

October 11, 2017

Dear Gillings Community,

On Wednesday, October 11th, we celebrate National Coming Out Day, a day to honor the strength and power of “coming out” as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Queer (LGBTQ) and for those allied with our LGBTQ peers. National Coming Out Day is a nationwide initiative launched by the Human Rights Campaign that stems from the monumental March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights on October 11th, 1987. Since then, this day has continued as a celebration for the courage it takes to live one’s truth and to promote healthy dialogue and a safer world for LGBTQ individuals everywhere, while also recognizing that not all members of the LGBTQ community are able to come out because of the potential for social harm.

Here at Gillings, we strive to create a diverse and inclusive environment for all faculty, staff, and students, within our school and beyond. All faculty, staff, students, and guests are invited to join us for a One Gillings National Coming Out Day celebration filled with music, cake, and fun activities from 1-2pm on Wednesday, October 11th. We will also provide a platform for those willing to share stories about their journey or words of encouragement to others in attendance.

We commend those who decide to come out at this time, while we recognize that coming out is a process that must be decided by each individual in their time. For some, coming out is a decision made many times throughout life, including in new professional and social settings. For others, the potential for violence or other social harms prevents them from being able to come out. But at Gillings, we support all members of our community where they are on their journey.

We remind you of ongoing efforts and resources available to LGBTQ individuals and allies. Key ways to learn more and get involved can be found at the UNC LGBTQ Center (<https://lgbtq.unc.edu/>), which is hosting a slate of Coming Out Day events and offers ongoing support for members of the UNC Community through programming and direct support (before, during, and after the decision to come out). The LGBTQ Center’s website also features resources for faculty/staff, undergraduate student, and graduate student organizations, and the Center provides communal spaces for LGBTQ individuals of like backgrounds or interests. Here at Gillings, we host the LGBTQ Health Disparities Research Collaborative (<https://studentlife.unc.edu/organization/lgbtqhealth>), an organization comprised of graduate students and faculty members who engage in critical conversations related to LGBTQ health.

For more information on the Human Rights Campaign and National Coming Out day, please visit: <https://www.hrc.org/resources/national-coming-out-day>.

For those looking to support others during their coming out process, feel free to explore the UNC LGBTQ site and other online sources, including GLSEN, an educational foundation focused on ensuring safe and affirming schools for LGBTQ Students: <https://www.glsen.org/blog/when-student-comes-out-youtoday-or-any-day>.

Best wishes!

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– on behalf of the Gillings School’s [Diversity and Inclusion Working Group](#)