

# campuslife & diversity

## MEET THE STUDENT STAFF

Cecilia (CeCe) Bobbitt '19  
LGBTQ and Gender Resources

Sarah Boese '20  
LGBTQ and Gender Resources

Zane Diamond '20  
LGBTQ and Gender Resources &  
Office of Religious and Spiritual Life

Dasanae (Precious) Davis '20  
ALANA Center

Roberto Aponte Duran '21  
ALANA Center

Diego Encarnacion '18  
Office of International Services

Austin Gibbs '19  
LGBTQ and Gender Resources

Sofia Gutierrez '18  
LGBTQ and Gender Resources

Ronela Haxhijaj '20  
Office of International Services

Kayla Holliday '19  
Campus Life and Diversity

Xiaoting Hu '20  
Office of International Services

Jennifer Jacobs '20  
Office of Religious and Spiritual Life

Kamakshi Kanojia '19  
Office of Religious and Spiritual Life

Nicole Kormendi '20  
Campus Life and Diversity

Alicia Menard-Livingston '18  
ALANA Center

Jo Hsuan (Brian) Lee '20  
Office of International Services

Tanyx Madrigal '18  
ALANA Center

Charlotte Meng '20  
Office of Religious and Spiritual Life

Noelle Julianna Morris '20  
Office of International Services

Viraj Nadkarni '20  
Office of International Services

Frank Najjarro '18  
ALANA Center

Sumiko Neary '20  
ALANA Center

Christian Perez '18  
ALANA Center

Sarah Ragan '19  
Office of Religious and Spiritual Life

Yasemin Smallens '20  
LGBTQ and Gender Resources

Darci Siegel '20  
LGBTQ and Gender Resources

Arjun Singh '20  
Office of International Services

Kaiqing (Annabell) Su '21  
Office of International Services

Niharika Shukla '20  
ALANA Center

Margaret Wagh '20  
LGBTQ and Gender Resources

Tamika Whitenack '21  
ALANA Center

Henery Wyand '20  
ALANA Center

Ruoxi (Laura) Yang '21  
Office of International Services

## STUDENT STAFF MAKING CHANGE ON CAMPUS

by Kayla Holliday '19

Passionate. Involved. Connected. Facilitators. Programmers. Committed. These are just a few of the words Campus Life and Diversity Student Staff use to describe their work. Their work is crucial to making the Vassar experience as inclusive as possible. Evidence is found in the ALANA Center, Religious and Spiritual Life, LGBTQ and Gender Resources, International Services, in the main office, and across campus.

Women's Center Intern, Darci Siegel believes that student interns are essential to campus life because we play dual roles as students and programmers or discussion facilitators. "This duality can benefit our campus because, as students, we constantly have our thumbs on the pulse of the political, social and cultural climate on our campus," they said. Student staff, which total twenty-four across the various offices, understand exactly what made them gravitate towards a position in Campus Life and Diversity.

Some staff want to carve out spaces of community that allow them to connect with others who can identify with their unique experiences and struggles on this campus and in the world at large. Others want to support groups who may not be highly recognized or supported on campus. Kamakshi Kanojia assumed her position as an intern for the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life because she noticed that "there is a notion that you cannot be religious at Vassar." With this realization, she wanted to use her campus job to "make the office more accessible for students seeking faith and religious practices on this campus."

The work of the interns also includes starting conversations to accentuate



Student staff hard at work on All College Day

positionality and experience. Ronela Haxhijaj, an intern from the Office of International Services, says "The main goal of our events is to engage the international student community, and to create a bridge between our student population and the wider Vassar community."

The interns believe that these are spaces that are necessary to enhance campus life because, in many cases, the offices and resources have positively impacted their Vassar experience. Essentially, student staff are determined to work closely with administrators and become an integral part of Campus Life and Diversity initiatives.

Alicia Menard-Livingston, who has worked for the ALANA Center their entire undergraduate experience, says that during times of hate and bias incidents or other stressful moments, even when they were hurting too, they felt a responsibility to help provide spaces for other students to heal.

(Continued on next page)

## ALL COLLEGE DAY EMPHASIZES COMMUNITY

February 28th marked the 18th Annual College Day, a Vassar tradition seeking to bring the campus community together. The day featured a Staff Appreciation Brunch hosted by President Bradley, exhibits, and the popular All College Day mugs, three workshops, a keynote lecture on implicit bias by Mx. Lena Tenney from the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, and a closing reception. This year's All College Day was planned in partnership with the Engaged Pluralism Initiative. All College Day began in February 2001 as a Campus Life and Diversity and college-wide initiative in response to a campus racial incident the previous spring. The event is traditionally held on the third Wednesday in February. For a closer look at the day's schedule and its history, click here: [#VCAIICollegeDay](#).



Keynote speaker, Lena Tenney, speaks on implicit bias, behavior and decision-making in the Villard Room. Photo: Karl Rabe/Vassar College

## THE ART OF LIVING....

On February 22, the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life highlighted daily practices such as the simple things we do each day to shape a way of life. The evening featured a talk by Stephanie Paulsell, Susan Shellcross Swartz Professor of the Practice of Christian Studies at Harvard Divinity School. Several faculty then led workshops to accentuate how simple practices (i.e., writing, moving, reading, contemplation, hospitality, and activism) can bring meaning, healing, friendship, and joy. "I loved how our speaker Stephanie Paulsell talked about practices as ways of doing the things we love more deeply and with more people," said Director of Religious and Spiritual Life and Assistant Dean, Sam Speers.



Faculty workshop leaders introduce their sessions.

## INTERGROUP DIALOGUE: RACE AND GENDER

New 6-week course/ EDUC 184  
Starting March 28, Weds. 1pm-3pm  
Contact Prof. WilliamsBrown:  
[kwilliamsbrown@vassar.edu](mailto:kwilliamsbrown@vassar.edu)  
3/9 deadline.

## BLACK ALUMNI RETURN TO CAMPUS

The African-American Alumnae/i Association (Triple AVC) returned to campus on February 8th for their annual gathering in the Aula to honor Black History Month. The evening was highlighted by greetings from Co-Chair, Karen Clopton '80, P'19, P'22, and reflections on Kendrick House (1969-75), the former Afro-American Cultural Center and residence (aka "The House"), by Eric Wilson '76. The gathering was festive and warm as students, faculty and staff mingled and played table games. Triple AVC returns to campus on April 13-15 for Triennial XII, a reunion of Black alumnae/i every three years. Along with workshops, faculty talks, speakers, and networking socials, Triennial will also launch *Buildings and Belonging: Mapping the African-American Experience at Vassar Since 1861*.

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT

**Brenda Vasquez-Tavarez** is in her second year as the Administrative Assistant for Campus Life and Diversity. Raised in New York City, she moved to the area fifteen years ago. She manages office support functions, coordinates meetings, and pulls together logistics for major events such as All College Day, Conversation Dinners, and conferences---among other important tasks. Drop by and say hello.

## (Student staff, cont'd.)

Although this was their duty as a Center intern, they find comfort in communal healing with other students. There seems to be a general consensus among the interns interviewed that, even though they are paid, it is hard to separate their work from their personal and campus experiences.

On a hyper-political campus like ours, these conversations are not left at the door when the interns clock out for the day, several stated. In most cases, the office in which they work relates directly to their identity, worldview or perspectives. "The Women's Center position is becoming me and I am becoming it," said Cece Bobbitt, who is in their second year in the role. They went on to explain that they have no problem with being so personally connected to the work because it is important work.

Throughout the years, student staff have had an incredible impact on the ways in which the division serves the student body at Vassar. As Campus Life and Diversity continues to evolve, one thing is for certain---student interns will always be an integral part of the office.

Kayla Holliday '19, Layout and Design  
Intern, Campus Life and Diversity Office