

## Our History: The Creation of the IUPUI LGBTQ+ Center

The LGBTQ+ Center at IUPUI was born out of multiple years of strategic planning by administration, faculty, staff and students. In 2013, Chancellor Charles Bantz and Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Karen Dace began discussing the needs of LGBTQ+ faculty, staff and students on IUPUI's campus. In spring 2014, responding to student needs, the Multicultural Center produced the first campus listing of gender neutral restrooms. Further into 2014, Chancellor Bantz created a committee charged with creating a plan to support the LGBTQ+ community on campus. This committee was comprised of the following faculty, staff, and students at IUPUI:

*Karen Dace* - Chair and Vice Chancellor of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

*Margo Foreman* - Office of Equal Opportunity

*Anthony Masseria* - LGBT Faculty Staff Council, School of Law

*Lauren Easterling* - LGBT Faculty Staff Council, Center for Teaching and Learning

*Julia Lash* - Counseling and Psychological Services

*Liam Howley* - School of Medicine and Advisor to the Gay Straight Medical Alliance

*Charli Champion-Shaw* - Native American Studies, School of Liberal Arts

*Mateo Perez* - Multicultural Center, Latino Student Association

And us:

*Taylor Dooley* - JagVersity Peer Educator in the Multicultural Center and student leader involved in the LGBTQ+ Student Alliance

*Khalilah Shabazz* - Director of the Multicultural Center

*Anne Mitchell* - Director of Survey Research and Evaluation and Advisor to the LGBTQ+ Student Alliance

This committee was responsible for designing the first plan and budget for what is now known as the LGBTQ+ Center at IUPUI. The plan was based on information collected about and from Centers focusing on the LGBTQ+ community at numerous universities across the country – including IUPUI's peer institutions. We (*Taylor Dooley* in particular) gathered as much information about planning, structure, assessment, resources, and relationships with other student-focused Centers (such as Multicultural Centers and Women Centers). We (*Khalilah Shabazz* and *Anne Mitchell*) traveled to five centers: Northwestern University, University of Illinois - Chicago, University of Louisville, University of Houston, and University of New Mexico - Albuquerque. We learned so much from these Centers, including the day to day activities, typical programming provided – both programming for the LGBTQ+ population on campus and ally training, organizational structure and budget information, assessment activities of the centers, and most importantly – for us – a better understanding of how these centers work with other units to address the needs of *all* LGBTQ+ students, faculty, and staff. One of the most important lessons learned from these visits was that intersectionality should be our priority in developing this plan.

Also, in the Fall of 2014, the IUPUI Climate Survey (created by *Anne Mitchell*) helped quantify the LGBTQ+ population on campus for the first time. The survey estimated that 14% of our undergraduate population identified as LGBTQ+ and documented the diversity within the LGBTQ+ population – with respect to gender, race/ethnicity, religion, political ideology, ability status and age. It also showed that LGBTQ+ students at IUPUI experienced the campus environment differently than their counterparts – and were not in agreement that the Multicultural Center served them. Furthermore, the survey documented that queer and transgender students of color at IUPUI experienced bias at higher rates than white LGBTQ+ students and straight/cisgender students of color. Given our campus mission and the diversity of our LGBTQ+ student body, we came to the conclusion that one of the most important planning decisions related to the potential support services for the LGBTQ+ community at IUPUI was how to ensure that those services are integrated with services the Multicultural Center already offered.

The committee proposed the creation of a LGBTQ+ Center at IUPUI that would be housed within the division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and that would be physically located with the Multicultural Center and Adaptive Education Services. We (*Taylor Dooley* specifically) presented the committee's plan to Chancellor Bantz in early 2015 and it was subsequently presented by Vice Chancellor Dace to the Chancellor's Cabinet. When the budgetary committee approved to allocate funding for this proposal, we shifted from the proposal committee to working on logistics. Later that Spring, we (*Khalilah Shabazz* and *Anne Mitchell*) realized that current queer and transgender students were not accessing on-campus housing. The Multicultural Center helped convene multiple staff from Student Affairs, including Housing and Residence Life staff, as well as representatives from the LGBT Faculty Staff Council and the LGBTQ+ Student Alliance to create Qmmunity, IUPUI's first residence-based learning community focused on the LGBTQ+ population. Students from the LGBTQ+ Student Alliance later interviewed multiple applicants and selected the first resident assistant for the space in North Hall.

In Fall 2015, as plans for the LGBTQ+ Center continued to develop, students from the LGBTQ+ community began advocating for multiple resources on campus, including additional all gender restrooms with signage, trans-inclusive health insurance, housing options, and ally training for IU police. The Queer Action Coalition (QAC), a group of LGBTQ+ students unaffiliated with the LGBTQ+ Student Alliance who prioritized advocacy by communicating with campus decision makers through social media and sidewalk chalking in order to feel heard and seen. Through multiple meetings and discussions with LGBTQ+ students, advisors, and current Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion staff members, the administration recognized some immediate needs that could be fulfilled. In Spring 2015, the administration held a meeting where students and administrators talked about what LGBTQ+ students were experiencing in classrooms, in restrooms, and in public spaces on campus. IUPUI also designated the first set of all-gender restrooms with appropriate signage. Last, the administration and students discussed how the LGBTQ+ Center space would be allocated, reaching a decision to put the Center within the current space of the Multicultural Center to help facilitate the partnership between the

centers and honoring the importance of the intersection of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Also in the Fall 2015, Vice Chancellor Dace appointed a search committee to hire the LGBTQ+ Center's first Director. This search committee included:

*Amanda Bonilla* - Social Justice Education

*Coretta King* - Leadership Programs

*Julia Lash* - Counseling and Psychological Services

*Anthony Masseria* - LGBT Faculty Staff Council

*Lauren Easterling* - LGBT Faculty Staff Council

*Nancy Robertson* - Faculty, Department of History, School of Liberal Arts

And us.

We were thrilled with the number and quality of individuals who applied and after multiple phone and on-campus interviews, we offered the position to Tristan Vaught from the University of Cincinnati.

Tristan Vaught started at the end of the Spring 2016 and the LGBTQ+ Center officially opened Fall 2016. To date, the Center offers three weekly programs: (1) Gender Spectrum, focused on transgender and gender creative students; (2) Shades of Pride, focused on queer and trans students of color; and (3) The Abbey Coffeehouse (named after a 1990's Indianapolis establishment), focused on dialoguing about the community's history by bringing together LGBTQ+ faculty, staff, and students. The LGBTQ+ Center provides ally training, resources for and about the LGBTQ+ student population, and partners with the Multicultural Center on a number of programs for and about the community. Tristan Vaught also serves as the advisor to Qmmunity, which opened in Fall 2016 in North Hall. Partnering with Counseling and Psychological Services, the Center has also provided support for students wanting to discuss the tragedy at Pulse Nightclub in Orlando and the Westboro Baptist Church protest at IUPUI. Because of the expanding capacity and need, the LGBTQ+ Center just hired its first part-time staff member to support Tristan – the student who helped the administration and staff put together the original plan and one of us (*Taylor Dooley*).

The three of us worked hard to mobilize and develop a plan for this LGBTQ+ Center that supports the success of *all* students. We did this planning with support from a number of folks on this campus - including a variety of faculty, staff, and administrators as well as countless LGBTQ+ students. We are proud to call this Center ours, theirs, and yours.

*Taylor Dooley* - LGBTQ+ Center and Alumni, Lilly School of Philanthropy

*Khalilah Shabazz* - Director of the Multicultural Center

*Anne Mitchell* - Director of Survey Research and Evaluation, Institutional Research and Decision Support and Advisor to the LGBTQ+ Student Alliance

