**We Make It Better**

“UNH feels more like home than home ever has.” An audience of over 200 faculty, staff and students heard about campus life and what students take away from programs. Sophomore Casey O’Dea’s video “LGBTQ+ Resources and Events at UNH” showed the level of support the LGBTQ+ community has received. In fact, *Trans UNH*, the school’s first student organization focused on transgender students and their allies, had just received its official student organization recognition the day before the event.

O’Dea’s video captured the essence of the tradition of the UNH LGBTQ+ and Ally Pancake Breakfast. A favorite and enduring event, the breakfast highlights the work accomplished, while calling attention to steps to build a safer, more welcoming campus.

In the opening words to the program, GLBT Commission co-chair **Joelle Ryan**, recalled how, in the past two decades, the presence of transgender students has grown, as have the benefits and support for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students and other UNH community members and their allies. "In the last 20 years, UNH has done good work in residential life, housing, campus rec, HR benefits and more,” said Ryan. She advised LGBTQ+ students and their allies to continue to "lift up the stories of transgender people, especially students ... so that people will know we are here at UNH."

President Mark Huddleston delivered the University Welcome, praising the UNH Wildcats *You Can Play* initiative — the university’s athletic teams who have pledged to create a safe and respectful environment for all athletes, inclusive of people who identify as LGBT.

Keynote speaker Mara Keisling, founding Executive Director of the National Center for Transgender Equality, reflected on the LGBTQ+ student journey as she recalled the days when a lot of people in this community came to college to get away from their neighborhoods, schools, or homes.

She stated that, though many things have changed for the better, there are still unsafe places for transgender and other people who identify on the spectrum. “And no research has been done appropriating the number of hate crimes, or domestic partnership violence or police brutality against us. Meanwhile, there are 10 states who have legislation to keep us out of the bathroom,” Keisling said.

Keisling has hope as individual states are taking significant steps toward equity and inclusion. In 2015, NH has passed drivers license legislation ruling that a person can now change their gender marker through simple application. She called attention to
improvements in federal employment discrimination law and a "light at the end of the tunnel" in the HIV epidemic.

She encouraged audience members to make life better for LGBTQ+ folks by being intentional. “Focus on being educators, and know that these battles are happening because we’re winning.” Keisling advised, "In this life it really doesn't matter what you think; it matters what you do. Think about who to reach out to and who to stand in solidarity with.”

“The LGBTQ community needs to think about what it really is," Keisling said, adding her opinion that we can no longer have a moral and effective movement for LGBTQ people unless we hold partnerships with other under-represented groups."We cannot have an LGBTQ movement without a poverty movement, without a pro-immigration movement, without anti-racism and disabilities-rights movements," she said.

The 2015 Faculty and Staff Kidder Fund Awards were presented by Joelle Ryan to Associate Professor Rebecca Glauber of Sociology Department and Dr. Lessa Brill of UNH Health Services respectively. Student Kidder Fund awards were presented by Ellen Semran, LGBTQ+ coordinator for the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, to Alicia Alec DuField, ’15 and to Lane McDonough, ’15. The Graduate Student Kidder Fund Award was presented by Associate Dean of the Graduate School Cari Moorhead to Mark Anthony. Learn more about each winner's contributions to the UNH community here.

Want to Know More?
See more about the history of the pancake breakfast here:
http://www.unh.edu/unhtoday/2015/04/breakfast-history-0
See more photos from the event here.
Trans UNH, UNH's student organization focused on transgender students and their allies, joins several other student orgs that support the LGBTQ+ community here on campus, including Alliance, Stonewall Grads and oSTEM (Out on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). "Each of the other three LGBTQ+ student organizations focus on supporting LGBTQ+ students, and have discussions and programs on a wide variety of LGBTQ+ issues, including focusing on people who are transgender. Trans UNH provides a supportive place for transgender, gender non-conforming, and questioning students and allies to talk about trans and gender related issues and experiences," says Ellen Semran, LGBTQ+ coordinator for the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs.