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LGBTQIAP+ Resources and Campus Climate at Worcester Polytechnic Institute

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LGBTQIAP+ Resources and Campus Climate at Worcester Polytechnic Institute

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LGBTQ+ Resources and Campus Climate at Worcester Polytechnic Institute

An Interactive Qualifying Project

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By Jasmin Sanchez

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Professor Zoe Reidinger, PhD

Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Abstract

While Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) has continuously expanded and promoted its LGBTQ+ programming and student resources, students who identify within the queer community at WPI are unaware of the majority of resources available to them (Sanchez, 2018). This IQP proposes programming that would be able to effectively inform prospective students about all LGBTQ+ resources available to them from WPI prior to their enrollment. Through an online survey distributed to current student members of LGBTQ+ advocacy groups at WPI (The Alliance and The Gender Equality Club), quantitative and qualitative data about the LGBTQ+ student experience at WPI were analysed and used to develop the program. Alongside promoting student resources, the program proposed here would foster a safe and welcoming learning environment for incoming LGBTQ+ students. Ultimately, the program would help queer students feel more accepted at WPI and set them on a path toward personal, academic, and professional success.
Acknowledgments

This Interactive Qualifying Project could not have been made possible without the guidance and support of numerous people throughout the Worcester Polytechnic Institute community. First and foremost, I would like to thank my faculty advisor of this IQP and advisor of The Alliance, Zoe Reidinger, for encouraging me to believe in myself and for being a role model. Zoe has provided me with a safe space to learn about myself and the world in which we live.

Secondly, I would like to thank Sammie Carmichael, recent Alliance President and my IQP partner during the first half of this project. Sammie is not currently a student at WPI, but while he was engaged in the project work, he provided vibrant ideas about resources we could provide students. In fact, it was Sammie's idea to propose an LGBTQ+ overnight program at WPI, and his ideas of how to develop upon it have influenced this report.

The assistance and feedback provided by Undergraduate Student Admissions and the Turn the Curve Program at WPI should also be acknowledged. Although the overnight program proposal could not be established this academic year, admissions staff members, Eliza Laurent and Kara O'Connell, suggested alternative resources that could be implemented in place of an overnight program by the upcoming Accepted Students Day event. The Turn the Curve Program staff members were able to provide helpful feedback, such as useful contacts and encouragement.

Last but not least, I would like to extend my gratitude toward The Alliance, past and current, whose members have proven to be a reliable support system for my own emotional and professional development, as well as that of others. I would particularly like to acknowledge The Alliance Executive Board: Jess Locke, Zack Orbach, Luis Sanchez, Alex Hunt, Rosana Pochat,
and Sadie Dominguez. With these members, and their diverse campus involvement, The Alliance and many other student resources flourish. I would also like to thank a particular Alliance general body member, recent WPI 19’ graduate and my best friend, Kimberly Stanway, who had always found time to speak passionately with me about my project goals and to encourage me to try my best in everything had I aimed to accomplish. Without The Alliance, this IQP, along with the majority of LGBTQ+ programming at WPI, would not be possible.

I am grateful to have been able to work on this IQP within the WPI community. I thank these community members for teaching me how to see myself in all others I meet and inspiring me to be an active leader in the world.
Key Terms

(This list was compiled and modified from glossaries provided by an IQP titled "LGBTQIAP+ Insights and Policy" (2017) written in part by two previous WPI Alliance executive board members, Pat Linzo and Leo Bunyea. These terms and definitions have also been modified from The Trevor Project (2017) and The Safe Zone Project glossaries.

agender – An individual who does not identify with any gender.

ally – A supporter of the LGBTQ+ community.

aromantic – An individual who does not typically experience romantic attraction.

asexual – An individual who does not typically experience sexual attraction.

bigender – An individual who identifies with two or more gender identities.

birth name – The name given to an individual at birth. This name may appear on paperwork but it should never be assumed that the individual goes by that name. For transgender people who use a different name than their birth name, this is frequently called their dead name. A recommended term to use instead of "birth name" is "lived name" or "preferred name," while acknowledging the name is more than merely a preference (See "lived name" below).

bisexual – An individual who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to individuals of two or more genders.

biological sex – The classification of people as male or female or intersex, typically assigned at birth based on the appearance of external anatomy.

cisgender – Term that refers to an individual whose gender identity matches the one assigned at birth.

gay – Generally refers to individuals who are sexually and/or romantically attracted to individuals of the same gender. This term is often used specifically to mean men individuals who
are attracted to men but is sometimes also used to refer to the entire LGBTQ+ community (e.g. gay rights).

**gender binary** – The idea that there are only two genders – man or woman and that a person must be strictly gendered as either/or.

**gender dysphoria** – The condition of feeling one's emotional and physiological gender identity to be opposed to one's biological sex in a way that brings about a profound state of unease or discomfort.

**gender expression** – The ways in which we each manifest gender (generally thought of as masculinity or femininity) and is usually an extension of our gender identity. Each of us expresses a particular gender every day – by the way we style our hair, select our clothing or by even the way we stand.

**gender identity** – The label given to one's internal sense of self in relation to the social constructs of masculinity, femininity and androgyny.

**gender neutral** – suitable for or not distinguishing between all genders. Applies to objects or spaces, not people.

**gender-non-conforming** – An individual whose gender identity does not conform to any societal notions of gender. Sometimes used to mean non-binary. Describes a person whose gender expression is, or appears to be, different from what we would expect from their assigned gender. Other terms include "gender variant" or "gender diverse."

**gender roles** – A gender role is a set of societal norms dictating what types of behaviors are generally considered acceptable, appropriate or desirable for a person based on their actual or perceived gender.
**heteronormativity** – The assumption, in individuals and/or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities. This leads to invisibility and stigmatizing of other sexualities: when learning a woman is married, asking her what her husband's name is. Heteronormativity also leads us to assume that only masculine men and feminine women are straight.

**heterosexual/straight** – Experiencing attraction solely (or primarily) to some members of a different gender.

**homophobia** – An umbrella term for a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, erasure, or discomfort) that one may have toward LGBTQ people. The term can also connote a fear, disgust, or dislike of being perceived as LGBTQ. **homophobic** – adj.: a word used to describe actions, behaviors, or individuals who demonstrate elements of this range of negative attitudes toward LGBTQ people.

**homosexual** – A person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex/gender. This [medical] term is considered stigmatizing (particularly as a noun) due to its history as a category of mental illness and is discouraged for common use (use gay or lesbian instead).

**intersex** – A general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. There are therefore many third biological sexes, outside the binary of male and female.

**lesbian** – An individual who identifies as a woman who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to other women.

**LGBTQ-friendly** – A characteristic of an organization resulting from setting high standards for LGBTQ-inclusion in policy, program and practice.
LGBTQIAP+ – One of the many acronyms used to refer to the community of individuals who are not heterosexual and/or cisgender. This one stands for "Lesbian, Gay/Genderqueer/Genderfluid, Bisexual/Biromantic/Bigender, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual/Aromantic/Agender, and Pansexual/Panromantic/Pangender". The acronym grows every day and many people use many different versions.

lived name or preferred name(s) – The name(s) chosen by a transgender individual that aligns with their gender(s). These name(s) may or may not appear in official paperwork but should be used when referring to the individual. It should be noted that a person may have more than one name they prefer and those names may be applicable at different times and environments. It is important to make sure that you check with the individual on which name to use at any given time.

non-binary – An individual whose gender identity does not fit within the binary of male and female. This can be an umbrella term for many non-binary genders, such as androgyne, agender, bigender, genderfluid, and genderqueer.

pansexual – An individual who is sexually attracted to individuals of more than two or all genders. Sometimes, this term is used interchangeably with bisexual, the correctness of which is still being disputed. Please ask how the individual chooses to identify themselves.

queer – This is used as an umbrella term to describe individuals who identify as non-straight. It is also used to describe people who have a non-conforming gender identity. Due to its historical use as a derogatory term, it is not embraced or used by all members of the LGBTQ+ community. The term queer can also be used interchangeably with LGBTQIAP+.

questioning – An individual who is unsure about or is exploring their orientation or gender identity.
**romantic orientation** – The romantic attraction one feels for others. Each sexual orientation has a corresponding, but separate, romantic orientation. Note: romantic and sexual orientations do not always need to match. For example, someone could be pansexual (sexually attracted to multiple genders), but exclusively homoromantic (interested in romantic relationships only with those of the same gender).

**sexual orientation** – The sexual attraction one feels for others, often labeled based on the gender relationship between the individual and the people they are attracted to.

**transgender** – An individual whose gender identity does not match the one assigned to them at birth.

**transition** – The shift when a person begins living as the gender they identify with rather than the gender assigned to them at birth. Often includes changing their first name and dressing and grooming differently. A transition may or may not also include medical and legal aspects, such as taking hormones, having gender reassignment surgery, or changing identity documents such as a driver's license to reflect their gender identity. However, these steps are often difficult for people to accomplish or afford.

**Executive Summary**

Worcester Polytechnic Institute was ranked as one of the top STEM colleges in the United States this past year by Forbes (2018), and it is recognized as one of the most LGBTQ-friendly technical institutes in New England, according to the Campus Pride Index ("LGBT-Friendly Campus Search"). Compared to liberal arts colleges, STEM-centric colleges are especially masculine and heteronormative (search “heteronormative” under Key Terms), and this lack of diversity is magnified in STEM-field workplaces. The effects are broad. While some U.S.
businesses and industries mostly hire cis-gender, white men, many others recognize the prosperity that comes with diverse talent and leadership. Businesses and higher education universities eagerly seek professionals of various backgrounds, including but not limited to diverse races and ethnicities, religions, genders, sexual and romantic orientations, ages, and abilities. Diversity increases innovation and productivity, and within postsecondary education, it benefits all students intellectually and socially (Farrel, 2017).

Worcester Polytechnic Institute consistently demonstrates efforts to recruit and retain a culturally diverse and inclusive community. The school is providing all students of the Class of 2022 with a global project scholarships to travel abroad to more than 50 project centers across 31 countries. Once a single-sex institution, serving mostly Caucasian men, WPI has evolved significantly, having just admitted the largest female student population recorded at WPI; the Class of 2021 includes 44% women (10% more than the previous year), “due to concerted efforts by the university to inspire more girls and young women to pursue STEM . . . placing WPI among STEM institutions with the highest percentage of female students (Duffy, 2017).”

Recruitment and retention efforts have also targeted other minority populations, such as people of color and international students. Currently, 68 countries are represented by the undergraduate student population. The Undergraduate Admissions Office and The Office of Multicultural Affairs at WPI, specifically work to reach students of all backgrounds and ensure their academic success.

WPI, however, lacks consistent outreach, recruitment and retention of the LGBTQ+ student population. In fact, there has not been implemented programming the past two years to recruit or retain LGBTQ+ students at WPI. Within the current political climate, when federal and many state laws are shifting in opposition of LGBTQ+ rights, it is important to emphasize
municipal and institutional LGBTQ+ support offering a safe space for students to pursue their academics and contribute to the diverse perspectives that help maintain society.

This project suggests the best way to learn about the LGBTQ+ student population at WPI is through directly surveying LGBTQ-identifying students about their experiences. Through our survey, we were able to describe the general demographic of the LGBTQ+ population, as well as the most and least popular LGBTQ+ resources, and the importance of establishing programming that educates students, faculty, and staff about LGBTQ+ resources.

Campus climate is a main factor that will impact all students in college, high school and earlier education. Most LGBTQ+ students report that the climate — their feelings of belonging, safety and inclusion — in college is better than the one they experienced in high school. Projecting even further into early education, it has been found that rates of unexcused absences and feeling a lack of belongingness for LGBTQ+ students is higher in middle school than in postsecondary education. Such information reveals that there is exposure of prejudice and discrimination toward young LGBTQ+ students before they enter college. Recognizing this impact, we chose to focus our project on LGBTQ-identifying, high school students accepted into WPI, and informing them on LGBTQ+ resources available from the institute.

The goal of the project was to gauge the LGBTQ+ campus climate at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, and to make recommendations for its improvement. We learned, through a campus climate survey provided by Campus Pride, WPI could improve in three areas: LGBTQ+ Support & Institutional Commitment, Housing & Residence Life, and Recruitment & Retention. Our recommendation to improve the campus climate for LGBTQ+ students is to ensure their awareness of the resources offered on or from campus, since many LGBTQ+ students have admitted they are not aware. To establish such awareness as early in one’s college career, we
decided to target prospective students, through proposing an overnight program that would guide them in observing all WPI offers in terms of LGBTQ+ support. The overnight program would train current WPI student to host high school students for one night and introduce these students to the various campus resources. This IQP also recommends the establishment of an event during the Accepted Students Day Program that could work to present information on LGBTQ+ student resources to those who do not participate in the overnight program. In case these resources cannot be approved and implemented for any reason, alternative programs have been proposed through this report which stand to be more feasible when considering participation count, planning time and funding.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Diversity is the state of involvement of differing perspectives, lifestyles, and demographics. In order for diversity to excel within an organization, those who comprise the group must be treated with respect, valued for their unique strengths, and trusted to create a safe, inclusive environment for others (Washington, 2018). Diversity is indispensable not only in the workforce but in all levels of education. Worcester Polytechnic Institute actively works to celebrate diversity and repel intolerance – recently echoed through an email titled "Embrace Difference: A Message to the Community," written by WPI President Laurie Leshin in response to politically motivated hate crimes in the country, one of which was the shootings at Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh last October. Through the message, President Leshin affirms, "Violence against any person – especially because of their political affiliation, faith, ethnicity, gender, race, sexual orientation, abilities, and/or socio-economic status – is not acceptable, period. This should go without saying, but apparently, we need to say it time and again . . . . I truly believe that opening ourselves to embracing difference is the only way to combat the hate that is currently fueling so much rhetoric and violence in our country and around the world. I ask you to join me in this quest." Furthermore, WPI administrators and departments, such as Undergraduate Admissions, The Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) and the Student Activities Office (SAO), regularly distribute educational material on the impact and importance of diversity. Diversity is directly proportional to innovation and productivity, and it benefits all students intellectually and socially (Farrel, 2017). The WPI community strives toward acceptance, inclusion, and the celebration of our differences.

LGBT STEM (2018), a web-based project aiming to expose LGBTQ+ students to queer diversity in STEM, exclaims, "The future of science relies on innovation, and the way to get it is
to make sure that people from all walks of life enter the profession. LGBT individuals are an important part of this diversity." The LGBTQ+ community at WPI is seemingly one of the most diverse groups at WPI. The Alliance, an LGBTQ-advocacy student organization at WPI, is composed of those of various nationalities, religious backgrounds, abilities and experiences. Some of the intersectional identities of our LGBTQ+ community can be observed in Appendix B.1. WPI serves its LGBTQ+ student community through the resources available on campus (Appendix D), and by doing so, the university simultaneously serves the whole student population.

Worcester Polytechnic Institute is #17 in the “Top 25 STEM Colleges 2018,” published by Forbes, and the second most LGBTQ-friendly technical institute in the New England region according to Campus Pride — a non-profit organization that assesses the LGBTQ+ campus climate at over 350 college campuses in the U.S. and provides strategies for improving it. The Campus Pride college search tool, the Campus Pride Index, also presently lists WPI as the third most LGBTQ-friendly technical institute in the nation, after Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Kennesaw State University (KSU) (LGBTQ-friendly Campus Search, 2019). In order to recognize WPI as a leading supporter of LGBTQ+ policy, practice and programming, Campus Pride labels the school with a “Premier” status on the site, publically visible to anyone using the LGBTQ-friendly-college search tool. WPI is the only Premier technical institute in New England (MIT is not a Premier campus). The methods of deciding Premier status are unknown.

Generally, STEM universities across the globe are perceived as heteronormative and hostile environments for individuals of the LGBTQ+ community. Heteronormativity enforces gender norms and it oppresses those who do not fit gender norms. Bias and homophobia fill
universities and they are usually amplified within STEM-field workplaces. It is not typical that a STEM university excels in LGBTQ+ visibility, policy and programming. Does WPI excel in LGBTQ+ support? WPI is listed as the second most LGBTQ-friendly campus in New England and third in the country; notwithstanding, WPI lacks fundamental LGBTQ+ resources, such as a LGBTQ+ resource center, full-time or part-time staff, mentorship program, or alumni network. After researching LGBTQ+ and STEM college-search websites popularly visited by high school students and parents, this IQP has created a rank listing the top LGBTQ+ STEM-centric universities in the country, and it was found that WPI comes in 37th place (Appendix A).

According to a campus climate survey provided by Campus Pride (2017), WPI excels within the following categories: LGBTQ+ Mental Health Counseling, Police Safety, and Student Life; WPI falls below average within LGBTQ+ Support & Institutional Commitment, Housing & Residence Life, and Recruitment & Retention. The aim of this IQP is to develop methods of lifting the averages of the latter three categories. Since WPI lacks a staff member intentionally hired to manage LGBTQ-related issues, as well as a LGBTQ+ resource center, it is imperative to have a consistent method of managing and distributing educational material, social advertisements, and information on other LGBTQ+ student resources to students. The Alliance is currently the main source of information regarding LGBTQ+ resources on campus, however, they too struggle with recruitment and retention rates. The Alliance is maintained by student volunteers and should not be responsible for handling the daily task of advising other queer students. The Alliance meets once per week with their general body membership to provide updates and answers to any questions. Since the executive board members are college students, their time and energy is limited. The Alliance as a whole and all queer students on campus could greatly benefit from the appointment of a full-time professional staff member who is employed
to support LGBTQ+ students and increase campus awareness of LGBTQ+ issues as 50% or more of the individual’s job description. That is our first recommendation for the LGBTQ+ community at WI; our second is a resource center run by paid full-time professionals and part-time students.

Considering the needs of the community, and the benefit of promoting school resources, we focused our efforts toward the prospective student population, so that they might become more aware of LGBTQ+ resources before their enrollment at WPI. This IQP suggests that an effective way to reach and inform specifically LGBTQ+ prospective students is through an overnight program. The program would directly introduce students to LGBTQ+ resources at WPI in a casual, social setting. The suggested name is "OASIS Overnight Program," recommended in order emphasize the institution's commitment of Offering Acceptance, Support, and Inclusion to Students (OASIS), as well as to promote the OASIS House as a safe space for queer students. Although the program is intended to inform prospective students, WPI student host would also gain awareness through the experience, since they would be trained to answer all conceivable questions related to our LGBTQ+ resources.

To reach those beyond the high school students who attend the overnight program, another event could be incorporated into the Accepted Students Day (ASD) program to discuss the resources available to the WPI LGBTQ+ community in a formal, 1-hour presentation. A brief social activity was created and added to the event to provide time for prospective students to meet one another, current students, faculty and staff of the LGBTQ+ community (Appendix E). To promote LGBTQ+ intersectionality, the ASD event could be in collaboration with the Office of Multicultural Affairs, First Generation students, and religious groups on campus, such as the Universalist Unitarian Fellowship.
Chapter 2: Background

The following information provides the background information necessary to understand the basis for this project. This Background is outlined by sections exploring the experiences faced by the LGBTQ+ community in various settings. By exploring the climate LGBTQ+ students regularly navigate, progress towards acceptance and inclusion in universities can be achieved. An understanding of this information should also provide context for the project findings and conclusions.

2.1 The LGBTQIAP+ Community

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and Pansexual are some communities that comprise the LGBTQIAP+ acronym (LGBTQIAP+ defined in Key Terms). Common interchangeable terms of some of the acronym letters include "Biromantic," "Transexual," "Questioning," "Aromantic," "Agender," and "Pansexual." Though it is often seen shortened as LGBT, in this report the LGBTQ+ acronym is used to represent these founding communities and all other queer communities, represented by the Q and plus sign ending the acronym. The acronym is used to represent diversity experienced within biological sex, sexual and romantic orientation, and gender identity. It is important to define these three concepts early as they are represented through each letter of the acronym, and they provide the foundation necessary in understanding many of the issues faced by the LGBTQ+ community. Sexual orientation, romantic orientation, and gender identity are often described after considering biological sex, however, they are all significantly different.

Although they are becoming more distinct, biological sex and gender identity are concepts often still confused with one another (Newman, 2018). Unlike gender, biological sex
may be more easily understood through anatomy. The majority of people across the world identify within one of two sex categories, female or male, popularly established by two separate sets of genitalia. In general, internal sex organs aside, if one has a penis, and also lacks a vagina, their sex might be considered male, and if one has a vagina and pronounced breasts, but lacks a penis, their sex would likely be expected to be female. Biological sex could also be described through the composition of one’s sex chromosomes. For medical treatment purposes, for example, it might be important to know whether someone possesses one, two, or even three X chromosomes. It has been established that biological males have XY chromosomes, while biological females have XX chromosomes, but even these males and females can possess various anatomical differences. For instance, they could possess both female and male sex organs simultaneously, including internal testicles and ovaries, while others do not possess distinguishing sex organs whatsoever, and yet their gender may ostensibly appear as either male or female. Some other intersex conditions include chromosomal sets of three — XXY and XXX, Klinefelter Syndrome and Triple X Syndrome, respectively. The Intersex Society of North America currently has 15 variations of genetic sex conditions listed on their webpage, and they also claim that one in every one hundred people are born with bodies different from “standard female or male bodies.” This goes to show the inaccuracy of a binary sex system, which only acknowledges two varieties of sex; it is clear there exist more than two biological sexes throughout society. It is crucial to acknowledge that people across the world do not only identify their biological sex as either male or female based on their reproductive organs or genetic differences (Newman, 2018). All in all, sex does not conform to a binary system, and neither does gender, but might rather form a spectrum, and this should be more widely acknowledged.
As soon as one can recognize the significant differences between sex and gender, one can begin to properly acknowledge the rest of the communities that create the LGBTQ+ community. Unlike biological sex, gender is not defined by anatomy or genetics, and though our biological sex is not our choice, our gender certainly could be. Some may argue that gender is not something you can choose but are naturally by being your authentic self. Most people describe their gender as they would their sex — male or female. Although one might appear to have typical male sex organs, it does not mean that that person identifies with the male gender or even the gender binary system. If their sex and gender match they are cisgender, and if their gender identity does not match their sex or is different from the gender they were assigned at birth, they are considered transgender. Some transgender people might not relate to possessing any particular gender (they might identify as agender, genderfluid, non-binary, or transgender).

Popular misconceptions of sex and gender have prompted generations of parents to raise their children with male sex organs to present a masculine male gender and children with female sex organs to present themselves as feminine girls. There is a growing concern for choosing and enforcing a child's gender and gender expression based on their set of reproductive organs. Countless cases of children as young as toddlers feel as though their self-conceptions do not align with cisnormativity, and so do not feel comfortable identifying as the gender they are assigned at birth by their parents. Failure to acknowledge these experiences is due to cisnormativity, the misconception that everyone is cisgender and a product of a binary system. Although people may undergo surgery in order to match their physical appearance and sexual organs with their gender identity, many people also deny this act of conforming to a gender binary system of sex and gender. Laws and services throughout the world influence societal responses to biological sex and gender expression, and it is time to fix these laws and services to
allow people the freedom to be themselves. Gender norms discourage people of all demographics to actively express their gender unusual to societal expectations, yet the extent of such discouragement varies by society (Luca Pax, 2017).

Which communities specify sexual orientation? The starting letters, LGB — Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual. The A and P also often signify Asexual and Pansexual, however, these letters could refer to, Aromantic, Pansexual, and Panromantic, and the B could represent Bigender and Biromantic, in order to describe other gender and romantic orientations.

2.2 The LGBTQ+ Community Throughout the World

Throughout the 20th century, the United States has made significant advancements regarding LGBTQ+ rights. In 1952, homosexuality was diagnosed as a "sociopathic personality disturbance" and homosexuals were banned from working for the U.S. federal government. It has since been decriminalized, its advocacy groups and Pride marches are advertised without fear of raids, and same-sex marriage has been legalized in all 50 states in the U.S. as of 2015. The United States is certainly not alone in this equal rights movement as 60% of all countries of the United Nations (UN) have also legalized homosexuality, 13% of the countries of the UN have legalized gay marriage, and a total of 19 countries in the world have allowed transgender people to serve in the military as their non-biological sex. It is worth considering the rapid furtherance of LGBTQ+ rights across the globe. Although great strides have been made for LGBTQ+ rights, there remains much to accomplish. The United States has granted many freedoms to LGBTQ+ people, however, on January 22, 2019, under the Trump Administration, the United States Supreme Court passed a transgender military ban forbidding transgender people from serving unless they identify as their biological sex while in service. Currently, every state has laws protecting individuals based on their sexual orientation, however, many states, such as New
Hampshire, do not have laws protecting those who transitions genders. The current political climate has prompted homophobia across the world and throughout schools, and so it is an exceptionally critical time to support those of the LGBTQ+ community, especially our students. "Ultimately, when the campus climate is unsafe and unwelcoming for any segment of the community, the entire community is affected." (Blumenfeld, 2014).

2.3 The LGBTQ+ Community in STEM Higher Education

As a historically-oppressed minority population, the LGBTQ+ community is constantly exposed to microaggressions and environmental stressors that can disadvantage students. Transgender students of color and of different abilities are significantly more vulnerable. Prejudice and discrimination experienced in academic environments can lead LGBTQ+ students to emotional distress that has been strongly correlated to more unexcused absences from classes, lower GPA scores, and higher suicide and homelessness rates than heterosexual, cisgender students who do not encounter similar bias (Farrel, 2017). This indicates that a negative academic atmosphere where students experience some level of discrimination can lead to academic and personal hardship.

As a result of such problematic experiences, retention rates of LGBTQ+ students who had enrolled in higher education have been shown to be drastically lower than those of students who do not identify within the community. The gap widens when we consider LGBTQ+ students enrolled in STEM majors at technical institutions. A research project conducted by Bryce Hughes, Adult and Higher Education Assistant Professor at Montana State University, surveyed 4,162 students majoring in STEM throughout their college careers. Of the students surveyed 318 identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. The project found that within the population surveyed, LGBTQ+ students were about 7% more likely to leave their STEM major than their heterosexual
counterparts (Hughes, 2018). LGBTQ+ computing majors in a 4-year STEM university found that their LGBTQ+ were "less likely to persist in the major than their heterosexual peers, which was attributed to their feeling a lower sense of belonging."

It is important to create an inclusive learning environment for LGBTQ+ students to feel safe and capable of success in order encourage diversity within the student population and the STEM community. As new and more complex obstacles are faced by society, it is important to recruit diverse perspectives to lead more effective problem solving. By encouraging diversity in academia, diversity is then encouraged in the workplace and society as a whole.

2.4 The LGBTQ+ Community at WPI

Worcester Polytechnic Institute is located in Worcester, Massachusetts, a five-time winner of the All-American City Award, which "recognizes communities that leverage civic engagement, collaboration, inclusiveness and innovation to successfully address local issues" ("All-America City Winners, 2018). WPI is home to 4,337 undergraduate students mostly majoring in STEM including a relatively large LGBTQ+ student population (Boudreau, 2018). The university is referred to as a "Premier" campus on a website called Campus Pride, "the leading national educational organization for LGBTQ college students and campus groups building future leaders and safer, more LGBTQ-friendly colleges and universities. . . . For the last decade, Campus Pride continues to be the most trusted, reliable educational resource for students and families to find the best campuses for LGBTQ inclusion and safety. The organization works alongside students, faculty, staff and administrators at 1400+ campuses annually to help support and improve the quality of campus life for LGBTQ people." Through the Campus Pride Index, institutions are evaluated based on their "commitment to LGBTQ-
inclusive policy, program and practice" based on the following 8 criteria concerning the LGBTQ population: Inclusion Policy, Support and Institutional Commitment, Academic Life, Student Life, Housing and Residence Life, Campus Safety, Counseling & Health, and finally, Recruitment and Retention ("LGBTQ-Friendly Campus Search"). Although WPI is ranked as a Premier campus, the school only receives a rating of 3.5 out of 5 stars for an overall score of 69%. The Campus Pride Index score was provided after the voluntary and confidential submission of a survey answering questions about the eight LGBTQ-friendly factors used to evaluate the current campus environment. Of the eight factors covered, WPI ranks lowest in LGBTQ+ Academic Life, LGBTQ+ Housing and Residence Life, LGBTQ+ Recruitment and Retention, and LGBTQ+ Support & Institutional Commitment Score. The highest ratings for the campus are in the LGBTQ+ Campus Safety score and the LGBTQ+ Health and Counseling Score. Such an analysis of the LGBTQ+ climate on the WPI campus reveals that while the campus is very inclusive and supportive in some factors, there is much room for improvement to enhance the campus climate. The WPI community works to provide invaluable student resources for the success of all its students. For the LGBTQ+ student population, there are at least a dozen campus resources available on campus for LGBTQ+ students, including The Alliance (WPI's LGBTQ+ advocacy student organization on campus) gender inclusive restrooms, gender inclusive housing, and preferred name and gender marker changes (See appendix Appendix B).

2.5 The LGBTQ+ Community in High School

Campus climate is a key factor that can impact students in high school and earlier education as well as in college. Most LGBTQ+ students report that the climate — their feelings of belonging, safety and inclusion — in college is better than the one they experienced in high
school (Renn, 2018). Projecting even farther back into early education, it has also been found that lacking sense of belongingness and higher rates of unexcused absences of LGBTQ+ students is higher in middle school (Robinson, 2011). Discrimination throughout the educational experiences of LGBTQ+ youth is indicative of a systemic issue that has led to LGBTQ+ oppression and misrepresentation in academia. Due to bias, prejudice and discrimination students face during their middle and high school years, many students and parents of LGBTQ+ students actively seek out LGBTQ-friendly colleges. In an effort to aid in this search, resources such as Campus Pride and College Choice are offer parents and students tools to identify LGBTQ-inclusive colleges. Much like the Campus Pride Index, College Choice ranks a number of schools on various indicators of LGBTQ+ inclusivity and reports the findings on an easily accessible website for student use.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Throughout this Interactive Qualifying Project, knowledge claims were based on pragmatic grounds by way of a mixed-methods research approach. The strategies of inquiry used resulted in quantitative and qualitative data and analysis. The main philosophy integrated into the research process is positivism, which can guide the quantitative analysis of the LGBTQ+ student population size currently at WPI and help predict the success of potential student resources; another philosophy, constructivism or interpretivism, was incorporated to better understand the qualitative data and describe the LGBTQ+ student experiences at WPI. The primary goals of this IQP were to gauge the present campus climate at WPI with respect to LGBTQ-friendliness and to make practical recommendations for its improvement. Universities with an abundance of student resources that foster inclusivity often have exceptional campus climates, especially when institutions invest in resources serving their minority and underrepresented populations. WPI is publically known to be supportive and inclusive of all its students, including its wide LGBTQ+ student population. However, students who enroll at WPI admittingly do so despite the lack of LGBTQ+ visibility they experience at WPI, according to "LGBTQIAP+ Insights and Policy," a recent IQP report having interviewed LGBTQ+ students at WPI. Also, a large number of LGBTQ+ students do not feel supported and comfortable being a queer person at WPI (Sanchez, 2018). In order to describe and potentially improve the current LGBTQ+ campus climate at WPI, the following objectives were developed and then justified:

1. List available LGBTQ+ resources at WPI and acknowledge which resources WPI does not offer compared to other LGBTQ-friendly STEM colleges, recognizing where WPI can improve in the Pride Index Campus Climate Survey.
2. Identify which resources students who identify within the LGBTQ+ are not aware of on and off the WPI campus, as well as report on the LGBTQ+ culture at WPI.

3. Develop resources to increase visibility and support, in order to emphasize LGBTQ+ visibility at WPI, while emphasizing the following LGBTQ-friendly categories: LGBTQ+ Support & Institutional Commitment, Housing & Residence Life, and Recruitment & Retention. Compare this new resource to similar resources implemented at other universities.

4. Establish effective communications with The Alliance, Gender Equality Club, and relevant campus departments, including Undergraduate Admissions and the Office of Multicultural Affairs

3.1 Discovering What Constitutes a LGBTQ-Friendly Campus

Learning about what resources WPI has to offer their LGBTQ+ students, faculty, staff, alumni, etc. is fundamental to understanding the institute's "active interest in LGBTQ issues and ongoing commitment to LGBTQ+ & ally people" that Campus Pride recognizes. There are currently around fourteen distinct LGBTQ+ student resources serviced at WPI by queer and ally community members (Appendix A). Several of these fourteen are detailed on the WPI Office of Multicultural Affairs web page recently updated by the Turn the Curve (TCT) program. Through a campus climate survey provided by Campus Pride, the leading non-profit organization assisting LGBTQ+ students with the LGBTQ-friendly college search, we were able to recognize how each specific LGBTQ+ resource impacts the WPI community. The Campus Pride Index is "...used to measure and promote LGBT quality of life on college and university campuses, as well as help postsecondary institutions become more LGBTQ-friendly (Lariosa, 2019)." Each LGBTQ+ resource available at a university contributes to LGBTQ+ policy, programming, or practice. On
the WPI Campus Pride webpage one can find a list of LGBTQ+ campus resources, events, and Alliance Executive Board contacts, regularly updated by The Alliance. WPI also has an online webpage updated by the TCT program queer and ally staff, which lists WPI’s LGBTQ+ resources. Many LGBTQ+ students at WPI, however, are not aware of the majority of LGBTQ+ resources available to them from the WPI campus upon enrollment and throughout their college careers. Some LGBTQ+ students may not know whom to contact with questions, and they may feel a lack of emotional and professional support on campus. It is important to establish clear methods of distributing information on the various social, wellness, and career-oriented resources available to every student.

Unlike many top LGBTQ-friendly campuses, WPI lacks critical resources that would more effectively support the community. One of the most significant LGBTQ+ resources at more than 100 college campuses is a LGBTQ+ Resource Center. A previous IQP analyzed the potential for a LGBTQ+ resource center at WPI, and it concluded that WPI does not currently possess the space or funds to erect a resource center of its own, so alternative resources are examined through this IQP, specifically, ones considering the needs and experiences of WPI's prospective student population. It is agreed that all resources, including those only available to current students, faculty and staff, can attract prospective students, so we consider all resources through this project when considering the development of a new resource targeting prospective students. In order to learn of which other LGBTQ+ resources WPI lacks and also find top LGBTQ-friendly campuses comparable to WPI, we searched the Campus Pride Index for the top three LGBTQ-friendly technical institutes in the United States: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Kennesaw State University, and Worcester Polytechnic Institute (respectively). Discovering the resources available at the other top two colleges was essential to understanding
the reasons they rank ahead of WPI and learning some ways WPI can improve upon their resources and overall campus climate for LGBTQ+ students.

3.2 Understanding the Impact of LGBTQ+ Resources at WPI

After considering the resources that WPI and other institutions service, we then could learn which resources WPI students are aware of on-campus as well as off-campus. This information would be useful when deciding which student resources could be most beneficial to WPI students.

We concluded that the easiest way to find this information would be through a student survey that asks dichotomous, multiple-choice, and open-ended questions. Survey participants could remain anonymous throughout the survey by choosing to skip the optional section where they could disclose their email in order to potentially participate in a follow-up survey or interview. All personal responses are being kept confidential in that participatory responses will not be identified.

Once the survey is distributed and results are collected, the project team analyzed all resultant data. Based on the results, conclusions can be made about the current WPI LGBTQ+ campus climate and how it could be more positively enhanced through this overnight program.

3.3 Developing a New LGBTQ+ Resource

After considering the findings of each objective, it was concluded that one of the most effective resources WPI should provide students is one encompassing and promoting all other LGBTQ+ available resources. This could assist any institute that lacks a full-time position managing LGBTQ+ outreach and advocacy and a resource center.
For this Interactive Qualifying Project, the team's goal was to determine a method of enhancing the visibility and campus climate revolving the LGBTQ+ community at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. One way we have decided to do this is by establishing an overnight program at WPI inviting prospective students who identify within the LGBTQ+ community and who are considering attending WPI. The program would give prospective students an opportunity to gain insight into residential life and LGBTQ+ campus resources at WPI, as well as to meet professors and potential classmates. This program would run similarly to the Athena and Discover over-night programs already established at WPI, as prospective students would be matched with a student host living on campus and would attend the open house ASD program the following day. The goal of this overnight program at WPI would be to foster a welcoming and inclusive community for prospective students. The next step of the IQP team was to choose which activities and information should be present in the program, through which a survey was conducted.

The survey's purpose was to ascertain knowledge and opinions from the WPI LGBTQ+ community to identify helpful resources and activities that the IQP team can include in the overnight program proposal. In order to know which resources to include and focus on within the program, the project team had created a survey in which student participants in The Alliance and Gender Equality Club conveyed which resources are most popular on and off campus, as well as the resources with which they are least familiar. The survey also helped us to determine hypothetical student interest in attending this program if they were a high school student, as well as future student interest in hosting prospective students. The survey will also gauge the current campus visibility and campus climate of the LGBTQ+ community.
The LGBTQ+ overnight program would follow an itinerary similar to that of the Athena and the Envision programs (Appendix F), and all programs might join together in the same activity in order for students to meet and connect. One activity on that itinerary should be a group discussion or presentation exploring the various LGBTQ+ student resources offered on and off-campus. The program should occur the night previous to an open house event, like Accepted Students Day. The program should conclude with the student registration for Accepted Students Day, during which they may attend the formal LGBTQ+ resources presentation. The methods of advertising the program can be found in Appendix I.
Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 What WPI has to Offer the LGBTQ+ Community

The Office of Multicultural Affairs offers its resources to LGBTQ+ students, as well as the Safezone Program and Health Services. The most active and popular LGBTQ+ campus resource is a student-led organization, The Alliance at WPI Affiliate oSTEM Chapter. The reason The Alliance is considered the most popular LGBTQ+ resource is that it is the most known and the most utilized resource of all the other resources, based on the survey conducted through this IQP. The purpose of The Alliance is to provide advocacy and community to people of diverse gender identities, and sexual and romantic orientations. As a two-term executive board member of The Alliance, I have seen tremendous growth from the club, especially within the involvement of the general student body. Currently, the club has a confidential email alias comprised of 270 WPI students, faculty and staff. About 50 members are considered active general body members, or members who have voted in our latest presidential election. The Alliance Executive Board consists of 6 members, and in 2018, we had our first all trans/non-binary executive board. The Alliance, however, periodically struggles to recruit and retain active general body members, especially first-year students. The Alliance was recently renamed to include the title "Affiliate oSTEM Chapter" in order to promote our membership to a professional, non-profit organization called Out in Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics, or oSTEM. oSTEM is a popular off-campus intercultural resource among Alliance members, which establishes a network of students and professionals pursuing STEM. The annual oSTEM conference offers various workshops, a career fair, graduate school expo, and many other professional, social, and wellness resources. In 2018, The Alliance attended their 3rd consecutive oSTEM conference in Houston, Texas with their largest group yet consisting of 12
students and 2 WPI staff chaperones. Currently, two Alliance members work for oSTEM as leaders in the Membership Committee and Diversity and Inclusion Committee. oSTEM is continuously expanding, having started from one university and then branching to more than 130 other institutional chapters committed to the LGBTQ+ community in STEM.

Besides The Alliance at WPI Affiliate oSTEM Chapter, the new Turn The Curve program at WPI has been a powerful resource for LGBTQ+ faculty, staff, students and allies at WPI. TCT was launched last year by LGBTQ+ and ally faculty and staff, although it has only ever had one active faculty member, Zoe Reidinger, biomedical engineering assistant teaching professor and my IQP advisor. The group has encouraged student advocacy, developed a new LGBTQ+ resources webpage and incorporated the LGBTQ+ genre into the WPI cinema website where one can find a growing list of LGBTQ-themed movies.
4.1.1 The Campus Pride Index Campus Climate Survey

The search narrowed from 352 total universities (technical, liberal arts, religious, military, historically black, etc.) to only 10 technical universities, making it one of the smallest LGBTQ-friendly campus categories on Campus Pride, compared to the 121 available liberal arts colleges. It was learned that the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a STEM university located in Boston, Massachusetts, surpasses WPI in most aspects of LGBTQ+ policy, practice, and programming. However, WPI ranks only second to MIT as the most LGBTQ-friendly technical institute in the New England region, and third in the nation, after MIT and Kennesaw State University, respectively (Campus Pride, 2019). While MIT is not a Premier Campus, while WPI is, it has a Pride Index Score of 4.5/5, the same score as Kennesaw State University. WPI's Pride Index Score is currently a 3.5/5 (69%), based on a 2017 Campus Climate Survey, generating a relatively large difference in scores among the top LGBTQ-friendly technical institutions. The next ranking trailing WPI is a ⅓ shared by 3 campuses: NHTI-Concord's Community College, Rochester Institute of Technology, and Premier campus, Pennsylvania College of Technology.

Not only is this representative of the limited selection of LGBTQ-friendly STEM universities for LGBTQ+ college-bound youth but of the necessary effort from STEM universities to visibly show its support for LGBTQ+ issues and resources. Unlike WPI, MIT provides students with LGBTQ-themed curricula, institutional scholarships, workshops led by professionals, a mentorship program, and more, in addition to their LGBTQ+ Resource Center ("Rainbow Lounge Resources"). These resources provide queer students with reliable safe spaces where they know they will feel welcomed and emboldened. A resource center can especially
help students find LGBTQ-related resources specific to their needs, such as financial guidance and emotional counseling.

What makes WPI a Premier Pride Campus? Recognizing where WPI can Improve

According to Campus Climate Survey, WPI

Based on the Campus Climate Survey, the following items are categories in which WPI should seek improvement:

a. LGBTQ+ Support & Institutional Commitment Score: 59% equals 3 Stars of 5
b. LGBTQ+ Housing & Residence Life Score: 57% equals 3 Stars of 5 Stars
c. LGBTQ+ Recruitment & Retention Score: 53% equals 3 Stars of 5 Stars

4.2 The Qualtrics Survey Analysis

Through an online survey using the Qualtrics server, we asked 100 WPI students a set of a dozen optional questions (Appendix A). We analyzed the results to gauge the current LGBTQ+ campus climate, determined which resources students are the most and least familiar with on and off campus, and roughly estimated the potential participation of LGBTQ+ high school students for the proposed overnight program geared toward the LGBTQ+ community. The survey participants were current members of The Alliance or Gender Equality Club with the majority being female identifying, while 26% identified themselves with they/them/their pronouns. This year The Alliance Executive Board is the first all transgender and gender non-binary board the school has elected. The problem at WPI is that the majority of LGBTQ+ students are not aware of all these resources available to them (Sanchez, 2018).

From this survey, we found that 9/10 students feel more comfortable identifying within the LGBTQ+ at WPI than in their hometowns. The most popular LGBTQ+ resource is The Alliance, and the least popular resources are preferred name changes, gender marker changes,
and Handshake, a job search database that can provide students with a list of LGBTQ-friendly companies hiring college students. When asked the question, "If you did not yet attend WPI and wanted to learn more about the school, how likely would you participate in an overnight program at WPI for prospective students who identify within the LGBTQ+ community...?" Of the 73 students who answered, 34% revealed that they would be very likely to attend, 41% would be somewhat likely, and 24% would not be interested.

4.3 The Recommended LGBTQ+ Resources

Prospective students currently in high school and within the LGBTQ+ community are the target audience for the program since they would benefit the most from learning of resources available to them in college. Prospective students are also a valuable group to The Alliance, as they may be recruited into the student organization. Besides those completing our surveys and those high school students registered in the program, other participants of the project would include the relevant departments across the WPI campus, such as but not limited to, Health Services, Student Development and Counseling Center (SDCC), Residential Services Office, Office of Undergraduate Admissions, Pre-Collegiate Outreach, Academic Resource Center, etc. The project team would contact these student departments with any questions concerning funding and safety. The project team would also contact the directors of the Athena and Envision programs with any questions, to exchange ideas and to coordinate student activities together. The identities of potential hosts would be known only to the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and the Residential Services Office.

At the conclusion, a budget and program itinerary should be finalized, as well as a method(s) of registering all interested high school participants and student hosts into the program
via WPI email, physical mail, and the online website. All materials should be purchased and some training should be conducted for student hosts.

4.4 Meetings with WPI Staff

Throughout the project, team members met with the various departments and groups of the WPI campus. In order to gain more insight into the next steps of the project and potential hurdles, the team met with Academic Advisor Tally Reeverts. (talk about her input and advice). Next, we contacted the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. After meeting with them on three separate occasions, it was decided that the overnight program and the open house event could not be initiated this academic year. However, an implementation process had been designed and reviewed.
Conclusions and Recommendations

In order to be a competitive organization today, a diverse population is essential for its sustainability, and the LGBTQ+ community is a considerably large and diverse group. In order to recruit and retain LGBTQ+ students at WPI, elevating the LGBTQ+ campus climate, this Interactive Qualifying Project recommends promoting the available LGBTQ+ student resources and regularly implementing new ones. This IQP proposes an overnight program for queer students accepted to attend WPI, inviting them to experience a day on campus to introduce them to the resources that would be available to them upon enrollment. Alternative programming is also suggested through this project.

After meeting with Undergraduate Admissions staff at WPI, it was decided that the OASIS overnight program and the OASIS event at Accepted Students Day could not be actualized the year of the IQP. Discussion is occurring this summer with the Diversity & Outreach Initiatives Admissions Team about implementing the programs for next academic year (2019-2020). Through a recent meeting, admissions staff Stephanie Rudzinski suggested a day program as a cheaper way to gauge the turnout of an overnight program. The day program would include a similar itinerary to that of the overnight program. In order efficiently develop these programs, this IQP strongly recommends a part-time, paid position for a LGBTQ-identify student ambassador on the Undergraduate Admissions Targeted Domestic Recruitment Associates Team.

I end with this quote recently spoken by 2020 Democratic Presidential Candidate Pete Buttigieg: "So much of this is the element of surprise. Ten years ago, you would not have said, ‘If we're going to cook up the ideal presidential candidate, let's have a 30-something, gay mayor
from the Midwest.' No other timing the last two hundred years would someone like me have fit a presidential campaign. But we're living in this moment, maybe the only moment, for the next two hundred years. Say, 'What does it [your constituency, country, district] call for in this moment.' To my surprise too, at first, I realized that this is a moment that just might call for somebody like me." (Trevor Noah's The Daily Show: Pete Buttigieg - How much Does White Male Privilege Decide Which Candidates Matter?)
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Appendix A: WPI LGBTQ+ Student Resources

A.1 WPI LGBTQ+ Resources Quick List

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<th>WPI LGBTQ+ Resources Quick List</th>
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<td>The Office of Multicultural Affairs</td>
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<td>OASIS House</td>
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<td>LGBTQ+ Library Lending</td>
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<td>The Alliance at WPI Affiliate oSTEM Chapter</td>
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<td>oSTEM Annual Conference</td>
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<td>Weekly Events</td>
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<td>The Gender Equality Club</td>
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<td>Safe Zone</td>
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<td>“Safe Space” Program</td>
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<td>Turn the Curve Program</td>
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<td>Gender Inclusive Housing</td>
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<td>Gender Inclusive Restrooms</td>
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<td>#LIVEWPI Cinema</td>
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A.2 Office Multicultural Affairs LGBTQ+ Resources Webpage

The Alliance

The Alliance is a student organization at WPI whose mission to provide a voice and body for students of WPI of all sexual orientations and gender identities. The organization offers social and educational programming, and a support networks for students.

Safe Zone

The Safe Zone Committee at WPI consists of students, staff, and faculty who work to provide the campus community with education and training to promote the understanding of issues affecting LGBTQ+ individuals, fostering an atmosphere of growth and enrichment for all. Please email the Committee with any questions, suggestions, or comments.

Safe Zone “Safe Space” Program

The “Safe Space” program is a campus-wide network of trained individuals who can act as resources for members of the campus community with questions or concerns related to LGBTQ+ issues.

Members that have completed the training and committed to help provide a “Safe Space” can highlight their visibility to the WPI community by prominently displaying the Safe Zone logo. The Safe Zone logo sends a message to LGBTQ+ people and their allies that the person displaying said symbol will be understanding, supportive, and trustworthy if a member of the LGBTQ+ community needs help, advice, or to talk with someone.

The Job Search & Handshake

The Career Development Center has some tips about what you choose to share or not share about your identity in your job search here.

If you wish to change your preferred name in Handshake, you can edit this in your student profile. If you wish to change your gender assignment in Handshake, go here for instructions.
Gender Inclusive Restrooms

There are numerous gender-inclusive restrooms available on campus. A full listing of the locations can be found on WPI’s Interactive Map.

Legal Name or Gender Change

If you have legally changed your name and/or gender and wish to have this reflected in your official student record, complete the Legal Name or Gender Change Form available on the Registrar’s website.

Preferred Name

If you are interested in sharing your gender identity with WPI or listing your preferred name in UNIX based applications at WPI (this includes the campus directory and your email display name) and on your WPI ID card, you can confidentially contact Emily Parlow, Assistant Dean of Students, emparlow@wpi.edu, located in the Dean of Students Office in the Rubin Campus Center.

Please note, if you use a first name that differs from your legal name, you have the ability to update it for general communications as well. For example, WPI’s Public Relations team uses the Merit platform to share student news through hometown press releases. If you would like to use your preferred name, please contact media@wpi.edu.

Otherwise, your legal name and gender will continue to be used in systems that require it. For example: financial records, government reporting, official University records, medical records. This will not change your name in Banner or on class lists or rosters. This can currently only be done by completing the Legal Name or Gender Change form.

Canvas

You can update your name in Canvas on your own. This can be done by following these steps.

Gender Inclusive Housing & Housing Application

Residential Services offers a variety of undergraduate housing opportunities that support students with a variety of gender expressions. For more information on housing options and directions on how to update your preferred name in StarRez, WPI’s housing selection and roster database, click here. While your legal name will appear in your housing application, you do have the ability to create your own username for the online housing application search function.

Mental Health and Wellness Support

The Student Development and Counselling Center affirms and supports students of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. Staff strive to provide a safe, intentional space where LGBTQ+, trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming students can have their wellness needs met. The SDCC is located on Einhorn Rd and can be reached at 1-508-831-5540.

Getting Connected with Worcester Community Health Care Providers

Health Services staff annually attend the “Advancing Excellence in Transgender Health” symposium and are knowledgeable in students of all sexual orientations and offer gender affirming care. They can direct you to appropriate community resources based upon your needs. Health Services is located in the lower level of Stoddard C and can be reached at 1-508-831-5520.

Community Resources

There are a number of resources available to LGBTQ+ Worcester community members. A listing compiled by Worcester Pride can be found here.
Appendix B: Top LGBTQ-Friendly Engineering Colleges

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<tr>
<th>College Campus</th>
<th>STEM Rankings</th>
<th>LGBTQ-Friendliness Rankings</th>
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<td></td>
<td>U.S. News</td>
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<td>(1) Lehigh University (Rossin)*</td>
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<td>(2) Princeton University*</td>
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<td>(3) University of Pennsylvania*</td>
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<td>(4) Tufts University*</td>
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<td>(5) Harvey Mudd College*</td>
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<td>(6) University of Washington*</td>
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<td>(7) Ohio State University*</td>
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<td>(8) University of Maryland – College Park (Clark)*</td>
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<td>(9) Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey – New Brunswick*</td>
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<td>(10) Massachusetts Institute of Technology</td>
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<td>University of Massachusetts – Amherst*</td>
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<td>Washington University in St. Louis</td>
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<td>Columbia University (Fu Foundation)</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Washington State University*</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>University of Colorado – Boulder*</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Pennsylvania State University – University Park*</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>University of Texas – Dallas (Jonsson)</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>University of Illinois – Chicago</td>
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<td>University of Wisconsin – Madison</td>
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<td>New York University (Tandon)</td>
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<td>Syracuse University</td>
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<td>Northwestern University (McCormick)</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>California Institute of Technology</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Carnegie Mellon University</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Measure 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Georgia Institute of Technology</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>University of Rochester</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Colorado School of Mines</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Stony Brook University</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Stevens Institute of Technology</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Drexel University</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Illinois Institute of Technology</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Worcester Polytechnic Institute</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The asterisk signifies colleges on the Best 30 LGBTQ-friendly Campuses
*Note: Colleges are descending in order of LGBTQ+ recognition and friendliness.
Appendix C: LGBTQ+ Student Experience Qualtrics Survey

Personal Information

Q2. Pronouns
- Ey/Em/Eirs
- He/Him/His
- She/Her/Hers
- They/Them/Theirs
- Other

Q14. Class Year
- Graduate Student
- 2019
- 2020
- 2021
- 2022

Personal Identities (Optional)

Q3. What are some of your intersectional identities? You can choose to include as little or as many of your identities e.g. Venezuelan, pansexual, genderfluid, student.

Comfort

Q5. Do you identify within the LGBTQIA+ community?
- Yes
- No

Q6. How would you describe your comfort level identifying in the LGBTQIA+ community?

Not comfortable 0 1 2 3 Somewhat 4 5 6 Very comfortable 7 8 9 10

Q7. Does your comfort level change when you are at WPI? Record your comfort level identifying in the LGBTQIAP+ community at WPI.

Q9. Which LGBTQIAP+ related campus resources do you use?
- The Alliance
- Safe Zone
- Job Search & Handshake
- Gender inclusive restrooms
- Gender Equality Club
- Legal name
- Preferred name change on Canvas or Outlook
- Gender inclusive housing
- Mental health/wellness support (SDCC)
- Health Services
- Gender marker change

Q10. Which of these resources were you previously unaware offers support to the LGBTQIAP+ campus community?
- The Alliance
- Safe Zone
- Job Search & Handshake
- Gender inclusive restrooms
- Gender Equality Club

Legal name change
Preferred name change on Canvas or Outlook
Gender inclusive housing
Mental health/wellness support (SDCC)
Health Services
Gender marker change

Q11. Are you aware of any helpful LGBTQIAP+ resources available off-campus?

Q15. If you did not yet attend WPI and wanted to learn more about the school, how likely would you participate in an overnight program at WPI for prospective students who identify within the LGBTQIAP+ community, in order to gain insight into residential life and LGBTQIAP+ campus resources, as well as to meet professors and potential classmates? (This program would run similarly to the Athena and Discover overnight programs, as you would be matched with a student host and receive free meals.)

- Very Likely
- Somewhat Likely
- Unlikely

Block 4

Q13. What is your email address? (Optional - if you consent to us asking you follow up questions)
Appendix D: Qualtrics Survey Findings

D.1 Intersecting Queer Identities at WPI
Appendix E: Accepted Students Day OASIS Event Activity

Have at least 1 question answered from someone in each of the color-coded groups to receive a prize!

Suggested Sample Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alliance Members</th>
<th>Faculty/Staff</th>
<th>Accepted Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q: What is the process in order to opt into Gender Inclusive Housing?</td>
<td>Q: Are you involved with The Alliance or another LGBTQIAP+ initiative on campus?</td>
<td>Q: What are the names (with pronouns) of three students who you have met at this event?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q: What are the LGBTQ+ student organizations active on campus? How often do they meet?</td>
<td>Q: Are you aware of any LGBTQ+ resources off campus?</td>
<td>Q: What other LGBTQ+ resources have you learned about on campus?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix F: Program Budgets

F.1 OASIS Overnight Program Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>QUANTITY</th>
<th>COST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food - Chartwell Dinner Buffet</td>
<td>10 Poultry</td>
<td>$450.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 Vegetarian Beverages and Desserts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food - Pulse on Dining Breakfast</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>$340.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buttons/Pins</td>
<td>1 Kit</td>
<td>$50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name tag stickers</td>
<td>1 Pack</td>
<td>$9.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lens &amp; Lights microphone</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance T-Shirts</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>$222.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing &amp; Folding Services</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>$19.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**E.2 OASIS Accepted Students Day Program Budget**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>QUANTITY</th>
<th>COST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lanyards</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>$44.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID card holders</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>$19.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$64.96</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total** | **$1,100.95**
## Appendix G: Campus Pride Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Star Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Campus Pride Score</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>3.5 stars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation Score</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>3.5 stars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Identity/Expression Score</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>3.5 stars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ Policy Inclusion Score</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>4 stars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ Support &amp; Institutional Commitment Score</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>3 stars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ Academic Life Score</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>2 stars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ Student Life Score</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>4.5 stars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ Housing &amp; Residence Life Score</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>3 stars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ Campus Safety Score</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>5 stars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ Counseling &amp; Health Score</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>5 stars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ Recruitment &amp; Retention Score</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>3 stars</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H: Program Sample Itineraries

H.1 OASIS Accepted Students Day Sample Itineraries

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**OASIS Overnight Program Sample Itinerary (2020)**

**PRISM Overnight Program**

4:00pm-5:00 Registration

5:00-5:30 Welcome

5:30-7:00 Dinner with Student hosts

7:00-8:00 Group Discussion

8:00-9:00 Social Activities

9:00-10:00 Create Your Own Pronoun Pins

**Accepted Students Day**

8:00am-9:30 Check-in; breakfast

9:30 Accepted Students Day begins

---

**OASIS Overnight Program Sample Itinerary (2020)**

**PRISM Overnight Program**

4:00pm-5:00 Registration

5:00-5:30 Welcome

5:30-7:00 Dinner with Student hosts

7:00-8:00 LGBTQIA+ Resources at WPI

8:00-9:00 Crafts at OASIS House

**Accepted Students Day**

8:00am-9:30 Check-in; breakfast

9:30 Accepted Students Day begins
G.2 Athena and Envision Programs Sample Itineraries

**Athena Overnight Program Sample Itinerary (2016)**

Athena Overnight
4:30pm-5:00 Registration
5:00-6:00 "Your WPI Questions Answered" panel discussion
6:00-7:00 Dinner with student hosts
7:00-7:30 Scavenger Hunt
7:30-8:30 Guerilla Improv Show
8:30-9:30 Dessert Social

**Accepted Student Day**
8:00am-9:30 Reunite with parents; breakfast
9:30 Accepted Student Day begins

**Envision Overnight Program Sample Itinerary (2016)**

Envision Overnight
4:00pm-4:30 Registration
4:30-5:15 Welcome
5:15-6:30 Dinner with student hosts
6:30-8:00 Group Discussion with WPI students
8:30-10:00 Social Activities

**Accepted Student Day**
8:00am-9:30 Check in; breakfast
9:30 Accepted Student Day begins
12:00pm-1:00 Multicultural Community Luncheon
Appendix H: Methods of Advertising

Methods of Advertising:

- Sending an email to The Alliance and GEC general bodies, as well as familiar faculty and staff with an attached flyer to come be a resource for accepted students within the LGBTQ+ community
- Printing flyers on quarter sheets for Alliance members to distribute throughout the ASD activities fair tabling to inform accepted students of the activity occurring later in the day
  - If the overnight program can be planned next year, we could advertise for student hosts at the New Student Orientation (NSO) activities fair tabling event
  - We could ask accepted students who approach The Alliance table for their emails to add to The Alliance alias, and then email the alias reminding all students about the ASD event
- Advertising the event through whichever avenues are taken by Admissions outreach for other ASD activities e.g. including this activity on the ASD itinerary, emailing all accepted students the ASD itinerary, and posting the program activities online
  - How does Admissions advertise other activities occurring on ASD?
  - A: directory of students
  - How does Admissions advertise the Envision Program?
  - A:
- Potentially emailing all accepted students details for this specific LGBTQIAP+ event
  - Incorporate into other emails regarding ASD sent to accepted students
- Putting up posters around campus to advertise to the faculty and staff we did not yet reach via email and to remind The Alliance GBM