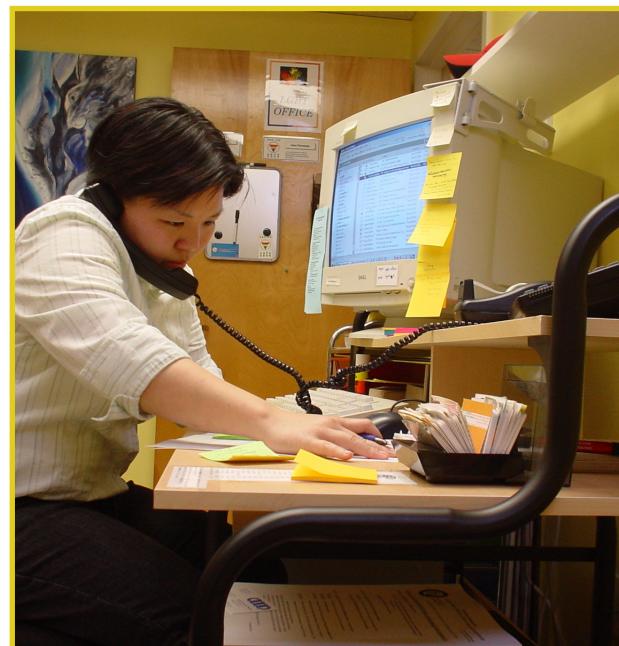
The amount of infrastructure that was laid in that year was tremendous. The Counseling Center agreed to have queer-identified counselors with set office hours each week devoted to informal engagement with folks. The Social Hour and a Half (now G-SHAH) was started then, among other social events, and Safe Zone was taking off, so the Center had a very strong presence.

“Our major obstacle was funding, limited staff and facilities,” recalls Chang. “We didn’t have a whole lot of resources, there was a budget that was really just an initial start-up budget [for] furniture, programs and some initiatives. No more than probably \$30,000. So it was a huge challenge trying to create something new that still existed [in one form or another] in either student orga-

nizations or the advisory board or Sexuality Studies. How do you create a new office for Student Affairs, trying to merge all those different initiatives together?”

There were other roadblocks, as well. “Working with LGBT students, it was always a challenge to navigate around the campus climate. So hate, harassment, discrimination, those are ongoing challenges that are never quickly resolved. It was also a challenge to get support from the campus community in terms of collaborative efforts.”

Still, the focus on achieving visibility and awareness prevailed. “We created a logo, a website, a lot of the imaging,” Chang continues, proudly. “We also created programs like the Speaker’s Bureau, made additions to the Safe Zone program, hosted speakers, [introduced] theme



Stephanie Chang, at work in the cramped LGBT Office, 2003  
PHOTO: MICHAEL JERCH

weeks and worked collaboratively with the Program of Sexuality Studies and GLBTSA [Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender/Straight Alliance].” [GLBTSA originated with B-GLAD, which had morphed into QNC (Queer Network for Change) until GLBTSA’s formation in 2002] This essential groundwork created the blueprint upon which the LGBT Center was based.

“We were in a tiny little office and a very tiny little room,” recalls Terri Phoenix, who came on board as a graduate assistant in the fall of 2005 under Chang’s auspices. The space, then known as the LGBT Office, had further flaws. “The room that the library was in was about as big as my office is now and we had no windows [so] when it rained really hard, it would flood,” recalls Phoenix. “So it wasn’t the best place, but



Student Staff in front of the LGBT Office at Steele Building, circa 2003

we were right in the middle of campus and very visible. Every tour group that came by, we were right next to South building, so everybody saw the sign that said LGBTQ Office."

In spite of the physical limitations of the office, it flourished with this crew, which included work study students Alex Ferrando and Vernon Cathcart, and part-time program assistant Clint Neil. When Chang left, shortly thereafter, Phoenix became the assistant director while Blackburn (by now the Associate Dean of Students) was appointed the interim director and a search began for a permanent director.

By the time the search wrapped up, at the end of the 2006/2007 academic year, Phoenix was working on earning a PhD while running the Center full-time. Impressed by Phoenix's experience in community organizing, activism, passion and education, the search committee hired Terri into the Director position (with unanimous approval by the search committee and campus), where T has served ever since.

Ferrando excelled at creative programming. In Fall 2004, he co-chaired GLBTSA with LGBT Office volunteer Sarah Chi (then Carucci), while the organization was still finding its footing. The two introduced Celebration Week, bringing best-selling author Augusten Burroughs to speak at Carroll Hall and arranging Brown Bag Lunch discussions.

Instrumental in resurrecting the drag shows into events that regularly drew upwards of 500 people, Ferrando maximized that experience. "I used that as a springboard for using a lot of the contacts I had made to help me in organizing the larger student organization. And Sarah was amazing – she helped do a lot of that work - [as were fellow students] Win Chesson and Zach Howell."

In the spring of 2006, when he organized his last drag show, at Memorial Hall, close to 900 tickets were sold. Bolstered by this success, he looked for other opportunities to create events that supported the students who had been regularly participating with the Center's activities. Inspired by Lavender Graduations that had already been taking place in a handful of universities across the country [including Duke, since 1997], Ferrando became the driving force to create the inaugural Lavender Graduation at UNC in May 2006 at Dey Hall's Toy Lounge.

"We're finally...getting our names and faces out there," he told USA Today, which featured an article on the ceremony that honors graduating Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer students, their Allies, and Sexuality Studies minors. Lavender Graduation has endured as an annual event of the LGBTQ Center [this year's event takes place on May 4th, 4-6 pm at Upendo] and one of the most meaningful celebrations of our students' achievements.

Other events followed, spearheaded by Phoenix. In 2006, T instituted what would become the annual Triangle Resource Fair to help introduce Ally businesses from the area to the UNC community. It was at that event that Phoenix met Danny DePuy, a representative for the Women's Center who had also served briefly as an intern on Fisher-Borne's Resource Center's Coalition in 2001.

Impressed by DePuy's credentials as a passionate advocate for LGBTQ and women's issues, Phoenix and the search committee chose DePuy as the Center's Assistant Director in late 2007. DePuy came on board in mid-September, when the semester was already well underway, leaving her with little time to prepare for Coming Out Week, which was just three weeks away.

During Coming Out Week, Danny was reminded of the importance of her position...and of the existence of the Center. "We had folks read 'Coming Out' stories in the Pit. I remember being SO nervous to stand out there and introduce the event, but there were students who came out and read their own coming out stories – and someone came out publicly for the first time," she remembers. "I was so moved and inspired by the courage of this young person and felt so grateful to be a part of the Center. What a success to see the empowerment of just one person!"

Inspired by occasions like this, and guided by Phoenix's steadfast vision to make the Center an inclusive place with numerous opportunities for programming, outreach and support, DePuy quickly defined her role. "My biggest growing edge was finding my voice as a facilitator, and developing my strengths around empathy, and as an educator," she says of her position as lead Safe Zone facilitator, programmer of countless events, and a voice of comfort for troubled folks who come to the Center seeking advice about coming out, harassment and other issues.

### The Center Moves

Around the same time, the Center was outgrowing its space in the Steele building and fighting ongoing flooding issues that threatened their library and resource center. "We would come in the day after heavy rains and find water in the office. We would have to blow dry the books in our library and try to find higher shelving," laughs Phoenix now of those stressful days. Evidently, the Center wasn't the only office experiencing housing issues at the Steele Building because renovations began at that time and the Center was moved from those quarters to the Student Academic Services Building (SASB) North, a newly renovated facility that was built over the site of the Chase Dining Hall.

"I was surprised and disappointed when the Center was slated to move to SASB North, originally on the



Terri (right) and Danny spreading the joy at a Pride NC parade

first floor in a prominent location with a single unit restroom nearby, only to later learn it would be moved to the third floor as the only other department besides the large Registrar's unit," notes Blackburn. "Though the space there is larger and nicer than the one on the first floor, it has not been ideal regarding visibility or accessibility for all students. It would be more appropriate on a more central campus location."

Indeed, the new Center facility was far more spacious, including an open gathering space for lounging or meeting, with a makeshift kitchenette, computer center, work table, and ample shelving for the growing library of over 2,000 books (in addition to Phoenix's and DePuy's offices, and a separate area for reception and resource materials). However, the new location was far less accessible to the main campus. Located on the corner of Ridge and Manning, the southernmost tip of the campus before the dip downhill to dorms, parking and the business school, SASB North is also home to the Registrar's office, which requires the entire floor to be shut down – for security reasons – by 5 pm. Therefore, this also limited the hours of the Center to 9-5, which further diminished accessibility. A campaign to move the LGBTQ Center back to the main campus began, but lack of available space has put this endeavor on hold.

As the Center settled into its new digs, Phoenix and

DePuy began broadening the scope of the office's reach beyond students, to include staff and faculty as well. DePuy, Phoenix, and Graduate Student Assistant Stephen Wiseman introduced Trans Talk Tuesday, an opportunity specifically designed for transgender folks to meet at the Open Eye Café in Carrboro for support and social connections. "It was fun, with anywhere from eight to 15 people coming together to help others in the group to navigate resources – you know, 'don't go to this [medical] provider' and so on. Some really strong bonds grew out of this and the support network has been sustained beyond the group," DePuy notes.

With DePuy in place to implement programming, Phoenix was able to turn more of T's attention to advocacy. Phoenix's influence was instrumental in ensuring that gender identity and gender expression were added to UNC-CH's non-discrimination policy in 2008. For that accomplishment, Phoenix found a forceful partner in Donna Bickford, then the Director of the Carolina Women's Center, while the two served on the EEO/ADA Office's Sexual Harassment Advisory Committee. "Both of our Centers were advocating for Gender Equity and Gender Identity and got that this was different from how people understood gender on campus. Case law in other jurisdictions [was such that] they were protected, but that wasn't the case here," notes Phoenix.

Phoenix and Bickford collaborated to address three major points: First, that the updated policy explicitly and clearly state and communicate a value that is important to those who may be affected; second, that a statement of value that discrimination, harassment and bullying behavior wouldn't be tolerated on campus; and, third, that there simply wasn't enough in the original statement in terms of how it was written.

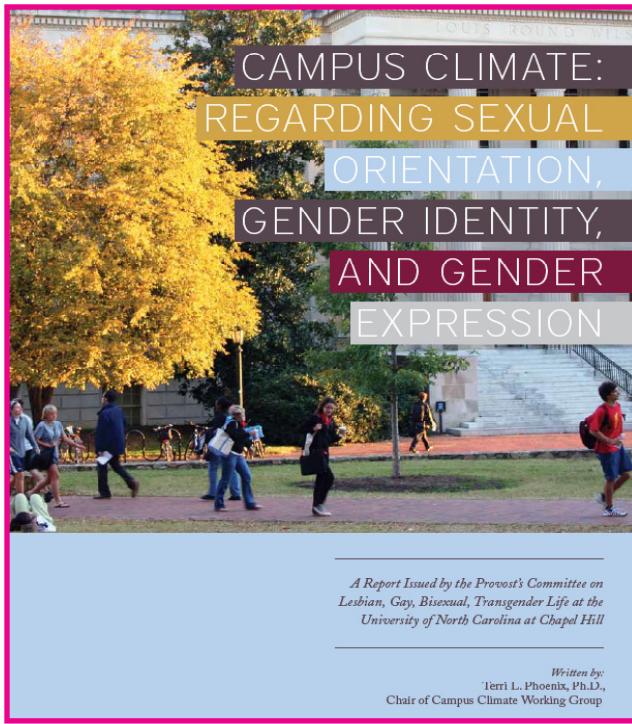
Phoenix and Bickford then pooled their knowledge to reach out to the various committees that they each had access to on campus (including the Provost's Committee on LGBTQ Life) and educate them on this issue. The turning point came when Bickford pushed to have Phoenix address the Sexual Harassment Advisory Committee. The committee included Anne Penn (head of the ADA/EEO office) and other significant administrators at UNC who had influence with the Chancellor and the Chancellor's Cabinet. Phoenix's message found the right ears and was delivered successfully to the Chancellor, resulting in this pivotal change in policy.

In 2008, the Provost's Committee on LGBTQ Life made the decision to conduct a campus climate survey. As a member of this committee, Terri Phoenix was appointed as the chair of the campus climate working group. The group consisted of undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff who were members of the Provost's Committee as well as others who were

not. The working group consulted national research, examined best practices in climate studies, consulted with national experts, and reviewed the report from the first Provost's Committee study. Based on this data, the working group created a 51-item survey that included questions about four major topics: (1) experiences on campus, (2) perceptions of safety for LGBTQ-identified persons and their allies, (3) knowledge and utilization of relevant campus resources, and (4) recommendations for improving campus climate. Data were collected in late spring 2009 via an online survey using convenience and snowball sampling. Following presentation of the findings to the Provost's Committee and senior level administrators, the report was released in fall 2011.

The data from the study demonstrated the positive value of the University's investment of resources in education, student support, policy changes, and resource provision related to people with marginalized sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. The overall experience of verbal harassment and fear for personal safety due to sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression was lower than that reported in the 2010 State of Higher Education for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender People (Rankin et al.). Respondents reported greater awareness of relevant resources than in the previous 2002 report.

However, the data also indicated that the experiences of people differed widely by their sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer (LGBQ) respondents were 19 times more likely to report experiencing verbal harass-



The Campus Climate Report, written by Terri Phoenix.

A Report Issued by the Provost's Committee on  
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Life at the  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Written by:  
Terri L. Phoenix, Ph.D.,  
Chair of Campus Climate Working Group

ment and fearing for their physical safety due to sexual orientation than heterosexual respondents. Transgender respondents reported verbal harassment (31.8%) and fear for their physical safety (36.4%) due to their gender identity/gender expression at the highest rate. People who self-identified as multi-racial were statistically most likely to have a negative response to the question “The University has adequately addressed issues of sexual orientation.”

Another large scale project the LGBTQ Center undertook was the Gender Non-Specific Bathroom campaign that was launched in fall 2009. The goal of the study was to identify all existing gender non-specific bathrooms on campus and to identify single stall locking bathrooms that could be transitioned into gender non-specific bathrooms. Work toward establishing gender non-specific bathrooms originated as far back as 2005 when Phoenix first brought T's concerns about bathroom safety and accessibility issues to the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs.

After many presentations, meetings and discussions, Christopher Payne sent a memo on September 19, 2006 to the Facilities Work Group asserting the need that read: “Providing Toilet Rooms that allow equal access without subjecting people to challenges or harassment for being challenged or harassed for being in ‘the wrong restroom’ promotes a safe, welcoming, and inclusive campus environment for students, faculty, staff, and visitors. These facilities represent more than an issue of comfort or convenience and accommodate transgender students, families with children -- such as mothers bringing sons or fathers bringing daughters to a restroom -- and people with disabilities who need the assistance of an attendant of a different gender.”

This was a remarkable piece of advocacy for transgender people on the University level. A small group of volunteers then conducted a preliminary survey that noted a number of bathrooms that could have been relabeled as Gender Non-Specific, but because the plumbing code dictated a certain ratio of male to female bathrooms, relabeling was not possible because it would have thrown off that required number.

However, when a change in the plumbing code took place in 2008/2009, Phoenix undertook a second, more detailed study. Student employees Angel Collier and Tim Armstrong took the lead on this project with the assistance of a plethora of other dedicated student employees and student volunteers. The survey assessed all bathrooms, campus-wide, for accessibility, labeling, single or multiple stall usage, and ability to lock. All gender non-specific and single stall locking bathrooms were recorded and publicized.



Signage reflecting a more inclusive bathroom policy was posted on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus as a result of Terri's successful Gender Non-Specific Bathroom campaign.

With this exhaustive survey in hand, Phoenix was able to advocate for additional Gender Non-Specific Bathrooms. “The outcome was that there was a re-designation of some single stall bathrooms,” Phoenix acknowledges.

Actually, the directive was explicit. According to Section IV. D. of the 2010 Design Guidelines (Department for Facilities Planning and Construction), requirements by the University as it relates to “Equal Access Toilet Rooms” specify that:

*“In new buildings and major building renovations that include toilet rooms at least one Equal Access Toilet Room shall be provided.” It further states that this should be in the form of a “single use toilet room with a lockable door” and that it is compliant with the current ADAAG and NCBC for a single accessible toilet room and that signage reads “Toilet Room” or “Unisex Toilet Room.”*

This served as a major victory of the LGBTQ Center and it allowed its staff to feel that their efforts will benefit others for years to come. Associate Vice Chancellor Payne was a tremendous ally and advocate around this policy and initiative.

Inspired by the success of the Gender Non-Specific Bathroom campaign and concerned about the growing safety issues affecting LGBTQ students who were forced to live in unfriendly and dangerous dorm

situations, Phoenix partnered with undergraduate student Kevin Claybren to spearhead a related campaign – this time, to bring Gender Non-Specific Housing to UNC-CH. Phoenix masterminded and championed a plan that involved the rigorous investigation of other universities' GNH policies (32 public institutions and 66 private institutions had already established a GNH policy on their campuses) with an eye towards implementing an official GNH arrangement at Carolina.

Claybren and Phoenix rallied student support via a series of events involving student advocacy. Claybren reached out to the Student Congress, who approved a symbolic measure of support for the plan in September of 2011. A month later, the proposal was presented to Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Winston Crisp, along with a petition signed by over 2,500 students, and 52 letters of support from various organizations, to be presented to then-Chancellor Thorp in November. However, it was temporarily shelved and in February of 2012, Phoenix and Claybren, who had been hopeful that their work had reached its fruition, were stunned to learn from Chancellor Thorp that before a pilot program could begin, more education would be needed.

Specifically, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Winston Crisp, who had been a proponent of the plan, told the Daily Tar Heel that Thorp had sent him a memo saying that the reason for the rejection was that UNC's "stakeholders off campus" had not been adequately educated about the proposal. One of the "stakeholders" Thorp had referred to was the Board of Trustees.

Although this was a huge blow to Phoenix and Claybren, they quickly rallied and began phase two of their campaign. Claybren, already taking a full course load, and spending 12 hours a week as a work study student, stretched himself to ensure that GNH would arrive at Carolina. He reached out to the Association of Student Governments to ensure they were on board and in November of 2012, the ASG officially endorsed establishing a GNH option at UNC-Chapel Hill.

As they neared the next Board of Trustees session, Phoenix and Claybren ramped up their efforts. A Change.org petition was directed to UNC President Tom Ross. Simultaneously, folks on campus were asked to fill out postcards that listed the reasons why they felt we needed GNH, with comments generally referencing safety and inclusion issues, and Carolina's responsibility to protect all students. The cards were submitted to the Chair of the Student Affairs committee, Wade Alston. On November 13th, Students spent the night at the Campus Y, holding a Sleep-In in support of GNH, which received a great amount of media coverage. The next day, GNH was approved unanimously by the Board of Trustees.

This was an enormous success for the LGBTQ Center, perhaps one of its greatest if one were to judge by the media coverage. CNN and even international press found this noteworthy and a celebratory mood prevailed as a pilot program was readied for the Fall 2013 semester. But the excitement didn't last for long.

The NC House of Representatives, a legislature that was decidedly unsupportive of LGBTQ issues, convened in June to finalize its budget, with a bill attached aimed specifically at banning GNH. In August, just a week prior to the start of the Fall semester, the UNC Board of Governors approved a policy that prevents students of the opposite sex from sharing suites and apartments, thus ending the GNH pilot program. What was particularly galling was the manner in which this was decided

I Want to See Gender Non-Specific Housing (GNH) in UNC System Schools because...

this University should be as inclusive of a place as it espouses to be. People should feel safe in their dorms + on campus. It's human rights for everyone - there is no difference!

**FAST FACTS ABOUT GNH**

Currently 32 public institutions and 66 private institutions provide offer GNH. Six (6) of UNC-CH peer institutions have GNH. National research suggests that in absence of GNH options, harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression frequently occurs in residential housing. GNH can benefit people of any sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expressions.

Over 750 postcards were submitted to Wade Alston, Student Affairs Committee Chair, as part of the campaign to impress the need for Gender Non-Specific Housing.

– behind closed doors and without the opportunity for any student voices to be heard.

"We were disappointed and devastated that two years of intense work that had built a pretty unanimous coalition in support of GNH could be undone in less than 30 minutes," recalls Phoenix, "but we were heartened by the fact that a number of our allies really didn't take it lying down and are, instead, mobilizing to express their concerns about that and to advocate for a change in that policy. Our strategy is to create a movement across the UNC system so that all of the schools' administrations will push GNH and understand how it contributes to a standard of success." Phoenix has since continued the conversation in meetings with UNC President Tom Ross's Chief of Staff and is hopeful that, in time, GNH can be readdressed.

However, it wasn't the first time that Phoenix faced such politically motivated adversity. Benefits Equity is another issue that T has devoted a substantial amount of time and energy towards achieving parity for every faculty, staff and student regarding their rights and privileges regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Working to ensure that all benefits were distributed in an equitable manner has been a major focus of the LGBTQ Center.

Although student benefits are controlled largely by the University itself, faculty and staff benefits are determined by the General Assembly and Office of State Personnel. At UNC-CH, students were already able to purchase health insurance for a same sex partner or spouse. However, that was not true across the UNC system. In 2008/2009, the General Administration decided to use the same health insurance policy across all UNC systems. That's when it became relevant that not all system schools had benefits equity in terms of health insurance. Phoenix teamed with Mary Covington, Executive Director of Campus Health Services, to educate her so that she could then take that language to the committees on which she served to help bring about this change. As a result of Covington's leadership on this issue, all UNC students now have the ability to purchase benefits for partners or spouses.

As for faculty and staff benefits equity, substantial progress has been made in that area as well. Associate Vice President for Human Resources and University Benefits Officer Brian Usischion has educated on the issue of justice as well as for recruitment and retention for faculty and staff. This is a direct result of Phoenix's ability to reach out to other departments to ensure that they are educated on vital issues and are, therefore, able to spread the word to other influential groups in their sphere.

Often, however, Phoenix was challenged by legal limitations. Prohibited by state law from taking a formal position for or against Amendment One (which sought to make marriage between a man and a woman the only domestic legal union that would be valid or recognized in North Carolina - and which ultimately became the law), T felt that it was important and in the scope of the Center's mission to educate people about the language of Amendment One and what UNC Law School faculty had identified as potential impacts of its passage. Working in partnership with students, faculty and community members to organize a number of events designed to be educational in nature, presenters and speakers of all backgrounds and from all sides of the debate were invited to participate in what became a healthy and informative discourse.

Just a few months after Amendment One passed in May 2012, Adrienne Stone-Gibilisco joined the staff as a part-time temporary Administrative Assistant. With a background in journalism, her skills allowed Phoenix's vision for the LGBTQ Center to realize its greater potential by expanding its media reach. Specifically, Gibilisco was able to create an alumni publication; improve upon and continue to release the weekly News & Notes, create press releases for media distribution; and, optimize Facebook and other social networking to increase visibility for the Center's programming and issues of interest.

Furthermore, having someone as a point person for when people enter the Center – and someone who can schedule Phoenix's and DePuy's incredibly full calendars – freed them to focus on their advocacy, programming and educational work.



The LGBTQ Center provides a variety of buttons to help bring visibility on campus. Ally buttons are particularly popular.

DePuy, a certified yoga instructor, introduced Queer Yoga during the Fall 2012 semester. Inspired by Michelle Johnson's Inclusive Yoga at the nearby Carrboro Yoga Company, Queer Yoga became a hit with undergrads, graduates and staff. With the intention of combining both regular practitioners and newbies to yoga so that they can share the same space with like-minded individuals, Queer Yoga later morphed into Social Justice Yoga in the Fall 2013 semester. "It's 'social justice' in that it rejuvenates and can be healing and supportive so that when people have to go out and do their work, they are better able to do so," explains DePuy.

DePuy also introduced First Fridays to allow students, staff and faculty to gather at the LGBTQ Center on the first Friday of each month for healthy snacks, games and

the opportunity to forge new friendships and reconnect with existing ones.

**M**eantime, Gibilisco's presence allowed Phoenix an expanded capacity to do trainings to both campus and community constituents. Major health organizations such as Piedmont Health, Chatham County DSS, local schools and so forth have benefited from presentations designed specifically towards educating their staff in treating LGBTQ patients and/or students with a better understanding towards their needs.

At the same time, campus-wide budget cuts had a huge impact. "The biggest challenge we have is probably the issue of funding," acknowledges Phoenix. "Because there are people in the General Assembly and probably people on the Board of Governors or Board of Trustees that would not be supportive of the Center, a decision was made to keep the funding low and also keeping all their funding private. So there's no state funding for the LGBTQ Center and that way if anyone ever raises a question, we can say that we're funded through private donations because the concern would be using state money."

For Phoenix, it is merely a reminder of why T is here. "I get to do education, I get to do direct support services, I get to do outreach, I get to do programs. I mean, that's my job every day, so I just love it. There are days when it's really hard and frustrating. We've come a long way but we have so, so much farther to go in changing our society and eradicating heterosexism and all the ways that all the other forms of oppression exacerbate that. So sometimes it's hard, but it's also tremendously rewarding."

Indeed, the LGBTQ Center's presence is a necessity, and so many people have benefited from its existence. Jon Curtis, Associate Director for Student Activities and Student Organizations (who had been on that initial Safe Zone Committee convened by Fisher-Borne) notes, "Although society, particularly our younger generation, is much more comfortable, open and relaxed with sexuality, we still need to have a Center that can provide resources and information and [that serves as] a place where somebody can go to if they've had an experience and they're not sure what it means, if they're having thoughts or feelings and they're not sure what they mean...having a place that's an LGBTQ-oriented resource is hugely important and it makes a statement to both our [current] students and our prospective students. It's critical that we have that available."

**A**s we enter 2014, the Center can now look back on its decade of existence with a great sense of pride. Yet there is still so much to be done. We must look

forward and continue to educate and bring visibility to issues that are important to LGBTQ communities while often navigating choppy political and economically-rough waters. Ever aware that the work they do on a daily basis has a direct impact on the lives of the students, staff and faculty at UNC and in the community beyond, the team at the LGBTQ Center remains committed to give their utmost to accomplish the Center's mission and vision.

In May of 2014, the Center will have an Alumni Reunion weekend to celebrate its first 10 years. Alumni and friends are invited to join the LGBTQ Center for a History Panel and an informal mixer on May 2nd, a banquet on May 3rd, and Lavender Graduation on May 4th.

Looking back on all the struggles, successes, and changes that occurred during the period leading up to the Center's establishment through today, one can only wonder what remarkable changes will have occurred by the time we celebrate the 20th anniversary in 2024.



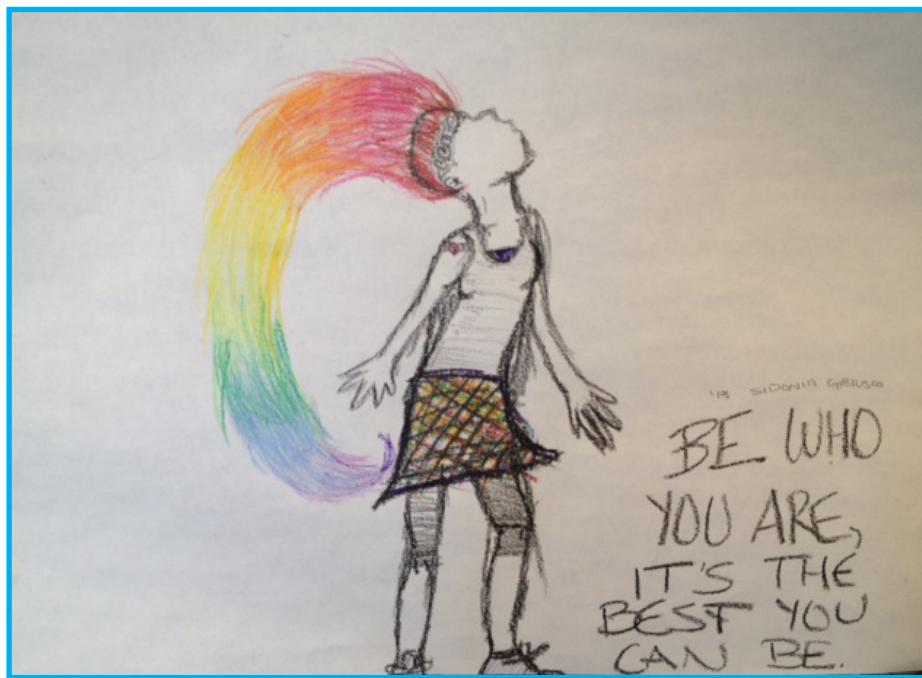
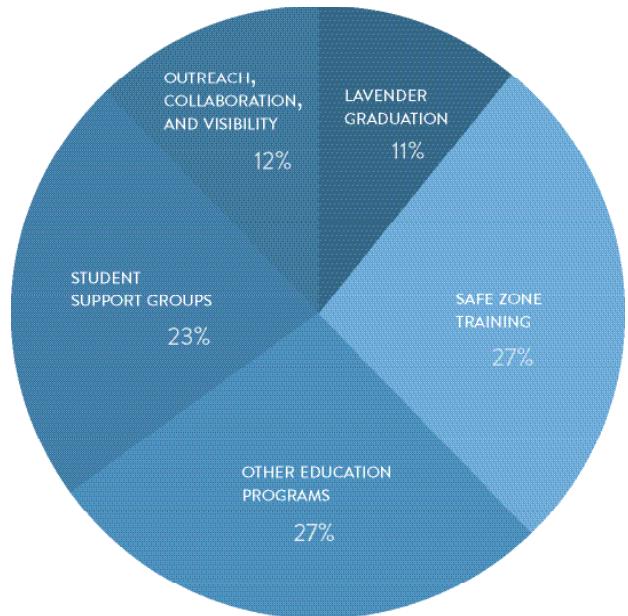
## SUPPORT THE LGBTQ CENTER

### Make a Donation

Our programming budget comes from private donations. The work of the LGBTQ Center to create a safe and inclusive campus environment would not be possible without our donors. Your generosity and support is greatly appreciated. The chart to the right represents the allocation of program funds by category. Your contributions of time, knowledge, money, and resources allow us to continue our efforts to ensure that all people at UNC-CH are treated equitably.

To make a donation to the LGBTQ Center, go to [www.lgbtq.unc.edu](http://www.lgbtq.unc.edu) and select donate.

**School/Unit/Program:** Division of Student Affairs  
**Fund:** LGBTQ Program Office (6250)



Original artwork by Sidonia Gibilisco, age 11.