

Stronger Together Newsletter

October-November 2023



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What's Happening in OIE

News and updates from the Office for Inclusive Excellence.

Identity-Based Employee Resource Groups.

The Office for Inclusive Excellence (OIE) is excited to partner with the Office of Human Resources (HR) to pilot identity-based employee resource groups. The OIE and HR commit to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) as critical elements to fulfilling our mission and core values. Our employees are integral to the success of the institution, and one way that we advance DEIB support is through the development of SHU Employee Resource Groups (ERG).

The OIE, in strategic partnership with HR, developed SHU ERGs to provide a platform for cultural and other identity-based connections, building community and sense of belonging, advocacy, education and development, and more. ERGs allow employees with commonalities to meet, support each other, and produce outcomes that improve job satisfaction. These commonalities may include but are not limited to: race/ethnicity, religion and spirituality, nationality, gender identity, sexual and romantic orientations, disabilities, and social causes.

ERGs, also referred to as affinity groups, are led by members of an organization with a guiding impetus to unite people around common identities and backgrounds and to provide a structured framework for awareness and advocacy. These groups operate differently in each organization but commonly incorporate a combination of professional and social networking activities. Some benefits of ERGs include the ability for employees to find community among other employees who share their identities, interests, and/or concerns; increased employee satisfaction and retention; and leadership opportunities for individuals from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds.

The four pilot ERGs will be as follows (formal group names are to be decided by the groups):

- Black employees
- Hispanic and Latin American employees
- International employees
- LGBTQ+ employees

Please understand that these groups are pilots, and there are more to come. We selected the groups based on employee demographic data, intermittent requests for employee support made to the OIE, and through discussion with the [Inclusive Excellence Advisory Council](#).

Additionally, we will phase in the implementation of the four pilot groups over the pilot year, beginning in spring 2024. We fully intend to expand ERGs during the 2024-2025 academic year, after the pilot year.

Consistent with [SHU's Anti-Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment Policy](#), our ERGs do not exclude on the basis of protected characteristics. As such, all employees are eligible for any group, even if as an ally/accomplice.

Please complete the [SHU Pilot ERG Interest Form](#) to express interest in joining either of the pilot ERGs, by Friday, December 15, 2023. After December 15th, someone from the OIE/HR will contact those who completed the form to schedule an initial meeting. The initial meeting will be informational, including discussions on electing officers for each group. Please note that December 15th is not the deadline to join but is the reference point that we will use to organize the first group meetings.

SHU Pride Week

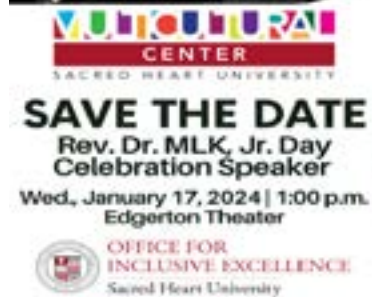
Pride Week was packed full of events for LGBTQ+ Pioneers and their allies. From November 13th to the 17th, LGBTQ+ Pioneers celebrated their community with educational programming from the SAGE Center, the Gender and Sexuality Alliance, and PRIDE. Students enjoyed making their own pride flags in the SAGE Center, hearing from LGBTQ+ staff about what pride means, playing games at the Queer Mixer, and watching Nimona with their friends over popcorn and snacks. Cadence Pentheny from the Triangle Community Center also came to campus to share their knowledge of LGBTQ+ sexual health with students and plenty of fun prizes.

The most well attended event was Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 16th, which was held in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit. November 20th, 2023 marks the 24th annual Transgender Day of Remembrance, a time in which the LGBTQ+ community mourns and remembers the lives of transgender people lost to violence in the past year. The commemorative day began in 1999 after the murder of a Connecticut native, Rita Hester, the year prior. Words were shared by GSA President Nicole Sperling, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Maurice Nelson, Manager of LGBTQ+ Affairs Kyle Humphreys, and Reverend Sara Smith. Faculty, staff, and students came together to remember the 32 lives we lost since November 20th, 2022.



MLK Save the Date

Join us for the annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration Speaker event on Wednesday, January 17, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. in the Edgerton Center for the Performing Arts. Doors will open at 12:30 p.m. The event, which is sponsored by the Multicultural Center in the Office for Inclusive Excellence, will include a post event reception. More information is to come, but for now, mark your calendars!



SHU Hosts Equity at the Heart of Teaching Symposium

The Equity at the Heart of Teaching Symposium was coordinated by the SHU Center for Teaching and Learning in strategic partnership with the Office for Inclusive Excellence. The Symposium brought together members of our campus community to meaningfully discuss ways to promote equity in teaching at classroom, department, college, and university levels. SHU faculty, staff, and graduate students interested in teaching attended this inaugural event.

The event included a keynote by Dr. Tracie Addy, author of [What Inclusive Instructors Do](#) and Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning at Lafayette College. The event also featured a SHU faculty discussion panel and opportunities for SHU instructors to engage with one another via a variety of session formats.

For more information about the symposium, check out the SHU article [SHU Hosts 'Equity at the Heart of Teaching Symposium.'](#)



Office For Inclusive Excellence Fellows Announcement

The Office for Inclusive Excellence (OIE) proudly announces Inclusive Excellence Faculty and Staff fellows to lead education and service that contribute to the Pioneer pursuit for inclusive excellence. Under the leadership of the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer (CDIO) [Maurice Nelson](#), the Inclusive Excellence Fellows program promotes faculty and staff engagement with the pending Pioneer Plan for Inclusive Excellence, SHU's diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging plan. [Dr. Lee Morgan](#), assistant professor and director of inclusive excellence education, serves as the CDIO's designee to assist with providing support and leadership to the cohort.

The [inaugural cohort](#) was selected from a competitive group of faculty and staff applicants. The eight selected fellows are as follows:

- **Ololade Afolabi** – Lecturer, SCMA
- **Rebekah Bryd** – Associate Professor, Counseling
- **Mark Congdon** – Assistant Professor, SCMA
- **Raheem Davis** – Clinical Placement & Compliance Coordinator, DHCON
- **Susan Goncalves** - Associate Professor, DHCON
- **Katie Kroeper** - Assistant Professor, Psychology
- **Deirdre Preis** – Assistant Professor, Educational Leadership
- **Callie Tabor** – Lecturer, Catholic Studies

The cohort's term began in August, and they are already energized and on task engaging with this prestigious fellowship appointment. **To learn more about the cohort and their first project, check out the [SHU Selects Inclusive Excellence Fellows](#) story.**

Inclusive Excellence

What's Happening Everywhere

National Coming Out Day

The first National Coming Out Day took place on October 11th, 1988. It had been one year since the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. While people were dying of AIDS and violence, the Regan administration continued to ignore a very real problem. So LGBTQ+ people got up and out and began announcing that they were gay. They were lesbians, "transsexuals", and queers putting their lives on the line to draw more attention to the AIDS crisis that was killing thousands of Americans and stoking the flames of homophobia. Jean O'Leary and Robert Eichberg combined forces as activists to mobilize a country, and for years we have continued to pass the torch.

Much has changed since 1988, but more work needs to be done. A record number of anti-trans bills have been passed in the United States, and in many countries it is still a crime to be gay. Protections are lacking for LGBTQ+ victims of discrimination and violence, especially LGBTQ+ people of color. This day commemorates that there is still work to be done, but also celebrates all LGBTQ+ people in all their diversity and bravery. The act of coming out is a political one, but should be welcomed and cherished. LGBTQ+ people are mothers, sisters, teachers, doctors, politicians, and above all human beings deserving of dignity.

To commemorate the 35th National Coming Out Day, Sacred Heart University celebrated its 4th at the Pioneer Quad. The Office for Inclusive Excellence invited speakers John Stafstrom and Connecticut State Treasurer Erick Russell to the stage to share their remarks and their coming out experiences. Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Maurice Nelson also welcomed President Petillo to share remarks, student leaders Nicole Sperling and Sage Sperling shared their stories, and Protestant Reverend Sara Smith led the audience in prayer. Kyle Humphreys, the college's first Manager of LGBTQ+ Affairs, closed out the evening following a performance from the college's gospel choir.



Hispanic and Latin American Heritage Month

Hispanic Heritage Month, celebrated from September 15th to October 15th, is a significant observance in the United States that honors the cultural contributions of Hispanic and Latin American people. This month-long celebration begins on the anniversary of the independence of several Latin American countries, including Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. During this month, various events and activities take place to recognize the diverse heritage, traditions, and achievements of Hispanic communities. This period allows for the appreciation of art, music, literature, and history that have influenced Hispanic culture, fostering a deep understanding and respect for Hispanic heritage in both the United States and worldwide.

The Multicultural Center had 2 big events to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month. On September 15th, we had our annual Salsa Night partnered with La Hispanidad. We served authentic cultural food, Latin American flag making, and a professional Salsa Instructor teaching an energetic crowd. Earlier in October, we had our Multicultural Kickback: Hispanic Heritage Month Edition. Students joined us for more food, their favorite Hispanic music, games, and community.

The Multicultural Center also cosponsored with Todowafi for "Revolucion: A 30 Day Digital Festival". Every day for Hispanic heritage month, there was digital access to Hispanic Heritage Month programming. Whether it was a panel discussion, interview, or editorial, something was happening, and we hope you had a chance to check it out.



Indigenous Peoples' Day and Native American Heritage Month

Indigenous Peoples' Day acknowledges the rich and diverse cultures, histories, and contributions of Native American communities across the United States. It is celebrated on the second Monday of October, representing an alternative to Columbus Day and offering a perspective on the impact of European colonization on the Americas that wasn't deliberately taught in schools. By recognizing Indigenous Peoples' Day, communities aim to honor the resilience and unique heritage of Native American tribes, fostering a more inclusive and accurate understanding of the country's history.

And then, rolling into November in tandem with Indigenous Peoples' Day, is Native American Heritage Month. This time is dedicated to take a deep dive into the rich Native cultures, traditions, and histories. Throughout this month, educational institutions, communities, and organizations engage in activities that celebrate Native American contributions while also shining a light on the ongoing challenges faced by Indigenous communities. As we reflect on the significance of this month, it is essential to recognize the importance of acknowledging the land on which we live and work. Here at our Sacred Heart, through our Tribal Land Acknowledgement, the institution recognized the original stewards of the land while fostering a spirit of respect and collaboration. We recognize and assert that true acknowledgement is met with actions toward inclusive excellence.

For more information about SHU's position, visit the [Tribal Land Acknowledgement](#) webpage. Additionally, faculty and students in SHU's Physician Assistant Studies program developed a phenomenal newsletter focused on [National Native American Heritage Month](#) that we encourage you to check out.

Inclusive Excellence

Spotlights-Departments and Clubs

Inclusive excellence initiatives taking place on our campus.

SHU Athletics Earns a High Athletic Equity Index Score

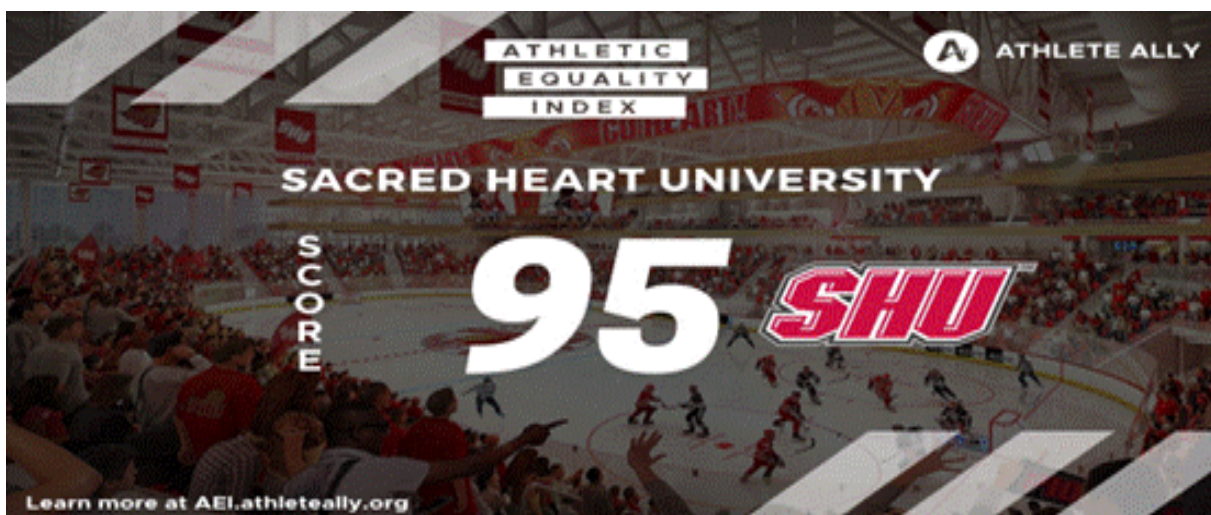
SHU Athletics has worked in various ways to identify needs and implement improvements and interventions that seek to improve diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging for student athletes and Athletics employees. One effort has been engagement with [Athlete Ally](#) on an assessment that yields an Athletic Equity Index score. The most recent review was done in October 2023, and SHU recorded a score of 95 out of 100, which represents a 20-point improvement from our initial score in 2022. Learn more about our score breakdown on the [SHU score page](#) on the Athlete Ally website.

About Athlete Ally:

Athlete Ally believes sport will change the world when it welcomes and empowers all people. As a leading national nonprofit working at the intersection of sport and LGBTQI+ equality, Athlete Ally works to end the structural and systemic oppression that isolates, excludes, and endangers LGBTQI+ people in sport. We educate individuals and institutions to understand obstacles to inclusion for LGBTQI+ people and how they can build an inclusive culture. We work to ensure sport governing bodies, teams and leagues adopt policies that reflect the diversity of their constituents. We incubate athlete activism to advance LGBTQI+ equality in and through sport. For more information, visit www.athleteally.org or follow them on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [Instagram](#).

About Athletic Equity Index:

The Athletic Equality Index was developed to measure LGBTQ inclusion policies and practices in collegiate athletics. Initially conducted biannually in [2017](#) and [2019](#) and now updated regularly. The AEI is a first-of-its-kind report providing a comprehensive look at how NCAA D-I institutions are supporting their LGBTQ student-athletes, coaches, administrators, staff, and fans.



Sacred Heart Community Theater Hosts Event on African-American and Jewish Civil Rights Alliance

The Sacred Heart Community Theater, in strategic collaboration with the Office for Inclusive Excellence and WSHU Public Radio, hosted an event on the documentary *Shared Legacies, The African American and Jewish Civil Rights Alliance*. The event included a screening of the documentary followed by an on stage panel discussion.



SHU Honors the 85th Anniversary of Kristallnacht

The Human Journey Colloquia Series, Office of Mission Integration, and Chaverim Yehudim (Jewish Club) hosted the Annual Commemoration honoring the 85th anniversary of Kristallnacht. The event took place in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit, featuring guest speaker Herbert N. Brockman, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Mishkan Israel.

In a message to the university, President Petillo said, "We commemorate Kristallnacht each year at Sacred Heart University because we are a community that welcomes and embraces people of every religion, culture, race and sexual orientation. Our mission is one of inclusivity in which we educate and inspire our students to be a positive moral force in the world." President Petillo also acknowledged the importance of remembering the events of November 9, 1938 "as an example of the suffering that we can bring upon other human beings when we marginalize and exclude 'the other.' This reminder seems particularly poignant today with the kind of hate we see and read about on an almost daily basis."

The event was followed by a fellowship reception.



SHU Honors Gloria Naylor with Conference and Exhibit

Sacred Heart University recently celebrated the influential writer Gloria Naylor with a conference and exhibit, marking the return of her archives to SHU. The conference, "With a Pen in Her Hand: Communities in Gloria Naylor's Fiction and Archives," featured keynote speaker Maxine Lavon Montgomery and different panel discussions.

Naylor's literary works, celebrated for portraying communities built by Black women, were present in the Art & Design Gallery. The exhibit, "With a Pen in Her Hand: Communities in Gloria Naylor's Fiction and Her Archives," runs until Dec. 1 and includes a mural created by students in SHU's art and design program. The involvement of English capstone students exploring Naylor's archives contributes not only to her work but demonstrates the university's dedication to academic excellence and social justice. For more information, check out the [SHU Honors Gloria Naylor with Conference and Exhibit article](#).



Contact Us

[Visit our webpage](#)

[Meet the OIE Team](#)

Email us: inclusiveexcellence@sacredheart.edu

Follow us on Instagram: @shu_inclusion @shu_multiculturalcenter_

Have any stories or upcoming events you'd like us to include in our next issue? [Submit your stories here!](#)



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