SSW TBLG DEAN MATTERS INITIATIVE
YEAR IN REVIEW
Submitted by
Leigh A. Robertson Faculty Advisor with
Samantha Wellman, John McDowell and Alexandra Nassif
MSW Candidates and Initiative Work Study
SEPTEMBER 2013-MAY 2014

Leigh A. Robertson, LMSW is the faculty advisor, with consultation and support from Associate Dean Michael Spencer and Elizabeth (Betsy) Voshel, Field Director and Clinical Faculty. MSW candidates, Samantha Wellman, John McDowell and Alexandra Nassif were the student work study coordinators.

History

In September 2002, President Mary Sue Coleman met with representatives of the Queer Visibility Caucus and created a task force to research the campus climate for TBLG Faculty, staff and students. The TBLG Report with recommendations was released by the Office of the Provost.

SSW Dean Paula Meares Allen formed the Dean's TBLG Advisory Task Group. The charge to the Task Group was the following:

Reviewing the Provost’s TBLG Report and priorities within SSW
Review all materials from and representing the SSW to ensure proper inclusion of the TBLG Community and TBLG issues
Campus wide TBLG groups included in new student orientation and Doctoral seminar materials.
Seek out and secure field placements for those wishing to work with TBLG communities
Provide training for field instructors regarding TBLG issues and communities.
Provide faculty and staff support in furthering their learning and skills regarding TBLG issues.
Offer formal and informal presentations and educational opportunities regarding TBLG issues and concerns for the SSW community.

In 2007, the SSW TBLG Task Force update recommended the creation of a SSW TBLG Matters committee whose goals are:

To provide students faculty and staff with tools and basic knowledge related to the TBLG communities and other minority groups based on categories of sexual and gender identity.
To educate about gender identity, gender expression, and the realities of life for transgender people.
To focus on those who are often invisible inside the TBLG movement: transgender, gender variant youth, TBLG workers, and TBLG people of color.

Since then, the TBLG Dean Matter's Initiative with faculty and student leadership, continues to offer programing and advocacy to meet these primary goals. Programing has included Out in Field workshops, Transgender Day of Remembrance events and speakers, small group discussion groups for TBLG student affinity groups, Teach Ins about TBLG local, state, and federal legislation, ally trainings and mini conferences for students and faculty.
This year in review highlights the Initiative’s work from September 2013-May 2014

The SSW Dean’s Initiative, Queer Social Work Alliance, and the Multicultural and Gender Affairs committee sponsored: Coming Out in Russia: A Global Social Work Perspective on October 10th. We had 20 students and faculty there to learn about the real life civil rights challenges TBLQG people are experiencing in Russia.

Out at Work: Navigating Identities in the Academy and the Job Market: October 9th 2013 6-8pm and March 19, 2014 6-8pm. Co-sponsored with the Center for the Education of Women and the Spectrum Center. Evaluation feedback: "I enjoyed the different perspectives of each and every person on the panel. I especially enjoyed Leigh Robertson and the doctoral student’s perspective and analysis of being “out” in field. "I liked the discussions of intersecting identities, passing privileges, and various degrees of ‘being out’.

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program

* welcome
* identities and the workplace: resources
  * panelist introductions
  * panelist remarks
* questions for the panel
* closing

panelists

* in alphabetical order

Lynn Conway is Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Emeritus, at the University of Michigan. Although born and raised as a boy, she felt a deep need to be a girl from early childhood. She was mostly invisible to transition in the 1950s, but with great luck, she finally found medical help and underwent transition surgery in 1988. At the time, she had begun working at IBM as a research engineer, but was fired when the company learned of her plans to transition. Although Lynn had to start all over again as a woman, she was able to move up the ladder as a contract programmer, she went on to become a pioneer of the microelectronics chip design revolution in Silicon Valley the 1980s. Lynn joined IBM in 1985 as Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science and Associate Dean of Engineering. In 1999, she faced legal action as stories circulated about her early work at IBM. Fearing growing pride in her accomplishments, she overcame her fears and quietly came out after three decades in stealth. During the 2000s, Lynn co-authored transwomens.org, a major transactivist website. Along the way, Lynn has become a “guiding light” to many young transgender women, giving them love and support as they reach for their dreams.

Dr. Marvannen Dohler, Ph.D., is an Environmental Chemist by training, and is an environmental activist at heart. She currently works as a Program Coordinator at a small environmental non-profit, an Environmental Policy Consultant to a federal agency and a Chemistry Lab Instructor at Eastern Michigan University. Marvannen is the relatively rare scientist who places a high value on social interactions and actively pursues opportunities to discuss non-technical issues. She is currently collaborating with colleagues to improve the social and emotional intelligence of her fellow-scientists.

Kevin Goodman is a fourth-year doctoral student in the Joint Psychology and Women’s Studies program at the University of Michigan, with a department-wide focus in Personality & Social Contexts Psychology. Kevin’s research and community involvement generally center around intersecting issues of coalition building, social justice education, and the lived experiences and co-gender perceptions of social and sexual minority youth. His involvement and leadership in various nonprofit camps and community organizations integrates Kevin’s graduate training in qualitative and survey methodology and integrative research with trans of normal education and professional experience in public speaking, dialogue facilitation, consulting, and conflict resolution.

Leigh Robertson, MA, LMSW, ACSW, has been a Field Educator / LEO Lecturer IV for the University of Michigan School of Social Work Office of Field Instruction since 2008. Previously, she worked as a Clinical social worker in the medical/military service at the U-M Health Systems. She has also been a medical social worker, case manager, director of the Lesbian and Gay Community Center in Cleveland, Ohio, social worker in five domestic violence shelters, and more. Her research interests include: domestic violence, health and mental health with older adults, medical social work, and social work practice within the TBIQGA (Transgender, bisexual, lesbian, gay, queer, questioning, intersex, and Allies) communities.

Jordah Thompson is the Studio Manager and Ru Youth Advisor for the Neutral Zone in Ann Arbor. Jordah grew up in Flint, Michigan in a religious household and being a person of faith has been an important part of his journey as a transgender person. Recently Jordah established the RR Collective, which is dedicated to raising funds for community organizations that support the transgender community.

co-sponsors:
Two Spirits: a documentary: Wednesday, December 4th

Two Spirits is a documentary that explores the history and cultural context of Two Spirit identities in Native American communities, and discusses the life and death of a Navajo teen that identified as Two Spirit. This event was co-sponsored by the Coalition of Native Graduate Students and the Queer Social Work Alliance, and was attended by around 10 people. Participants indicated that they felt this event expanded their awareness of Two Spirit identities as well as their interest in related issues covered in the film and discussion, including intersectionality and historical context, support systems, hate crime prevention and bystander intervention, the merits and limits of “tolerance” as a goal, and disparities in the prosecution and media coverage of hate crimes.
WHEN YOUR IDENTITIES ARE YOUR WORK

navigating multiple identities and [*]
the academy, the workplace, the office, the job market, etc.

PROGRAM

• welcome
• resources
• panelist introductions
• table conversations
• panelist wrap-up
• closing

PANELISTS

*in alphabetical order

D Alvarez received an MSW from UoM in 2012 with a focus on Community Organizing. Dr. Alvarez's professional interests include looking at the intersection of identity work, education, and community organizing/activism. He is currently the Interim Program Manager at the Program on Intergroup Relations where they manage CommonGround—a student run social justice education program. Outside of work, Dr. Alvarez participates in panels on social identity topics and is frequently thinking about the fluidity of identities and how social identities show up and impact group dynamics.

PANELISTS (continued)

Maria S. Johnson is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Center for the Education of Women at the University of Michigan. Dr. Johnson researches the role of race and gender within family relationships and federal family policy. She also evaluates CEW's programs that aim to advance women's career development. In addition, to her research, Dr. Johnson teaches and facilitates discussions about social justice and multicultural issues in the academy. She earned a Ph.D. in Public Policy and Sociology from the University of Michigan and a BA in History from Hampton University. Starting this fall she will be an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice at the University of Delaware.

Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes is Director of the Latina/o Studies Program and Associate Professor of American Culture, Romance Languages and Literatures, and Women's Studies at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Born and raised in Puerto Rico, he received his A.B. from Harvard (1991) and M.A. and Ph.D. from Columbia (1999). He is the author of Queer Rhymes: Culture and Sensibilities in the Diaspora (2009), Olas furiosas de azúcar/Bitter Sugar Waves (2009), and Antología del país (2015). He co-edited an issue of CENTRO Journal on Puerto Rican Queer Sensibilities (Summer 2007) and is currently working on a book titled "Transboca and Transmambo: Trans Diasporic Puerto Rican Drag."

Shari Robinson-Lynch has nearly 20 years of professional experience as a geriatric social worker. She also has research interest and expertise in feminist gerontology, feminist anthropology, international aging and issues of diversity and cultural competence (bilingual), in particular, TBGLQU+ transgender, baccalaureate, gay, lesbian and queer older adults. Currently, Shari is the Assistant Director for Engaged Learning Partnerships at the Ginsburg Center. She is also a LEO Adjunct Lecturer with both the School of Social Work and the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. Shari lives her life, both professionally and personally, by shining a bright light on all of her visible and invisible identities.

Carrie Rose received her MSW from Columbia University and her Master of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary. She also has a BA from Drake University where she studied English and women's studies. Her professional involvement includes case management with homeless youth, counseling and advocacy with women regarding reproductive rights, medical social work with a particular focus on health care disparities for queer communities, and now individual counseling and programming for adult women regarding career and educational goals. She identifies unapologetically as both feminist and queer, and carries a commitment to multicultural and anti-racist practice into her work. As a first generation college student herself, she also holds a particular passion for people struggling with class issues. In addition to counseling at the CEW, Carrie also teaches in the Schools of Social Work at both UMich and EMU.

Jonah Thompson received his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Michigan in the field of Sound Engineering. He now works at the Ann Arbor Neutral Zone, leading the Queer Youth Programming and managing the recording studio, The Orpheum. His passions for business, music, and mentoring have evolved into a vision for his life's work which involves establishing community spaces that combine artistic spaces for identity development and discovery. Most recently, he launched his latest endeavor, the RE:Collective Foundation, which is an entity that leverages relationships with allied businesses, foundations, and individuals to multiply grassroots community fundraising efforts for transgender people of color in need of medical access.

co-sponsors:

M SOCIAL WORK M CEW CENTER FOR THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN M STUDENT LIFE SPECTRUM CENTER UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
Winter 2014 The DI collaborated with OFI to revise the Out in Field brochure. DI work study students were involved in reflecting on their own coming out process, and how it relates to field and their social work identity. They also engaged in more outreach with their peers about the Out in Field program.
Goals for the next year:

The TBLG Dean Matters Initiative partnered with student groups this year and we plan to continue to do so in this next year. The Initiative and Queer Alliance student leadership have met through the year to learn more about each other’s mission and how to work collaboratively.

One area of interest for next year will be “TBLGQIA and Aging”. Representatives from both groups, including some faculty, have been meeting this summer to plan for more programs. Film and discussion session, lunch and learn events and an Aging symposium are in the planning for fall 2014.

We will continue to collaborate in creating relevant programing, keeping with the TBLG DMI mission and goals, within the School of Social Work and the University partnerships with Queer Alliance, and UM Spectrum Center.

We will continue to focus on assisting MSW students in reflecting on and transitioning their TBLGQIA identities into their professional identities.