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## A Conversation with Jeff

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**GLBTQ Alumni Oral History Project**

**Conversation with Jeff (class of 2013)**

**April 11, 2015**

**Conducted by Vanessa and Colleen**

**Location: Phone**

**Length: 55 minutes**

**Keywords: activist, battle fatigue, coming out, friendship, heterosexism, higher education, Jesuit, leadership, progress, relationships, residence life, student organizations, training**

**Transcript:**

*Jeff:* How are you?

*Vanessa:* I'm pretty good. Um, so we have two recorders on just in case. But um, thank you for doing this with us.

*Jeff:* Yeah, definitely.

*Vanessa:* Okay so, um I guess we'll like just get started. So how did you decide to come to Holy Cross?

*Jeff:* Ummmm, okay, uh.... I'm thinking of awhile back ago, umm. It um, so coming from high school, I attended a Jesuit high school. And, um, I actually only applied to Jesuit schools. Um it was, I think it was something that, um, when I went on the college tours, it just, it felt right.

*Vanessa:* Mhm.

*Jeff:* Out of the schools that I visited, so I just ended up applying to only Jesuit schools and in terms of looking at the places that I got in, um I came from high school wanting to be a classics major, wanting to like teach high school Latin, um which, I ended up being a classics major at Holy Cross and Holy Cross was one of the best, um schools in the country for undergrad for classics. But I went to Holy Cross and um, I actually didn't visit until after I got accepted and it all felt right. Um.... I ended up attending and that was back in the fall of 2009.

*Vanessa:* Yeah...so like what was your transition from high school to Holy Cross like?

*Jeff:* Umm, I think the transition was more academic, um and kind of a way I wasn't expecting. So I um, so freshman year, I'm thinking of where I came from in high school. So in high school I was super academically driven, um spent hours and hours and hours studying, um, you know trying to get like, a hundred on everything.

*Vanessa:* Mhm.

*Jeff:* Um, and then when I came to Holy Cross, um, I started making friends, um who, so actually some of the first friends that I made were RAs in my building who were also in the classics department. So, um, I ended up getting really close with them and then started through

them getting involved in different organizations on campus and or thinking about getting involved I guess. So, I started seeing my experiences being more social while still trying to be academically driven and actually I think, um so that was the second year Montserrat, um was in place. Um, my, my Montserrat seminar actually ended up influencing my minor, um, and so I think that's sort of what, what kept me going, um actually during my first year, which at the time I thought Montserrat super annoying, but now I'm like...

*Vanessa:* Um, what was your minor?

*Jeff:* Um, so, I first declared an art history minor, um going into sophomore year and then I later declared an Italian minor too because I studied abroad in Rome during my junior year, um, so Classics, art history, and Italian kind of all ended up blending together pretty well.

*Vanessa:* Okay, um so I know you didn't graduate not too long ago but do you think Holy Cross was any different during the time you were here?

*Jeff:* Uh, compared to now?

*Vanessa:* Yeah.

*Jeff:* I think so. Um, I, like in terms of looking back um, just um, I guess even some structural changes, so like looking at the different construction that happened on campus while I was there, um, Figge went up during my junior year um and then some other different construction projects like Kimball. I'm so jealous that Kimball is the way it is now.

*Vanessa:* Yeah.

*Jeff:* Um, but umm, in terms of, of campus culture, um at least from perceived, notion on Facebook, at least from talking to some folks that are still there or that graduated last year, um I think in especially in terms of the way I was involved in the LGBT resources on campus, like I've seen it grow a lot. So my, my freshman year I, um, the clubs on campus, we had a club called ABiGaLe and a club called Allies, um, and they were two separate things, um, and I was, my freshman year I got involved in Allies as the freshman apprentice and then I applied to be co-chair, um, going into my sophomore year. And finding out at the end of the year, um, I ended up getting an email from Liz [inaudible], someone that was the associate director of um, the Office of Student Programs and Involvement at the time, SPI instead of OSI. I got an email from him to come in and to talk about what was going on and I met my co-chair around that time who ended up becoming my best friend sophomore year. Um, and she and I met with him and he was like "So, um, so here's the story, ABiGaLe had less than 15 members so it couldn't be officially recognized as an SGA club to bring into the next year and Allies was in debt because, um, of programming from Rainbow Alliance week and for the t-shirt costs." So, um it was in the red and neither of them ended up submitting the paperwork to go through SGA recognition. Um my co-chair and I were, like, "oh okay, like we just found out we were in this position and then like all this happened." So we sat down in the O'Kane computer lab, tried to fill out all the SGA paperwork that night, um send it to the person in SGA that was doing RSO recognition, and um still ended up finding out it was too late. So did some work over the summer and um, and then

ended up getting recognized in the fall. But all the administrators throughout the process were great, um, and I think that follows when I met Kristine Goodwin, who was the Associate Dean of Student Life at the time and so she was really supportive of, um, also at the time, the idea of combining the two clubs together, um, so sorry that this is like a really long answer.

*Vanessa:* It's no problem.

*Jeff:* I'm trying to think of like the history throughout like how it's changed so, um, so she was really, um really supportive of combining the clubs together, which at the time ABiGaLe was more of an affinity space for folks that identified as LGBTQ on campus. Allies was sort of like the activist group, that, um, you know that could be um, a straight ally or identify as queer or anything, but more activist oriented, I guess. So combining the two clubs together, um, my sophomore year, it was a lot of identity, um, like sort of identity crisis personally but as well as a group, um not knowing exactly what was on campus and so meeting as an e-board, um sort of ended up, um grabbing other people. So I was also an RA, that was my first year as an RA, my sophomore year, um I ended up grabbing two other people who are RAs on my staff to like fill in spaces on the e-board. Um, and then, we sort of went throughout the year and finding out that things were, were very outdated. Um, so at the time Safe Space was a program, um, that was kind of like an Ally training but the, books that we had on like how to do the training and like some of the videotapes, like actual cassette tapes, that we had, were very outdated, um and used a lot of language that just wasn't really appropriate anymore, I think. Um, so throughout that year and working with, um, with Dean Goodwin as well as some folks from Res Life, um, I got the idea of changing up Safe Space and so that's where ReSSpect ended up coming from. And thinking of the acronym for ReSSpect, *Rethinking the Sexuality Spectrum*, and sort of moving more towards the idea of queerness and what that meant and the intersectionality between queerness and religion and how those intersections sort of play out at Holy Cross. That's where ReSSpect came from um, and then sort of working with the e-board throughout the year and trying to find best practices and figure out ways to make that happen and then ended up interning with OSI over the summer after my sophomore year and then presented ReSSpect for the first time during RA training my, the beginning of my junior year. Um and also, so this is kind of like the last piece of the puzzle that fits into how it's changed since, is my co-chair and I over that summer going into junior year really wanted to bring alumni back to campus. We got in touch with, so our faculty advisor, um, is Tom Landy, or was Tom Landy at the time, who is the Director of the McFarland, now the McFarland Center for Religion, Ethics, and Culture and we met with him and he introduced us to Tom Caddigan over in Alumni Relations and really started getting together and piecing together names of alumni and so Katie and I are putting together people that we knew who had just graduated, which was also kind of interesting because there were people that we assumed identified and people that we knew identified and so that was kind of like an interesting balance to, to and that's kind of how he was going off too, like he had had lists of students that he worked with in the past but like just sort of, you know weird knowing how those lists ended up happening and so sending those to Tom and figuring out how we were going to do it and so that was the, so we actually started the first homecoming reception for LGBTQ alumni, which happened the fall of my junior year. And then from that, some of the alumni got together and um were like, now since we were asked to come back, and for many of them it was the first time they actually came back to Holy Cross. And so they got together and started working with Alumni Relations and now they created the LGBTQ alumni affinity group

and then the faculty and staff at Holy Cross, we started reaching out to more as well so as a result of that they created Outfront as a part of that collaboration. And so looking back at my experience it really all came from the students, which realizing now, so I currently work in higher ed. in Student Affairs and seeing how much, you know, we did as a student and how much it was sort of on us to do the work and to reach out to people and to bring communities together, wishing that more of that was done by the full-time staff or by the administrators at the time, but seeing now how far it has come, so seeing that Pride is a thing and that it's changing the name of ABiGaLe /Allies to be something that is more recent or applicable to current student body. And seeing how much the LGBTQ affinity group, the alumni group has grown over the last three or so years and then now seeing that Outfront has become a lot more purpose and that they are collaborating more with the student group. And so just from hearing from folks, from reading on the website, or seeing involvement on campus I think things have changed a lot, specifically around your identity at Holy Cross that was very different in comparison to my freshman year even though it's not too long ago.

**Vanessa:** Um, okay so we are going to start with like, the coming out type of questions. And so, recognizing that coming isn't a one-time event, when and how did you first come out?

**Jeff:** Um, so I think back to maybe, senior year in high school I was starting to come out to myself and then to a few friends, really just one friend at the time. And then, the summer before I went to Holy Cross I was in my first relationship and I think that allowed me to come out a lot more to myself and um, then to a lot more of my friends. So really coming in to, cause that started maybe a week or two after summer orientation, um, not with someone who was at Holy Cross, but um really going into my freshman year of thinking that, I don't know, when I first came to Holy Cross I did feel welcomed and I did feel a part of, and I think a lot of it too was the friends that I had through Classics or the people that were RAs and by default. A lot of them were involved in theater and did ACT and so I ended up getting a lot more friends in the theater department and everyone was really like open and friendly and I really kind of came to Holy Cross being out which I found out very quickly wasn't very common for freshmen or first-year students at the time, and then meeting my future roommate during my freshman year and meeting my friend who ended up being my co-chair ABiGaLe/Allies my junior year and then she was our senior year too that year and some of my other friends. But thinking that in terms of the class of 2013, there were only like three or four of us that were out on campus and that stayed relatively consistent throughout my four years so that was always kind of hard but I think once I came out at Holy Cross that allowed me to come out to my family my freshman year, at least some of my family, um and really Holy Cross ended up becoming a place that was more of a home for me than my actual home just because I did feel like I could be there. So that made it easier throughout the four years. I guess not have to feel like I was continuing to come out but then what was I gonna do from there to hopefully make the campus more inclusive for other folks to do that too if they wished to do that.

**Vanessa:** Um, so can you share a story of what it was like being out at Holy Cross?

**Jeff:** Um, so I think looking back at all four years it was, I think the hardest thing about being out on campus and being a student leader on campus and how that intersected and I think that this is the case too with a lot of, so once I became co-chair of ABiGaLe /Allies and ended up

looking at my friend group we were all between sophomore and junior year, all of us were the co-chairs of all the MSOs on campus and so, it was, in terms of sharing our experiences with each other as students who had marginalized identities on campus, whether for me it was a marginalized sexual orientation and then for others having marginalized racial identities on campus, and what that meant to be student leaders with those identities. It felt like at least for me that, so once I was out and once I became the co-chair of ABiGaLe /Allies and once people knew me as like the RA and as the student leader and eventually someone that was on SGA and everything like that, people looked to me to educate them about my identity, which in terms of thinking about social justice its kind of the opposite of what you wanna do, which I think was the hardest thing for me throughout the four years, so I can think of maybe you know a couple things you know my freshman year in terms of homophobia on my floor, or like some instances in figuring out who else is out on campus. But I think overall it was the thing of being an out student leader that, you know people are always calling me and my other co-chair to do trainings on campus or to come in and talk to them about what it meant to be queer on campus and so I think it was more, I think that had an affect also on my ability to make friends with other queer students on campus because I was so out and because people knew me as like the gay person on campus. Other people who were in the closet didn't wanna be associated with me because they thought that by being associated with me then that would mean that they would have to come out too and so I think that was hard too looking back at my experience throughout the four years.

**Vanessa:** And who would you say your support system was here?

**Jeff:** Um, so I think in terms of friends, some of my friends on the e-board of ABiGaLe /Allies, some of my friends, some of my other friends that were involved in the other Multicultural Student Organizations and then other RAs, Res. Life really became my community and you know other RAs in my building my first year and I was an RA for two years and then I was an SRD my senior year and so the RA staff, that full community of RAs really, I think also got me through. And then I think in terms of my support system from faculty and staff, the supervisors and some of the CDCs in Res. Life who, at this point none of them still work there, but, and then Chuck Stanley who is still one of the Associate Directors, Ben Kanabis (sp?) who used to be one of the Associate Directors in Res. Life and then Kristine Goodwin who was the Associate Dean. They, and I think of in terms of, in the moment support, I think of after, so when I presented ReSSpect for the first time at RA training in fall of 2011, I remember sending a three-page long email to Dean Goodwin right that night after I presented it just being like completely overwhelmed, that it happened but then like angry at the whole process too at the same time so she sat down with me, it was still during RA training like for lunch down in Crossroads the very next day, she responded to me like at 6 am the next day and we sat down in Crossroads and I just remember like, just like crying, and just like reflecting on my experience and she was so crucial. I think both in mentoring me in my identities as a student on campus but also ended up becoming one of my greatest mentors for Student Affairs and now seeing the work that I do in Student Affairs today of really looking back at her as being one of my mentors that really got me where I am today too.

**Vanessa:** What was angering about that process, you said that when you did the ReSSpect training?

**Jeff:** Yeah, I think it was, I think that the anger came from the frustration of having to be, again, the one, like the one person that was educating. Also, feeling like I had to be the one to be reaching out to administrators on campus, um, the, that was when the first round of looking for a Diversity Officer on campus, a Chief Diversity Officer on campus, that was when they went around on their first try of making that happen and I remember reading the leadership profiles, so the longer position description for that, which I think was about twenty-pages long and there was no mention of LGBTQ issues in that except for the general non-discrimination statement of just like Holy Cross's nondiscrimination statement overall that includes sexual orientation. And so I think like looking at all of the work that I had done at that point over a year to make ReSSpect happen or to make the alumni event happen, I'm thinking like okay I am doing this for Holy Cross, I'm not getting paid at all for it and my friendships are being hurt in the process, thinking of ABiGaLe /Allies and how much I wanted to work to make change happen on campus and how that affected my friends who were also going through that process but like balancing relationships and balancing friendships and how I ended up hurting my friends and how my friends ended up hurting me throughout that process and I think there was just a lot of pain associated with that and then when we talk about social justice work there is a lot that's around sort of battle fatigue. So, you know it could be racial battle fatigue or sexual orientation battle fatigue or gender battle fatigue of when you continue to have the conversations but you feel like you're the only one doing it and you get to a point that you're giving everything of yourself and not seeing in the moment how you're getting something back. And I think that was what it was for me, of feeling like I had given everything at that point and hadn't, hadn't really gotten much in return. I think that was kind of and then just looking at my own identity development at the time too of figuring out, what I, you know, my identity was and how that was meant to show up at Holy Cross I think was, it was all sort of like a watershed moment of like that pain turned to anger and then I just became angry at everyone. (laughs)

**Colleen:** Um, so, if you could do your Holy Cross experience over, would you do anything differently?

**Jeff:** Umm, I don't think so (laughter). I remember having this conversation with, uhm, again with my co-chair at the time, uh, from sophomore year. Uhm, some point during—so she was class of 2012, so some time during my senior year I remember just, like, the middle of the night one time calling her and, like, talking about everything and, you know asking her if she thought it was worth it. Uhm, and for her it wasn't, uhm, she experienced a lot of pain, as well, as a result of the work that we did. But for me, you know looking back now especially, uhm, at all of my involvement, you know whether that was my involvement as an RA, or in SGA, or working in OSI, or even different offices on campus, uhm, you know that really lead me to my student affairs journey of the work that I'm doing now. And I think in terms of the work that I did at Holy Cross around my LGBT identity and where that fit in the Jesuit mission, uhm, and thinking, you know, sort of similarly of how that influenced the work that I do now, uhm, with students and especially allowing me to place, sort of, my experience in relation to when I'm working with students who also hold marginalized identities and, sort of that trust-building with them, and trying to, sort of, not let my experience that I had, be their experience too—or at least the negative parts of it because again, like, I think looking back I got so much out of it, you know, again, as a Student Affairs professional now, like, I learned how to navigate campus politics as a student in ways that some professionals don't understand until, like, their third year in their first

job—and so, things like that, you know, it makes sense and I'm grateful for that, but I think the thing I'm most grateful for (in) everything that I've done is, again, the people that I've met and the community that I built, and the support that I had and hopefully that the work that I did—it was meaningful, and it's going to continue to be meaningful for students that continue to Holy Cross, and seeing again how much it's changed from the fall of 2009 until now being the spring of 2015, uhm, I think a lot has changed and I don't know what either of your experiences are, or how you perceive the campus climate to be, but just the campus things that are in place now that weren't there when I was a first-year student and talking to alumni and seeing how much that's changed since, like the 80s—uhm, or earlier than that, uhm, I do see myself as an important piece in that puzzle. Uhm, I think it took me a while to see that, but I'm really grateful for all of the experiences that happened so I don't think I would have changed any of it.

**Colleen:** Cool—uhm... Do you think, uh, that Holy Cross climate, or the Jesuit identity, uh, affected your view of your own sexuality?

**Jeff:** Uhm—I think for me the Jesuit identity affected it in a positive way. Uhm, as of the opportunities I had for reflection throughout my four years, which I totally took for granted while I was there (laughter), uh but realizing now that it was really important, you know like, as an RA, the times that—and I don't even know if they still do this, uhm, like Student Affairs in general—we had a, uhm, a reflection book that like took the year into like four seasons, and then each of those seasons into—oh no, they took it into the two semesters and then those semesters were divided into like three sort of, like seasons, uhm it had a, like, reflection questions for all of your four years, uhm, and thinking—thinking back to how much I hated writing and journaling and everything like that, but, you know as an RA that was something that we had to do during RA training or, uh, one of the four cornerstones being reflective habits, uhm—but uhm, senior year I did the spiritual exercises and if either of you haven't done that yet or still have the opportunity to do that I would definitely recommend doing that because that was one of the most transformative experiences of probably my entire life. Uhm, being able to go into the middle of the woods for five days, in silence and reflect was definitely one of the most powerful experiences that I've ever experienced and I think the, just like, besides that for, like, in terms of my own personal identity development, but for, in terms of, just the Jesuit community and like, Jesuit ideals overall, uhm, in that camp of, uhm of the care for the whole person, uhm and in terms of solidarity in being you know “women and men for and with others” uhm, those things leave—and then just like how cool the Jesuits are in general (laughter)—they leave a lot of room for, you know that creative dialogue and really embracing dialogue when talking about difficult issues and difficult conversations, uhm, but I think, I-I again can't imagine my experience at a different institution, for my college or undergraduate experience, uhm, and now being at the end of my graduate program, of looking into work pretty much primarily only at Jesuit institutions, uhm, just because I feel that that work and doing this work there, specifically, is so important—uh, like creating young leaders who will go out and transform the world.

**Colleen:** Uhm, did you have any romantic relationships at Holy Cross?

**Jeff:** At Holy Cross or during my time at Holy Cross? (laughter)

**Colleen:** Uhm, I guess either (laughter), whatever you feel comfortable talking about.



**Jeff:** Right, so—uhm, I was, you know, involved in romantic relationships during my time at Holy Cross. Uhm, I never dated anyone else from Holy Cross. Uhm, I think, again, it sort of went back to that, uhm, that uhm... that part about being out on campus and being in my position on campus and sort of having that stigma attached to, you know with, because I think—you know again while homophobia exists and while it does happen at Holy Cross I think a lot of it is more of... the heterosexism that happens on campus, you know thinking of—and like this is like, I guess just a bigger thing that will eventually bubble down into answering your question (laughter). But you know thinking of something as simple as, like—so in terms of my Italian minor, for example, probably any language that you take, you know in your first, like in the- the intro to that language class, you know the professor, you know, will go around and, uhm, you know when you're learning like the future tense in a language, like, they'll ask you to be like, "oh, well," you know, "who will your," like, "describe your future wife," or "describe your future husband." Uhm, and I think of, how... how gendered that is...

**Colleen & Vanessa:** Yeah... mmhmm

**Jeff:** How that could happen, like, my experience of that in my intro to Italian class I'm being like, "well my future *husband* will be..." (laughter) You know, they don't know who I'm going to get married to and like what's that about. Uhm, so, I think uhm—but you know that- in terms of that being pervasive across campus and just like everyone assuming... Especially looking at the hook-up culture of Holy Cross

**Colleen:** Yeah

**Jeff:** And student involvement with alcohol, uhm on campus (laughter) I think, you know, all of those things together really didn't create an environment that even if I did or was involved in a romantic relationship it probably wouldn't be a very productive one (laughter). Uhm, so...yeah. I guess that's a really long answer to that question (laughter).

**Colleen:** That's okay (laughter). Uhm, well looking back on, uh, I guess looking back on all the relationship stuff during college is there anything you wish you had known?

**Jeff:** Uh, I think, I think again going back into... Well, this is going to bring up another (inaudible) too (laughter)

**Colleen:** (laughter) That's okay

**Jeff:** I think another thing about my, uhm, again my involvement, uh, and sort of being, again like, people looking at me as "the gay man on campus" kind of thing. Uhm, I think that really prevented me from looking at the importance of the other identities that I hold and then doing the work on those other identities too. Uhm, so, in terms of being the gay man on campus, I think uhm, that once I was that far out, uh, once I started to explore my queer identity more, uh, and identifying as queer it was something that was a lot more fluid and wasn't tied to gender or sexual orientation, specifically I think, you know, sort of in thinking of, uhm, not necessarily relationships, but like, navigating hook up culture with like, with women on campus, or uh, you

know with other men, or with folks identifying either way, uhm, I think that was hard, of uhm, if I did find myself being attracted to women, was I, sort of, you know going back on everyone... or you know letting everyone down, for you know, being the gay person on campus, so I think that limit (inaudible). Uhm, and I think, uhm, of also starting to question gender and starting to identify more as gender-queer, and what does that mean? And I don't think that space was available at all on campus, uh and I don't know what it's like now but definitely during my time there, uh, queer issues and trans issues were something that were very, very far behind and almost consistently left out of the conversation. Uhm, so with that aspect of, of my experience too. So I think, you know backed up on all of that, if I could go back and tell myself something, it probably would be, not to take myself so seriously, I think, uhm I think specifically during my sophomore year and the first semester of my junior year, uhm before I went abroad, I think I took myself, really way too seriously (laughter). Like, I think all of that student-leader stuff I think ended up just going to my head, and uhm, did stop me to build, either friendships or romantic relationships and so I think, again, uhm that's what I would tell my younger self, uhm, about navigating that at Holy Cross.

**Collen:** Alright okay, uhm, so the last section of, ah, the questions, uh, is kind of a looking back on everything. Even though (laughter) this is what it's been for the most part (laughter). Uhm, I don't know (laughter). Uhm, so based on your experience, what advice would you offer to LGBTQ students who are struggling to come out at Holy Cross?

**Jeff:** Uhm, I mean that's a really hard question to answer, because everyone has—everyone's on their own journey, uhm, and develops their identity in very different ways. Uhm, and so I think—and also, you know, in terms of—just in looking at how the world is changing and seeing that there are more, like gay-straight alliances in high schools, which, you know allow people to come out, you know when they come to college, a little bit more—and looking at the Holy Cross culture in the past, of people staying in the closet at Holy Cross and then coming out after, um, I don't, I mean, I think, I don't know I think—it's so different for everyone I feel...because I think also the thing that I learned throughout my time there too is that, like, at the time again you know ABiGaLe/Allies, or now PRIDE, it's not for everyone. Uhm, not everyone who is queer on campus wants to be involved—probably for good reasons too, uhm, and so I think, like, because for me it was like, “okay, you need to come out, you need to join ABiGaLe/Allies and you need to stand up and show everyone that we exist and that we're here, and that this is a community,” and that, all of that. And I think like, you know looking at my past self I think that's total bullshit (laughter), that's not what people need to hear, uhm, and so I don't know I think if I could just, maybe, in terms of having one-on-one conversations with someone, you know and not wanting to go to the whole, like, “it gets better!” thing (laughter). So, I don't know I feel like that's just a really difficult question to answer.

**Colleen:** Definitely (laughter). Uh... you might have the same answer for this one... but, do you have any advice that you would offer to LGBTQ seniors who are about to make the transition from collegiate to professional life?

**Jeff:** Uhm... So I think that would be more practical. Uhm, thinking about, looking, you know for me coming out of grad school and looking at uhm, jobs, and looking at, you know make sure they're looking at non-discrimination statements, for the stuff they're working for, uh, you know

if they're looking at benefits, uhm and, you know not assuming that a senior in college is going to be working for the same company that they'll be working for when they, or if they have a live-in partner; uhm, (inaudible) and what it covers, uhm, you know looking at trans voices not being part of the conversation, uhm, what it means, you know again in terms of similarly with non-discrimination statements or you do, uhm do, like, benefits include insurance that will cover, any cost that, uh, are associated with transitioning. Uhm, I think again with intersectionality being important, uhm, you know I would, in terms of doing, uhm, a lot of the work here, you know I'm currently at UVM, uhm, in Student Affairs but, looking at all of the work that's done here, for queer people of color, uh, and for what does that mean for queer people of color at Holy Cross navigating that conversation, and you know for me not being able to identify with their experience, uhm as a white person, but what is it to balance those identities and to have those intersecting identities and how, how systems of oppression play out in interviewing processes and uh, in application processes and how to navigate that and looking for mentors who have gone through that uhm, and finding people you know in professional settings who have navigated those spaces, uh, and figured out how to do that and be their most authentic selves I think that would be a really important thing to tell graduating seniors who are job-searching. Uhm, and then I think too of—even if you're not job searching if you're looking for grad school, or kinda similar, similar like in making sure you can show up as your most authentic self, uh, wherever you end up being. Whether that's through volunteer work, or internationally and looking at what international laws are, uh, as well, uh, but I think abroad... er, um, I think that would be sort of what I would tell a senior.

**Colleen:** Cool, uh, and then, so lastly, could you share a story about a moment when being LGBTQ impacted an experience, uh at Holy Cross?

**Jeff:** Uh, you mean like my overall experience?

**Colleen:** Uh, like a specific experience.

**Jeff:** Uhm... Now I have to think (laughter).

**Colleen:** You can take your time.

**Jeff:** Uhm... Yeah it's hard to just, to figure out one (laughter). I think, uhm, I think looking back... Uhm, oh I think there's one interesting, I think experience that happened that, uhm, that ended up playing out in an interesting way. Uhm, so again, so being an RA, and this was sophomore year, uhm, there was one instance where me and two of my friends who were also in AbiGale/Allies, uhm, were walking on Easy Street back to, uhm, I was an RA in Hanselman at the time. Uhm, and someone was, uh, coming out of Healy, uhm and shouted, uh the "F" word at us, uh the gay "F" word (laughter). And, thinking of like, of what that meant—and also, like, so balancing my personal identity with my friends at the time, and also being, uhm, in terms of being an RA and being a mandated reporter for bias incidents, what that meant, and how, you know, whether or not I felt comfortable reporting that, but realizing that I had to, and so I like wrote up an incident report but I didn't submit it, so I sent it to, I sent it to like the, a the professional staff member on duty, but then it like, it didn't go into—because that technically wasn't protocol, because you're supposed to call pub. safe, and then, like filing an incident

report, and then like, public safety will handle it from there, and then like, you know, put up the “hate-happened-here” tape or whatever (laughter). All that, so realizing that wasn’t the protocol, uhm, but like what it meant for me to be targeted... with that, and also be responsible for like following through as an RA, uhm, and so I think that had an interesting impact on where it went from there. Uhm, and how it ended up being brought up to, to Dean Goodwin, who handled that case with the person who said that, uhm, and you know going through like an educational, uhm, type of thing with that, uhm, so I think that was an interesting balance with that, and then I think another thing, I think in terms of like, of thinking of things of, like, blatant homophobia on campus, like, it’s really that experience and then I think, again, my freshman year, just living on, probably like the worst hall ever in Mulledy (laughter). Uhm, and like that experience being in a forced triple, and having a partner at the time, and just not a welcoming hall, uhm, and ways that, you know, I would be targeted, and there was actually, like some type of sexual harassment thing that happened that year too, uhm and then you know just like daily micro-aggressions that would happen. Uhm, and I think looking back at my freshman year, that was, those are probably the most impactful negative experiences that I had, and also acknowledging that your question didn’t necessarily mean any negative experiences either so... (laughter) Hopefully I gave you enough positive throughout

**Collen & Vanessa:** Oh, definitely

**Jeff:** Sort of realizing that towards the end of (laughter).

**Vanessa:** Yeah, so I guess we really touched on everything and you really helped us with this interview project, like thank you so much for asking to do this.

**Jeff:** No, it’s uhm, this is great and any time I get to talk to current students again not being super old so far, it’s always a good experience too so... And like that, and I think going back to that senior question too, like, the alumni connection for Holy Cross is really real, like, when you meet people out there in real life, like, they’re wearing a shirt or they have a bumper sticker or something, like they are willing to make connections with you, and like any time you have the opportunity to give back. Maybe not monetarily because I’ll still be paying back Holy Cross for a while (laughter), but more through connecting with current students, like that part is definitely really real so.

**Colleen:** Good. Do you have any questions for us?

**Jeff:** Uhm, maybe just why you took this class or why you’re involved in the project?

**Vanessa:** Well, I took this class—well I’m also taking a gender and society course as well and I also took gay theatre my sophomore year with Malia so I’m always interested in like, gender and sexuality because—now my friends call me, like the “queer expert” because I literally educate them on everything I learn in class.

**Colleen:** Yeah, I mean, I took it—I’m a Soc and PoliSci major, and I like, so I knew—I was looking at the sociology classes and I just realized I don’t really know anything, like, anything that’s not TV-related about, like, LGBTQ stuff. Like, I knew like the basics, and I had an O.K.

grasp on, like, what language was right and stuff but when it comes down to it I was clueless. Yeah that's pretty much why... but I mean I'm learning a lot definitely.

**Jeff:** How do you feel, like, this class or other classes that you've taken impacted your experience at Holy Cross?

**Vanessa:** Personally, I mean I've always been accepting but I became way more accepting because now, like, I'm learning, like, personal stories of people who really struggle, to like—I know people being double marginalized, triple marginalized and, like, it's crazy because I didn't know how badly it affects people. Because now I saw this preview for the show coming on Oxygen called like, "Prancers," or something of the sort. It's like gay black males who love to dance in like, Alabama, and like, I almost shed a tear at the preview itself because they're crying because they really can't do what they love which is dancing because, you know you're in the South which is like, worse than the North, so they can't really be happy with what they are and where they are and doing what they want to do.

**Colleen:** I think it's really interesting kind of, watching things you learn from classes like this play out, like, because I mean like, the culture at Holy Cross is...(laughter) I guess the mainstream, like, I've always, the second I got here, or spent more than a couple days here I was like, I can't see so many pastels and preppiness every day, I'm going to die

**Vanessa:** Like Sperry's and Martha's Vineyard everywhere....

**Colleen:** Yeah, and like the whole like, kind of just like "jock stuff"... it's very high school-y here

**Vanessa:** Yeah, you can't be different, it's hard to be different

**Colleen:** Yeah, and so it kind of, like, I don't know I really crave kind of, things, classes like this and learning about things like this because it's like...you know this is so not the real world here.

**Vanessa:** Yeah.

**Jeff:** (laughter) Once you go out past the gate it's not so lame... it's very different (laughter). Well, thank you for sharing some of your experiences too.

**Colleen & Vanessa:** Thank you. Yeah.

**Colleen:** I guess that's it.

**Vanessa:** Alright, have a great weekend.

**Colleen:** Yeah

**Jeff:** You too

*Colleen and Vanessa:* Thanks, goodbye.