



Office of Equity and Inclusion Newsletter

Fall 2019



Note from the Editor

Changes are on the horizon at the University of Lynchburg. Our very own Dr. Aaron Smith, '05, '07 MEd, '18 EdD accepted the position of Vice President and Dean for Student Development, after serving two years as the Diversity & Inclusion Officer within the Office of Equity and Inclusion. A national search will be conducted to find the next DIO at the University of Lynchburg. This position has been instrumental in enhancing campus culture, placing an emphasis on an environment where everyone feels as though they belong. Look for the position to be posted on the University of Lynchburg's job website soon.

To find out more about initiatives within the Office of Equity and Inclusion at the University of Lynchburg, please visit our [Facebook Page](#) or follow us on Instagram: @inclusiveatoei_. As always, be sure to send us comments or suggestions concerning what you'd like to see in our future correspondence.

Get excited - Homecoming is right around the corner!!

This year's homecoming will celebrate the "4s" and the "9s" during the weekend of October 18-20th. Several activities have been planned for the weekend, so we hope that you'll join us. Many alums ask about how they can be involved in their alma mater. One way to make a difference is to connect with current students by





joining us for a special brunch designed for you and our students. It will be held in the West Room on Saturday, October 19th at 12 noon. This is a catered brunch compliments of the Alumni Office and the OEI to provide an opportunity to meet and connect with current minority students. We hope to see you there!

Homecoming 2018 (Pictured from left to right Rodney Early, '98, Ryan Hubbard, '05, Duwuantae Tolbert, Aaron Smith, '05, Timothy Grant, '03, Seth Whelan, '03)

A New Tradition: The Donning of the Kente Ceremony

On May 18, 2019, family, friends, faculty and staff gathered to celebrate 12 University of Lynchburg graduating seniors who demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting and executing the mission of our office. The

Donning of the Kente ceremony (DOK), a first time event on our campus, celebrates graduating seniors of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds who have made outstanding contributions to our office and to the greater Lynchburg campus community.



This year, our graduates were involved in a plethora of various organizations on campus. From BSA to SGA, all of the graduating seniors left their mark on our campus. Oh, how we will miss them!

From left to right, they are D'Andria Alston-Thomas, Kelsey Blount, Kirsten Goodman, Manal Sayed, Lupita Rodriguez, Sydney Jamison, Kristen Valentine, Victoria Ross, Adriel Woltz, Ania Austin, Jessica Matthews and Seija Wynn. We are so proud of all they have accomplished and excited for all that they will continue to pursue in the future!



The Significance of the Kente Cloth

The Kente cloth stole represents the pride one feels in both their African heritage and college journey. The cloth reminds us of those who have paved the way before us with dignity, liberation and love. This year, and for years to come, the kente cloth stole is donned by the Director of Multicultural Services, Annette Stadtherr.

We are so excited to introduce this new tradition to our campus community! We hope that our alumni base, community members, friends and family will join us this year to help celebrate our graduating seniors who are making a difference on our campus everyday!



This upcoming year, The Annual Donning of the Kente Ceremony will take place on **May 15, 2020**. Stay tuned for more updates and information!

A Sweet Twist on All Things Tech

By Kirsten Goodman



Meet Tracy K. Epps '01, a proud LC alum, active member of Alpha Kappa Sorority Inc. and Chesapeake, VA native. After completing her undergraduate degree in French and Business management, Tracy earned a master of arts in technical and scientific communication at James Madison University in 2004. Tracy understands the value in alumni-student connection. Throughout her service on the Alumni Association Board of Directors she has been a key figure in the establishment of affinity groups, helping to engage both alumni and students alike. One of the ways Tracy does this is through the management of the [Helen Mundy Witt Society Facebook Page](#).

As Tracy reflected back on her college days, she described LC to be a place that welcomed students. She traced her favorite college memory back to a theater class that she was required to take for her major. While theater was not her forte, Tracy did have a passion for art. On her route to her familiar theater class, she remembers often times walking by unfamiliar territory; an art class that peaked her interest way more than anything theater related. As she walked by the class, she recalls the professor gently inviting her to join the other students. That day, Tracy not only crafted pottery, but also realized the importance of gentle nuances like the simple invitation by her professor that truly can make all the difference in our lives.

Currently, Tracy is based in the Northern Virginia area and works as a Knowledge Manager for AT&T where she ensures the seamless accessibility of digital information. Talk about tech savvy? When she is not creating content for digital platforms, Tracy enjoys pursuing her love for art. Building off of her early experience in her pottery-making art class, Tracy is passionate about encouraging others to build community at their respective organizations, much like our community at LC - one that is marked by open-mindedness and inclusivity.

“Expect to hear the no’s and prepare to navigate them.”

-Tracy K. Epps '01

She’s Got It All

By Kirsten Goodman



Meet Keaira Reese, a student who is proud of who she has become. Keaira insists that her experiences at Lynchburg have positively impacted her outlook and mindset. She has blossomed into the young woman and student she always aspired to be. Through her involvement on the Student Diversity Council, Track & Field team and the Student Judicial Board, Keaira has fostered her passion for people. In those roles, she says, she also found herself, in its truest form.

Keaira hails from Norfolk, VA but since coming to Lynchburg has traveled all over the world. Last year, she traveled to South Korea with Lynchburg Study Abroad and decided to stay an extra week to teach students about her culture. Most recently, Keaira traveled with Dr. Bates on a study abroad trip to London, England where she attended plays and read English literature. A rising senior and English major, Keaira says she aspires to begin her career as a Language Analyst upon graduation. Because she has a passion for helping others and loves to travel, Keaira has a life-long goal to open an international school for low-income students.

Keaira is passionate about connecting with Lynchburg alumni and welcomes their support, especially for students of color. She wants our alumni base at the University to know that their voices matter and more importantly, that students are willing to listen. Keaira's beaming personality is felt in all those she encounters. She is truly a ray of sunshine and brings her energy wherever she goes. What's even more, is that she loves Lynchburg - she even wore one of her many UL t-shirts to her interview! Her top three favorite things about UL are our Student Development department, our English department and her Track & Field team. She says in each of these sectors of the UL community, she has found her people; her very best friends, quirky professors and supportive advocates who have taught her more about herself than she ever could.

"Thanks to Lynchburg, I've become the best version of myself. I've blossomed here."

-Keaira Reese '20