

# Office of Equity & Inclusion

## University of Lynchburg

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The Voice Newsletter  
Spring 2024

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# The Voice Newsletter

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## Celebrating Diversity at the University of Lynchburg

The year 2023 was a remarkable one for the University of Lynchburg in terms of cultural diversity. Despite the challenges and uncertainties posed by the global pandemic, social movements, and political changes, the University welcomed a record number of international students, organized and participated in various events and programs that celebrated and promoted diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, and demonstrated its commitment to becoming a more inclusive and global community.



Photo of International Students from Bangladesh

Photo by Rafiul Islam

One of the most notable achievements of 2023 was the arrival of more than 80 international students from 34 countries, bringing the total international student population to about 120. This was the largest and most diverse group of international students in the University's history, representing a significant increase from the previous years. The international students brought with them their unique perspectives, experiences, and cultures, enriching the campus life and learning environment. They also contributed to the academic excellence and athletic success of the University, as many of them were enrolled in competitive programs and participated in varsity sports.

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The University of Lynchburg also hosted and joined several events and initiatives that showcased and supported its cultural diversity in 2023. Some examples of these are:

- The International Meet and Greet, which was a welcome reception for the new international students and an opportunity for them to meet and mingle with other students, faculty, and staff.
- The International Food Festival, which was a delicious and fun event that featured cuisines from different countries and regions, prepared and served by the international students and their American friends.
- The Diwali Celebration, which was a festive and colorful event that marked the Hindu festival of lights, with music, dance, food, and fireworks.
- The Lynchburg International Festival, which was a community-wide event that celebrated the diversity and achievements of the people of Lynchburg and the surrounding areas, with a parade of nations, cultural performances, displays, and more.
- The Multicultural Gala, which was a formal and elegant event that recognized the individuals and groups who made significant contributions to inclusive excellence at the University of Lynchburg.



These and other events and programs not only provided opportunities for the University community to learn about and appreciate different cultures, but also fostered a sense of belonging and connection among the participants and attendees. They also demonstrated the University's mission, vision, and values regarding diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, and its alignment with the global trends and issues of the 21st century.

2023 was a special year for the University of Lynchburg in terms of cultural diversity, as it welcomed, celebrated, and supported its international students and their cultures, and engaged in various activities and initiatives that enhanced its inclusiveness and global awareness. The University of Lynchburg proved that it is not only a place of academic excellence, but also a place of cultural richness and harmony. As the University continues to grow and evolve, it will surely attract and retain more students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds and origins, and become a leader in fostering a more inclusive and global society.

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## The Importance of Belonging

Belonging is a fundamental human need that affects our well-being, happiness, and motivation. It is the feeling of being connected, valued, and accepted by others who share common interests, goals, or identities. Belonging can be experienced in different contexts, such as family, friends, school, work, community, or culture.

One context where belonging is especially important is in education. Students who feel a sense of belonging at school are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and successful in their learning. They are also more likely to have positive relationships with their peers, teachers, and staff. The Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI) at the University of Lynchburg is committed to fostering a campus culture that promotes belonging for all students, faculty, and staff. The OEI offers various programs, workshops, and resources that aim to enhance diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging on campus. Some examples of these initiatives are:

The Diversity and Inclusion Innovation Grant (DIIG) Program, which supports projects that advance justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and/or belonging in various areas, such as recruitment and retention, inclusive pedagogy, dialogue and civil discourse, social justice, and workplace inclusion.



Photo of 2023 Multicultural Gala

The Multicultural Gala, which celebrates the diversity and achievements of the University community and recognizes individuals and groups who have made significant contributions to inclusive excellence.

Belonging is a vital aspect of our human nature that influences our health, happiness, and success. By creating a sense of belonging for ourselves and others, we can enhance our well-being and contribute to a more inclusive and harmonious society. The OEI is dedicated to helping the University of Lynchburg become a place where everyone feels welcomed, valued, seen, heard, and respected. We invite you to join us in this mission and celebrate the diversity and belonging that make our campus community unique and vibrant.

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## Faculty/Student/Staff Spotlights



Dr. David O. Freier

Dr. Freier is a professor of biology who has a passion for teaching and research. He received the 2023 Shirley E. Rosser Excellence in Teaching Award for his outstanding teaching and mentoring of students. He also led a research project on the effects of stress on the cardiovascular system, involving several undergraduate students. Dr. Freier believes that biology is a fascinating and relevant subject that can help students understand themselves and the world better.

Em Maxey '23

Em Maxey is an art major and graphic design minor who found an outlet at Lynchburg for multiple facets of their life. They created a mural for the OEI office, expressing their identity and creativity. Em Maxey says that art is a way of communicating and connecting with others, and that they want to use their skills and talents to make a positive impact. Em Maxey also enjoys playing soccer, singing in the choir, and volunteering in the community.



Danielle Sarchet

Danielle Sarchet is the International Student Support Coordinator at the University of Lynchburg. She joined the Office of Wellness and Health Promotion in 2023 to help the growing number of international students on campus. She works closely with the students to connect them with programs and events on campus and direct them to the appropriate departments and resources. She is passionate about helping international students feel welcomed, valued, seen, heard, and respected at the University of Lynchburg.

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## Black History Month Events

- Black Student Association Black History Month Kickoff
  - Hall Campus Ballroom, Feb. 2, 7pm
- National African American History and Culture Museum Trip
  - Feb. 3, Departing from OEI at 9:15am and returning around 10pm
- Black Student Association Black Jeopardy
  - Westover, Feb. 5, 7pm with Prizes
- Alpha Psi Lambda Motivational Speaker
  - Hall Campus Ballroom, Feb. 7, 6pm, Claudio Otero
- AAAG Black Business Fair
  - Hall Campus Ballroom, Feb. 9, 2-7pm
- Courageous Conversation with Cecilia Smith/LaFayette Harris
  - Virtual, Feb. 9, 4pm
- Cecilia Smith/LaFayette Harris Concert
  - Sydnor Performance Hall, Feb. 10, 7:30pm
  - Free tickets for students/faculty/staff
- Black Student Association Aux Wars
  - Westover, Feb. 12, 7pm with Prizes
- GSA/W2W/M2M Round Black Table
  - Hall Campus Ballroom, Feb. 14, 6pm



- Black Student Association All Black Party
  - Hall Campus Ballroom, Feb. 16, 8pm
  - \$5 Entry Fee (\$3 pre-sale, \$10 for non-UL students)
- Double Header Basketball Game
  - Turner Gym, Feb. 17
  - Men's game at 2pm vs. Averett
  - Women's game at 4:30pm vs. Virginia Wesleyan
- Black Student Association Black Family Feud
  - Westover, Feb. 19, 7pm Prizes
  - Teams of 5
- Keynote Speaker: Mr. Delaney
  - The West Room, Feb. 21, 6pm
- Gospel Concert
  - Sydnor Performance hall, Feb. 25, 4pm
- Honorable Mentions
  - Hall Campus Ballroom, Feb. 27, 5pm
- Courageous Wednesday:
  - Dr. Subramaniam & Dr. Alcalde
  - "Dismantling Institutional Whiteness"
  - Feb. 28, 6pm (Virtual)

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## Meet Our Team



**Dr. Robert L. Canida II**  
Vice President for Inclusive  
Excellence



**Mr. Matt Johnston**  
Director of Student Diversity  
and Belonging



**Mrs. Jennifer Reichard**  
Executive Assistant to the  
VP for Inclusive Excellence



**Mrs. Alexis Scott**  
Graduate Intern for  
Equity and Inclusion



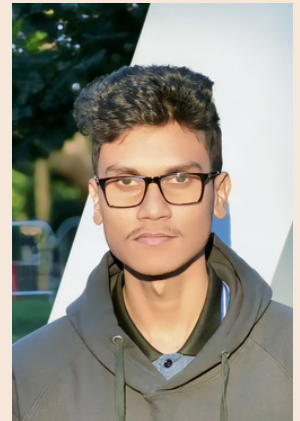
**Mr. Charles Johnson**  
Graduate Assistant for  
Student Diversity and  
Belonging



**Mr. Christian Otero**  
Graduate Assistant for  
Equity and Inclusion



**Mr. Dai'Deion**  
Student Diversity  
Liaison



**Mr. Rafiul (Rafi)  
Islam**  
Newsletter Writer &  
Editor

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