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Fearless Friday: Jennifer McCary

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Fearless Friday: Jennifer McCary

Abstract

As we conclude Diversity Peer Educators Week, we honor Jennifer McCary, the fearless advisor. In addition to her roles with DPE, she is the Assistant Dean of College Life and Director of Student Rights and Responsibilities as well as the Director of the Women's Center. The Diversity Peer Educators, or DPEs, are a group of students dedicated to facilitating conversations among the student body about various issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, Fearless Friday, Diversity Peer Educators (DPE), diversity, equity, inclusion, culture change

Disciplines

Civic and Community Engagement | Education Policy | Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies | Gender and Sexuality | Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies | Social Psychology and Interaction

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](#) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at [surgegettysburg.wordpress.com](#) Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that –isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

FEARLESS FRIDAY: JENNIFER MCCARY

February 20, 2015



As we conclude Diversity Peer Educators Week, we honor Jennifer McCary, the fearless advisor. In addition to her roles with DPE, she is the Assistant Dean of College Life and Director of Student Rights and Responsibilities as well as the Director of the Women's Center. The Diversity Peer Educators, or DPEs, are a group of students dedicated to facilitating conversations among the student body about various issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

McCary began working at Gettysburg College in 2011. She was drawn to the position because of her work and interest in bystander intervention. Drawing from the ideas that peers learn best from their fellow peers and that cultures change more quickly when students are leading it, McCary submitted proposals for the Diversity Peer Educator program and the Social Justice Institute, believing that these could be game changers for the college. She hoped to generate a more respectful culture where students understood bias and could name and address problems. SJI and DPE were both started in the 2012-2013 school year and together were aimed at bringing students together

who advocated for awareness and wanted to make an impact on the campus community.

McCary defines the success of DPEs in the programs that make people think in new ways. For example, after Thursday's panel discussion, she received three bias reports about incidents that were not previously thought of as bias incidents. The numbers of reported bias incidents have increased, but that is because more people are aware, which is the biggest success. More people are recognizing the injustices on campus and more people are motivated to help create change.

McCary is most proud of the students who serve as DPEs. Her work in student conduct can be challenging at times, so she describes the DPEs as her “rainbow on a cloudy day.” She has the opportunity to watch the growth and impact each DPE has had on campus.

When trying to change culture, McCary knows that it does not happen overnight. There are still places on campus that she’d like to see DPE work in order to better educate students, faculty, and administrators on issues diversity, equity, and inclusion. McCary envisions DPEs doing more programming in the classrooms, working with faculty when topics of diversity are a part of the curriculum, leading a class when the class would be otherwise cancelled and working with Jean Arnold, the Chief Diversity Officer. McCary is also working with other institutions to replicate Gettysburg’s DPE model, including Albright College and Princeton University.

McCary hopes that DPEs and the work of social justice become an integral part of the campus culture as time goes on.