



NEWSLETTER

Spring 2019

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

The Office of Equity and Inclusion hopes that you have had a prosperous new year thus far. We always want to keep our alumni base informed in the areas of diversity and inclusion on campus, alumni accomplishments, and general news pertaining to the University of Lynchburg. So, if you have news to share, comments, or questions please don't hesitate to contact us at OEI@Lynchburg.edu or contact the Office of Alumni Relations at alumni@Lynchburg.edu.

Alumna Profile:



Dr. Kim Davis

Meet Kim Davis who earned her degree in communications in 1999. Although one might consider her an untraditional student, Davis made the necessary sacrifices in order to complete her degree. Davis transferred in as a junior. She took classes during the day and worked a third-shift job in the evenings in order to fulfill her responsibilities as a mother and provider for her family. Although Davis did not have the freedom in her schedule to enjoy extra-curricular activities, her time at University of Lynchburg provided the practical life lesson of staying focused. Davis set strict academic goals for herself and wished to complete her Masters and Doctorate degrees consecutively. She credits her parent's support (both graduates of Lynchburg College) as they provided words of encouragement throughout her academic career that helped her persevere. She shared that her experience at University of Lynchburg taught her not to take things for granted and to "dig deep" in order to accomplish her ambitious intentions. Davis went on to complete her Doctorate degree from another local college, Virginia University of Lynchburg, and accomplished her goal to retire by 50. Davis shared her message to other alumni: "You may feel like you do not have a lot to give back but you really do. You can go to events that the school has and just tell the kids there that they can do it. You can tell them your story which just might give them the confidence that they need." Davis feels strongly about the importance of getting an education and has a great sense of pride in her alma mater, the University of Lynchburg.

Student Profile:



Laura Arriaza

Meet Laura Arriaza '20, an International Relations major. Arriaza was attracted to Lynchburg because of the sense of community that the small campus offers. Because she attended a small high school in her hometown in New Jersey, learning in a small classroom setting was another appealing feature of the University of Lynchburg. In addition, one of Laura's goals was to explore new places, which is why she decided to go far from home for her college experience.

Arriaza got involved on campus almost immediately. She was hired as a Student Diversity Liaison in the Office of Equity and Inclusion during her freshman year. This position enabled her to facilitate programs about diversity and inclusion on campus as well as with other community organizations and colleges. During the spring semester of her freshman year, Laura founded Alpha Psi Lambda which is a Greek Latinx Co Ed Social Fraternity, for which she currently serves as President. She also actively participated in the Latino Student Association, Student Government Association, and the Student Diversity Council. Laura credits her time spent in the Office of Equity and Inclusion and its related programs as helping her build lasting friendships and connections.

Laura also enjoys playing on the club soccer team and being physically active. Upon graduation she plans to obtain her Master's degree in either Diplomacy or International Relations/Affairs. She visualizes herself studying abroad, perhaps in Europe, in order to continue her goal of exploration.

An Unexpected Gift:

The Clara Lee Miller Trust Estate recently informed the University of Lynchburg of an endowed gift of over \$300,000 for work specifically connected to the Office of Equity and Inclusion. Ms. Clara Lee Miller ('49), left this gift in her estate after passing in 2006. The gift was recently released.

Ms. Miller served her community diligently as she had a passion for equity. She worked tirelessly to ensure that underfunded college students had scholarships to attend schools. Ms.

Miller also spent time establishing counseling programs at the School for Creative and Performing Arts in Ohio. Ms. Frances Haas, a close friend of Miller's said, "She would have wanted to have been known as somebody who helped. She always said she came into this world to help save it." Ms. Miller will be remembered for her kind heart and generosity.

As a result of her gift, the University of Lynchburg minority and women students will now have a newly funded endowed scholarship. Her gift will help to fund programming within the new Dimensions of Diversity Residential Learning Community. Her gift will also allow the University of Lynchburg to intentionally attract underrepresented faculty and staff to help teach and mentor our students.

Ms. Clara Lee Miller's legacy of helping will continue, forever, at the University of Lynchburg thanks to her gift.

Please click here for the full story: [Alumna's gift to support scholarships and diversity](#)

Story about the Multicultural Gala:



The Office of Equity and Inclusion is proud to bring back the Multicultural Gala for its second year on April 27, 2019. The event, co-founded by students Darian Geddis and D'Andria Alston-Thomas, was conceived from the desire to "celebrate and honor the efforts of The Office

of Equity and Inclusion; including all students, faculty, and staff members who work tirelessly to make our university a more equitable institution” as described by Geddis. He explains why he feels this event is so important: “we as an institution must celebrate and recognize those who work to make our campus more inclusive.”

Last year’s graduate assistant for the Office of Equity and Inclusion, Baylee McPeak, shared that she was thrilled to be a part of the event. When describing her involvement she said: “my role in the planning and execution of the event was mainly whatever role I needed to play! If that was sending out emails/making flyers/or decorating the day of, the students took the lead and I helped whenever it was needed. I was so impressed at their event planning skills and attention to the smallest detail!” Baylee shares the sentiment of other students, she feels this event is important because it is an opportunity to honor “those who go through the school year feeling unnoticed or under appreciated for the work they do in regard to diversity and inclusion, the gala was a way to treat those individuals and make them feel appreciated, as they deserve.”

Another student involved in the planning for this year's event is Veronika Williams. She sat down with me to share her thoughts about the Multicultural Gala. Last year her role was smaller and she shared that she “wished to have more of an impact by stepping up into a role with more responsibility. Due to the fact that last year’s Gala was the inaugural event, I saw the opportunity for the Gala to have plenty of growth and development.” She hopes to contribute to the efforts by providing leadership and organization in her role as chair and “day-of executions - as well as budget, dining/catering, and ordering awards.”

Both Darian and Veronika expressed similar opinions when asked what they hope other students and staff get out of attending this event. Darian shared that he “would like students to be inspired by this event and to understand the value of inclusion. We hope this event sparks unity among the campus, so that we are always being inclusive in everything we do.” Veronika hopes students and staff get: “recognition for their efforts towards working for an inclusive campus as well as a broader perspective.”

Quotes from alumni:

“What I enjoyed most about the Multicultural Gala was that it was conceived, planned, and implemented by students. It was exciting to see that our future alumni are so passionate about equality and talented in their execution of such a grand event.” -Veronica Soles '98

“What an honor to be a participant of the inaugural Multicultural Gala! As a proud alumna of this remarkable institution, I was moved to witness the University's embrace and actions towards diversity, inclusivity, and equity. I look forward to supporting such events in the future.” -Kelli Rainey '99

“A diverse and inclusive University is a benefit for students, staff, and faculty alike because we play to the strengths of each other bringing perspectives that a homogeneous group can't easily achieve. The Multicultural Gala showed that the University of Lynchburg leadership aren't just paying lip service but actively listening to the concerns of the students and groups we serve.” - Noble Ackerson '02

“It was great seeing alumni who had graduated 30, 40 and nearly 50 years ago interacting with students, telling them about their lives at LC. It is often said, ‘It isn't about what you know, but who you know!’ This was a great opportunity to build connections.” -Nat Marshall '83

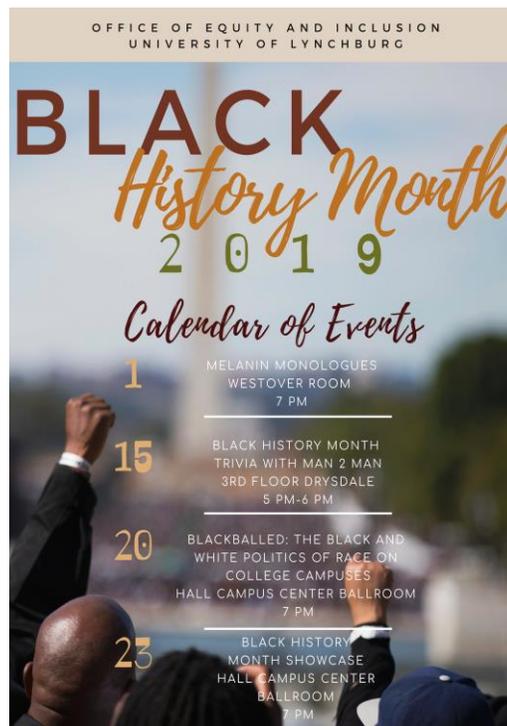
2019 Multicultural Gala Keynote Speaker:



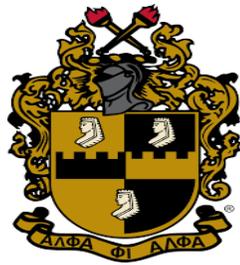
We are honored to announce that Francessa Spencer Vasquez '00 will be our keynote speaker this year. Currently, she is the Head of Americas Solutions Architecture at Amazon Web Services. Ms. Vasquez's interests in equity and inclusion were evident from the time she was an undergrad here at University of Lynchburg where she not only served as a SGA President but was also in Delta Sigma Theta. As an alumna, she served as the Vice President of the Technology Committee for six years. She has since moved on to a plethora of other volunteering opportunities and has developed her career. Vasquez describes herself as: "a results-driven executive with a diverse career path blending strategic planning, consulting, building, operational excellence, and customer growth."

Black History Month Celebrations that took place in February:

Take a look at the 2nd Annual [Black History Month Showcase](#) that culminated over a dozen events during the month of February celebrating the contributions of African Americans past and present.



We are happy to welcome back the return of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. and Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc.!



Upcoming Events:

- April 27th at 7 PM in the Ballroom - Multicultural Gala
- May 17 at 6:30 PM in Turner Gymnasium - Graduate and Doctoral Commencement
- May 18 at 9 AM in the Dell - Undergraduate Commencement