

## WHATS NEXT?

Planning is already underway for the Second Annual LGBT+ College Conference.

### Some highlights:

- The conference opening day will allow researchers (faculty, staff, and students) from Tennessee to share the results of their research projects related to LGBT+ issues
- Results of the Tennessee LGBT+ Campus Climate Survey will be used to develop a strategy session to utilize strengths identified by some institutions to assist with challenges identified by other institutions
- A special session for student affairs professionals will allow better planning and strategizing by administrators working to support and retain their LGBT+ students

MAKE PLANS TO ATTEND THE SECOND ANNUAL  
LGBT+ COLLEGE CONFERENCE APRIL 9-11, 2015!

**"I think that everyone at the conference, sponsors and attendees alike, came away with a greater understanding that inclusion of LGBT people, both in school and the community, enriches all of our society."**

**Terry Bird, MTSU Alumnus 1968**

INAUGURAL  
LGBT+ COLLEGE  
CONFERENCE

## INAUGURAL LGBT+ COLLEGE CONFERENCE

*A SUMMARY OF A UNIQUE AND VALUABLE  
LEARNING AND APPLICATION EXPERIENCE*



### PRESENTING SPONSORS

**Deloitte.**



# A UNIFIED STUDENT COMMUNITY

Representatives from twenty-one colleges and universities, public and private, as well as a number of community colleges, convened to examine issues that have an impact on LGBT+ students now and in the future. April 10 -12, 2014 marked for participants an opportunity to examine a variety of topics designed to empower students and administrators to bring change back to their campuses. The participating organizations represented the following institutions:

- Middle Tennessee State University
- Christian Brothers University
- East Tennessee State University
- The University of Tennessee—Knoxville
- University of Tennessee—Chattanooga
- Lincoln Memorial University
- University of North Alabama
- Winthrop University
- Hunter College
- Austin Peay State University
- Tennessee State University
- Tennessee Tech University
- Rhodes College
- Vanderbilt University
- University of Memphis
- Western Kentucky University
- Northeast State Community College
- Southwest State Community College
- Columbia State Community College
- Volunteer State Community College
- Walter State Community College

## DAY 1

Beverly Watts, Director of the Tennessee Human Rights Commission, opened the conference by welcoming students from across the state and impressing upon them the importance of fighting for positive social change. MTSU Head Football Coach Rick Stockstill followed by introducing Alan Gendreau, the first openly gay NCAA Division I college football player, and the all-time leading scorer in the NCAA's Sun Belt Conference. Gendreau's inspiring story set the stage for a conference filled with opportunities for students to learn and grow on their own personal journeys.

Stephen Loveless of the Tennessee Equality Project, and a LGBTQI Program Coordinator at Vanderbilt University, provided a tutorial for students on the workings of the Tennessee State Legislature. At the end of his session, students knew who their state representatives and senators were, how bills become law in Tennessee, and how to research legislation that might be of interest to the LGBT+ community. Loveless also led a strategy session focused on establishing S.M.A.R.T. goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely), and the group worked to help refine one another's goals.



LEARNING BREAKOUT SESSION; Queering the Spectrum

***"On Friday, I attended a lecture on the strategies and approaches to use when applying for a grant. I felt that the information I learned could not only be used to apply for grants, but also when applying for schools and jobs in the future. The message of the lecture was learn how to adapt your ideas and connect with others in order to accomplish and reach your goals."***

***CHRISTINA H. - STUDENT ATTENDEE***

## DAY 2

The focus of Day 2 was student outcomes, and the first panel of the day featured Bea Purdue, Development Officer for MTSU's College of Behavioral and Health Sciences, moderating a discussion of Friendraising and Fundraising. Panelists were Travis Parman of Nissan North America, Michael McDaniel of The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee, and Jan Maddox of Deloitte. Conference-goers were treated to an informative and wide-ranging discussion of how to align funding requests with the values and priorities of funders, and how not to take "no" for an answer.

The day continued with Joshua Rigsby, President of MT Lambda, and William Langston, Psychology Professor and Faculty Advisor for MT Lambda, discussing how to align LGBT+ student goals with institutional administration goals. Rigsby and Langston included data from their campus climate survey sent to 33 institutions in the state of Tennessee; data that could be used to help an institution identify its most pressing needs. Following Rigsby and Langston's presentation, conference-goers assembled to identify their strengths and needs, and then shared strategies to act as change-agents for their campuses.

At least two significant outcomes have already emerged from this session: Christian Brothers University will be undertaking a local campus climate survey (using materials shared from Middle Tennessee State University), and Volunteer State Community College will be starting a SafeZone program (again, using materials shared from Middle Tennessee State University). In addition, attendees made numerous contacts to assist one another in programming, fundraising, and maintaining membership in their organizations (an especially vexing problem for community colleges given their rapid turnover).

The day's sessions concluded with a panel discussion moderated by Patrick McCarthy, Professor in MTSU's Industrial/Organizational Psychology program, focused on life after college, bringing one's whole self to work. Panelists were Ron Balacarras of Deloitte, Gregg Cason of Nissan North America, and Diane Easter of Deloitte. Panelists shared stories and added a personal touch to a day filled with organizing and strategizing.

## DAY 3

Day 3 began with breakout sessions for students to learn about and confront their own biases that they may have concerning members of the LGBT+ community. Over six sessions, conference-goers addressed bullying, trans\* issues, LGBT+ and communities of color, and attitudes towards bisexual people.

These free-ranging discussions were the highlight of the conference for many attendees, including Leslie L., who wrote: "At the beginning of the experience, I wasn't sure what LGBT stood for or what exactly the conference was about, but I actually learned quite a bit there. During the second day we attended a lecture on different words

used to 'name' people who are not heterosexual and how those words can be hurtful and disrespectful to those individuals. I could also appreciate and relate this lecture to my life because I have a very good friend who is gay. I learned a lot about the issues that are present in the LGBT community and some ways that they are approaching the issues."

Day 3 concluded with Pastor Bryan Currie's discussion of homosexuality and religion, another high point for many attendees, and an empowering experience for attendees from religious institutions who learned ways to discuss LGBT+ issues with their campus administrators.

## GRATITUDE

This event could not have been possible without the support of the MTSU College of Behavioral and Health Sciences.

The tireless support of the volunteers from the conference's presenting sponsors, Nissan North America and Deloitte—serving as panelists, assisting with registration and logistics, and generally making things run smoothly—was essential to making the event a success.

MT Lambda and MTSU student volunteers also logged innumerable hours dedicated to the conference's goals in often thankless roles.

Conference supporters Cracker Barrel, Project Uno, and Open Arms Care Corporation also made their presence felt in a meaningful way and provided invaluable contributions to the conference's success.

The MTSU June Anderson Center for Women & Nontraditional Students, MTSU Student Programming, and the MTSU National Women's History Month Committee partnered with MT Lambda to present both of the conference's main Keynotes—Jennifer Lanier & Elizabeth Birch.

## ENTERTAINING AND IMPACTFUL PROGRAMING

Each evening, conference-goers were treated to entertaining and impactful programming that highlighted conference themes. The first evening, the film *Miracles on Honey-Bee Hill*, a project of MTSU Professor, Dr. Bob Pondillo, was presented, along with a discussion moderated by Dr. Pondillo.

The second evening, actress Jennifer Lanier presented her emotional and thought-provoking performance *None of the Above* about her personal journey as an African American, Lesbian, and Native American woman. Lanier's performance was made possible with the support of the MTSU Women's History Month Committee and the June Anderson Center for Women and Nontraditional Students.

This event had a profound impact on several audience members, including Marcus C., who wrote:

"After I saw Jennifer Lanier's dynamic performance of *None of the Above*, I felt an immediate rush of joy overcome me. Her show combined comedy, social issues, life lessons, and great acting all into one powerful movement that I would recommend to anyone as a must-see performance.

"One lesson that I took from her show was that it is alright to be who you are and not concern yourself with what others may think of you or how they expect you to live your life. Up until recently, I had always done what was expected of me and pushed my thoughts and feelings to the side because I was worried about disappointing people and what they might think of me. However, Ms. Lanier has taught me that life is much more enjoyable when you decide to live for yourself and dance to the tune of your own song.

"The most touching part of the show for me was the segment about the coyote and the leaf. She mentioned how the coyote walked far into the water holding a leaf in its mouth until the coyote was completely under water and all you could see was the leaf. The coyote was carrying the leaf so that the fleas would eventually travel up the leaf and off of the coyote and he could leave the leaf in the water and return to the shore. The point behind this story is if you have something that is bothering you it is not healthy to hold on to it. Instead you should cast your leaves away and try to move on and make the best of everyday you have.

"Overall I found Ms. Lanier's show inspiring and amazing. To say that her performance was 'great' is a huge understatement. In order to give this performance justice it is not sufficient enough to simply show up and watch the performance, you must also think about how you are able to take her lessons and apply them to your everyday life and how you can make the most of the life that you are given."

The final evening, conference-goers were treated to a TED Talk-style lecture by Elizabeth Birch, former Executive Director of the Human Rights Campaign, discussing the entire history of the LGBT+ community framed against the backdrop of human history. After Birch's lecture, the conference awards dinner celebrated a successful and invigorating three-day experience, and recognized the significant contributions of the honorees.

## CONFERENCE HONOREES

Wayne C. Rosing LGBT+ Advocacy Award:

Presented to Dr. Jim Williams of MTSU for his tireless efforts on behalf of the MTSU LGBT+ community, including using his role on the faculty senate to advocate for adding sexual orientation to MTSU's non-discrimination policy

Civic Advocacy Award:

Presented to Chris Sanders of the Tennessee Equality Project for his tireless work on behalf of the LGBT+ community in Tennessee

Community Excellence Award:

Presented to Michael McDaniel of the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee for his commitment to building alliances between business, education, and community support for the Inaugural LGBT+ College Conference

Ally Diversity Award:

Presented to Dr. Harold Whiteside, Dean, MTSU College of Behavioral and Health Sciences for his leadership on behalf of the MTSU LGBT+ community (this award will be named the Harold Whiteside Ally Diversity Award)

Corporate Engagement Award:

Presented to Diane Easter of Deloitte for her lifetime of leadership in the corporate community on behalf of LGBT+ persons attempting to bring their whole self to work (this award will be named the Diane Easter Corporate Engagement Award)