LGBT Office Recognizes Three Graduating Seniors

In May the Office of LGBT Awareness will bid adieu to three wonderful seniors, Christine Kassab, Mikaela Mathern, and Jessica Vooris as they walk in graduation. Each of them has been involved in the Office since their freshman or sophomore years in one capacity or another. They have each brought positive energy and commitment to making Bucknell a more inclusive campus. We will miss them greatly and wish them all the luck in their future endeavors.

Below is a brief biography of each senior.

Christine Kassab was an Environmental Geology major and was involved in Women's Rowing, Women's Club Soccer, Environmental Club, Vagina Monologues and V-Day, BU Geological Society, Pep Band, Chi Omega, Mortar Board Honor Society, and BU Environmental Center. She was part of FLAG&B&T for four and a half years and worked at the Office of LGBT Awareness for one and a half years. Christine coordinated GLBT History Month, maintained the Office website, and was the Treasurer for FLAG. Her favorite thing about the Office of LGBT Awareness and FLAG&B&T is the community. Going with Tyler Dinucci to The Creating Change Conference is her favorite memory of the time she spent involved with the Office and FLAG&B&T. In the future, “Susan and I are moving to Indiana so that I can pursue my masters degree in geology at Purdue University.”

Mikaela Mathern graduates as a Biology major and a French minor. As a sophomore, Mikaela was recognized for her work in diversity for the 2006-2007 academic year. Over the past four years, she has been involved in V-Day Bucknell, this year as Executive Vagina, 1 in 4 (Sexual Assault Awareness and Education) as co-president, Chi Omega, and Hillel. “I have been participating in FLAG since early my freshman year when Jessica invited me to a meeting.” She has always been an active member in the group, often helping with various “tabling” events. Mikaela's favorite thing about FLAG: “The people...seriously everyone in FLAG and those that work in the office are fun people to hang out with. Especially Fran, I really enjoy my conversations with her.” Mikaela also had many fond memories of FLAG&B&T that stay close to her heart, “Chalking the steps of Rooke Chem in a rainbow. It took so long and we used all the chalk but we did it. Also there was one study break in the office lounge. Jessica was president of FLAG and we ordered fondue. OMG there was so much chocolate consumed that night.” In the future, she hopes to work in the entertainment industry, “We shall see how that works out.”

Jessica Vooris is an English: Creative Writing and Women and Gender Studies major with a minor in Spanish. She graduates as a member of Phi Beta Kappa (inducted senior year), with an Award of Excellence in Women and Gender Studies (senior year), the Bucknell Prize for Women, sophomore and junior year, and an Honorable Mention West Branch/Stadler Center Literary Prize for poetry (sophomore year). Jessica has been an active member of several groups on campus including VDay Bucknell, Bucknell Brigade, Intergroup Dialogue, and Sirens, the feminist group on campus. In addition to these groups, Jessica has worked in the Office of LGBT Awareness and a substantial member of FLAG&B&T since her freshman year. She was president of FLAG&B&T her sophomore year and has acted as secretary/treasurer her senior year. Through her work in the office she has helped develop the The ALLIANCE: Creating Safe Space at Bucknell peer education program. Jessica has given Safe Space presentations, organized the NCOD faculty and staff support list, and completed the Safe Space summaries and report for the provost. When asked about her favorite things about the Office of LGBT Awareness and FLAG&B&T, Jessica says, “Fran—the office isn’t the same without her!!! Also, it is such a welcoming, comfortable place to be. I used to just come here and hang out, read magazines, do homework. (That was back when I actually had free time in my life.) My favorite thing about FLAG is that it is a fun, safe place to hang out with friends.” Jessica has many fond memories of her time here at Bucknell, “I have so many favorite memories from over the years...from my first NCOD my freshman year, chalking Rooke Chem steps a rainbow sophomore year, watching the Kinsey Sicks, the Spring Fling each year at Fran’s, GALABI at homecoming each year. Coming back to the office after being away a year...” One particular memory of hers can be found on the next page. In the future, Jessica plans to take a year off and then apply to graduate school for a PHD in Women and Gender Studies.
Jessica Vooris’s **Favorite Memory of Working at the Office of LGBT Awareness** (well...technically before she started working)

My favorite memory is probably the first time I came into the office, my freshman year. I don’t think classes had even started, but I had managed to take some time during the craziness of orientation to come here. I was just sitting in the lounge, looking around, reading some magazines, and in general, just taking it all in. For the first time since I arrived on campus I felt as though I could just breathe, and BE. I didn’t have to worry about figuring out which of my hallmates I could/would come out to. I didn’t have to worry about what the next few weeks would bring with classes/making friends/extracurricular activities. I felt really safe. Fran came into the office, and I could hear her ask Chad—who was working up front at the time—who I was. He said he didn’t really know. I guess I had said hello to him briefly when I came in? but nothing more. “Well, go and talk to her” said Fran, in her usual insistent way. So he came in and introduced himself, and we talked a while. That was the day I knew I had found a place to belong on campus. Even though I didn’t know quite how much I would be involved—I knew already that the office would be a big part of my life here!

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**JEANS DAY AND DAY OF SILENCE**

On Thursday, April 16, 2009, Bucknell’s campus was filled with students wearing their “gay? fine by me.” t-shirts. Gathered at the Rooke Chemistry steps, supporters showed off their colors and jeans in a rainbow on a beautiful day. It was a very silent photo, however, since many of the Jeans Day supporters were also participating in Day of Silence. On this day, those LGBT and other diverse groups remained silent to demonstrate the oppression they face. In the past, they felt they were forced to stay “silent” about who they were, their feelings, and, in particular, their sexual orientation. During the beginning of the week, students, faculty, and staff were able to pledge their silence in the ELC mall. After only four days, one hundred thirty-two people signed the pledge, and many more were silent on their own vow. That evening, FLAG&B&T broke the silence with a viewing of the film Milk. Students came together to show support not only for each other, but for all who feel as if they have been oppressed in their lives. It is a great feeling to walk around campus and see so many supporters, even if it is just simply wearing their colorful t-shirt.

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http://www.bucknell.edu/LGBT.xml

The Office of Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Awareness, is committed to making Bucknell a safe place for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. This is accomplished by supporting student groups and efforts to educating and increase awareness about LGBT issues and current public policy concerns. The office is guided by an Advisory Board comprised of students, faculty, staff, and administrators who are interested in and committed to the mission of the Office.

Given that Bucknell is dedicated to prepare its students to be morally responsible citizens, and given that societal attitudes are changing, the University attempts to promote attitudes and behaviors among its students which will create a climate of mutual respect and empower us all to appreciate diversity.