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If You Can, You Can

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Authors

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If You Can, You Can

TEAM MEMBERS

Amy Chesky, Clinical Transformation Specialist-Lead, Clinical Transformation Specialist-Lead
Rima Franklin, Associate Professor, Department of Biology
Sandra Fritton, Counselor, Learning Specialist, Disability Support Services
Alena C. Hampton, Assistant Director for Clinical Services, University Counseling Services
Demetrius Shambley, Student Athlete Academic Coordinator, University College
Gokhan Yucel, Associate Director for Decision Support Systems, Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Project Sponsor: Dorothy Fillmore, Associate Director of Academic Operations, Department of Psychology

PROJECT ABSTRACT

VCU distinguishes itself as being one of Virginia's most diverse institutions of higher education. This project seeks to support and extend this wonderful attribute by encouraging a climate of equity and inclusiveness. *If You Can, You Can* creates a common platform and language in support of the university's mission to address disparities concerning equality and inclusiveness, and provides a model that is useful in promoting all dimensions of diversity. In addition to developing this overarching model, Team Real Connections worked with the VCU Athletics department to implement a prototype program called "*If you can play, you can play*," which promotes inclusivity for those in the LGBTQ community within athletics. That initiative is comprised of the following components:

- the production of a marketing video to introduce and promote the campaign
- the submission of the video to the national "You Can Play" project (<http://youcanplayproject.org/>)
- a survey assessing how VCU athletes perceive the current climate in athletics
- training sessions with athletic coaches and staff to promote awareness and advocacy for the LGBTQ community
- dissemination of posters, postcards, and wristbands to promote the campaign and publicize events
- programs in October (LGBTQ History Month) with speakers Pat Griffin and Hudson Taylor to bring further awareness to the importance of inclusivity
- promotion of the campaign and events at various athletic events

The success of the prototype campaign demonstrates that *If You Can, You Can* has the potential to serve as a comprehensive platform for units around VCU who wish to promote inclusivity and equity along other dimensions of diversity. Ultimately, the team envisions a university-wide initiative that unites VCU in achieving its goal of becoming a premier urban research university where everyone is welcomed, supported, and valued.

QUEST FOR DISTINCTION

Theme 1A: Recruit and retain talented and diverse students who will graduate at a higher rate and will contribute to a highly skilled workforce.

VCU has made clear its intention to "embrace the opportunity to diversify our student profile by recruiting nationally and internationally with the goal of increasing the state's workforce potential, economic vitality, and quality of life". VCU prides itself on being a diverse and welcoming campus. The *If You Can, You Can* project speaks to the heart of this mission by

working to further create an inclusive environment across campus, starting with implementation for LGBTQ in VCU Athletics.

Theme 1C: Engage students, the alumni of tomorrow, in high impact academic and extracurricular experiences that expand learning, promote civil discourse, and engage students in self-reflection and creative expression.

Theme 1 embraces the concept that “learning and personal development occur as a result of productive classroom experiences that are coupled with meaningful engagement in both academic and non-academic experiences outside of the classroom.” The project continues this important dialogue around inclusivity through the production of the video, the dissemination of wrists bands that further promote our mission, and the two events by nationally recognized speakers in the “outside of the classroom” platform. This project engages the campus in promoting self-growth and allows for a deeper understanding of others.

PROJECT GOALS

The fundamental goal of this project is to promote a more inclusive environment at the university, starting with a targeted effort in the Department of Athletics. Another goal of this campaign is to provide a blueprint by which this message of inclusivity can be extended throughout VCU and the local community to help embrace all dimensions of diversity. The team proposes a university-wide message of “If you can... you can!” that could be used as an overarching theme to engage the VCU campus in a meaningful dialogue about the importance and value of inclusivity across all areas of diversity and all roles at the institution.

PROJECT STRATEGIES

The two strategies used throughout the team experience were consensus and engaging stakeholders. From its inception, Team Real Connections operated based on consensus. When decisions needed to be made, each member had the opportunity to share their perspective and state their opinion. Afterward votes were taken to determine which direction the project would take. The team was intentional about meeting with a variety of stakeholders across campus to hone ideas, develop buy-in, and to secure financial support. Stakeholders with whom the team met included: Department of Athletics, Division of Inclusive Excellence, Health Sciences - Strategic Initiatives and Engagement, Office of Multicultural Student Affairs (OMSA), Equality VCU, and the Student Government Association.

ACTION STEPS

- Met with stakeholders across campus for help in honing the project based on the needs of the University. Garnered financial support for the initiative from these stakeholders.
- Identified, solicited, and utilized resources from campus partners.
- Developed a list of potential national speakers that could help to bring awareness.
- Developed, disseminated, and analyzed results of a survey to assess current climate.
- Developed promotional materials, including a video, wristbands, and posters.
- Developed a schedule of events that would be appealing to both faculty/staff and students.
- Secured speakers for the events.
- Secured venues for the events.
- Developed a schedule for training Athletics coaches and trainers around LGBTQ issues.
- Marketed the events using promotional materials, University technology vehicles, and social media.

OUTCOMES

The primary outcome of *If You Can, You Can* is the creation of a replicable model for addressing all dimensions of diversity, and it is hoped that this blueprint will be widely used in various communities across VCU. The project also facilitates growth within the Department of Athletics. Engaging all of the student athletes to reflect on their environment and to provide them with opportunities to consider ways that they help to foster this environment will be transformative. Providing diversity training to the Athletics staff will further help to create a culture of inclusivity. This initiative broadens this discussion to the wider campus community. By engaging faculty, staff, and students from departments across the university, seeds of inclusivity are planted and germinated throughout VCU.

SUSTAINABILITY

All of the stakeholders with whom we collaborated were excited about this project and saw it as a valuable endeavor. To sustain this effort, the team believes that the Division of Inclusive Excellence is the ideal unit to make this project viable moving forward. Collaboration with other offices, for example the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, will be critical for success.

RESOURCES

The implementation of this project required a variety of resources. Human resources were needed to engage and collaborate with stakeholders and partners across the university, to secure the national speakers, and to provide diversity training to coaches and trainers. Further, technical skills were needed in the area of video production, print design to develop promotional materials, and statistical analysis of survey data. Financial resources were also required with the greatest expenditure devoted to paying the fees for national speakers. Sustaining this project for the long term will require continued human, technical, and financial resources. The following table further details the financial resources required for this project.

PROJECT BUDGET

INCOME

Internal Funding Raised

Health Sciences	\$4,000
Student Government Association	\$3,500
Division of Inclusive Excellence	\$2,500
Department of Athletics	\$2,000
Office of Multicultural Student Affairs	\$700
Equality VCU	\$200
GEHLI	\$1,000

Total Income **\$13,900**

EXPENSES

Program Related

Speaker Fees	\$7,550
Program Promotion (Digital and Print Media items, Wristbands, etc.)	\$2,900
Food and Refreshments	\$2,900

Other Expenses

Campus Climate Assessment	\$500
Miscellaneous	\$50

Total Expenses **\$13,900**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The success of future iterations of this project is dependent upon collaboration across units and departments on campus, as well as collaboration with the student population. While the team engaged a variety of stakeholders throughout the project, it is recommended that in the future a student contingent be involved much earlier in the process. It is also recommended that the national speakers that are invited to campus are advocates that are widely recognizable. Finally, the team believes that the next step of the *If You Can, You Can* campaign should engage administration, deans, and department heads from across the university in an exploration of how this message can be adapted to promote inclusivity for the university and specifically within their unit.

FINAL PITCH

If You Can, You Can is a unique platform with a strong message designed to promote inclusivity across all dimensions of diversity. With its inaugural initiative concerning LGBTQ community in athletics, it represents an adoptable model for addressing disparities impacting communities across the university.

CLIMATE FOR LGBTQ ATHLETES

IF YOU CAN PLAY, YOU CAN PLAY VCU

1. Rate the climate within athletics toward athletes who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or questioning (LGBTQ) or are perceived to be LGBTQ.

	Very Positive	More Positive than Negative	More Negative than Positive	Very Negative	No impression of the Climate
Among VCU Athletes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Among VCU Coaches and Staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Among other members of the VCU Community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. How often do you hear jokes, slurs, or negative comments about people who identify as LGBTQ or are perceived to be LGBTQ?

	Never	Occasionally	Often	Not Applicable/Don't Know
Among VCU Athletes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Among VCU Coaches and Staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Among other members of the VCU Community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. When jokes, slurs, or negative comments about LGBTQ people occur, how often do athletes, coaches, and/or members of the athletics staff intervene or challenge those behaviors?

Never	Occasionally	Often	Not Applicable/Don't Know
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Have any of the members of your team disclosed that they are LGBTQ?

No	Yes, to the entire team	Yes, to one or more members of the team but not the entire team
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. How comfortable would you be with an LGBTQ teammate who was out to your team OR how comfortable are you with an LGBTQ teammate who IS out to your team?

Very Comfortable	More Comfortable Than uncomfortable	More uncomfortable than comfortable	Very uncomfortable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Please Turn Over →)

6. Classification

First Year	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Graduate Student
<input type="radio"/>				

7. Gender Identity

Man/Male	Women/female	Gender queer	Other (please specify)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="text"/>

8. Do you consider yourself to be transgender?

Yes	No	Unsure
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Sexual Identity

Heterosexual/Straight	Bisexual	Gay or Lesbian	Queer	Questioning	Other (please specify)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="text"/>				

10. Your sport(s)

Baseball	<input type="radio"/>
Basketball	<input type="radio"/>
Cross Country	<input type="radio"/>
Field Hockey	<input type="radio"/>
Golf	<input type="radio"/>
Lacrosse	<input type="radio"/>
Soccer	<input type="radio"/>
Tennis	<input type="radio"/>
Track & Field	<input type="radio"/>
Volleyball	<input type="radio"/>

IF YOU CAN...
YOU CAN...

TEAM REAL CONNECTIONS



Amy Chesky
Office of Clinical
Transformation



Rima Franklin
Department of Biology



Sandra Fritton
Disability Support
Services



Alena Hampton
University Counseling
Services



Demetrius Shambley
University College



Gökhan Yücel
Office of Planning and
Decision Support



VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY
The Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute



At
VCU...



YOU CAN!

If YOU CAN learn,



you can LEARN!

If YOU CAN teach,



you can TEACH!

If **YOU CAN** research,



you can **RESEARCH!**

If **YOU CAN** help,



you can **HELP!**

If **YOU CAN** serve,



you can **SERVE!**

If **YOU CAN** lead,



you can **LEAD!**

PROJECT OVERVIEW



IF YOU CAN... YOU CAN...

A platform for diversity and inclusion

PROJECT GOAL

Support university's mission to address disparities concerning diversity, equality and inclusiveness



CAMPAIGN SELECTION

Motivation

- Promote inclusiveness
- Institutional perception
- High visibility
- Influence potential



LGBTQ Community
in Athletics

DEVELOPING A MODEL



Criteria

- Sustainability
- Adoptability
- Repeatability

MODEL FOR SUCCESS



If **YOU CAN** play,



you can **PLAY!**

SECURE SPONSORSHIP

Teaming Up with
A Sponsor



CREATE BUY-IN

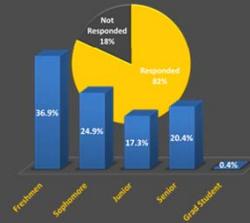
- Department of Athletics
- Division of Inclusive Excellence
- Office of Multicultural Student Affairs
- Health Sciences
- Student Government Association
- Equality VCU

EXPLORE PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



- Marketing and Publication
- Promotional Video and Posters
- Faculty / Staff and Student events for institutional awareness and impact

UNDERSTAND CLIMATE & SET GOALS



- 7% say the climate is somewhat negative among VCU Athletes
- 12% of student athletes indicated discomfort with having an LGBTQ teammate
- 51% acknowledged hearing negative comments
- 8% identified themselves as LGBQ
- 2% identified as transgender

EVENTS TO CREATE AWARENESS



Dr. Pat Griffin
Founding Director



Hudson Taylor
Founder & Executive Director



COMMUNICATING OUR MESSAGE



PROJECT OUTCOMES

Diversity, Equality and Inclusiveness

- **Common platform** for all communities within VCU
- **Model** for future diversity and inclusiveness campaigns / initiatives



PROJECT OUTCOMES

Specific to the LGBTQ in Athletics Campaign

- **Promotional video**
 - Strengthens VCU's commitment
 - Reaches a national audience



- **University & community-wide partnerships**
 - Training programs
 - LGBTQ awareness events in October
 - Climate assessment



A PLATFORM THAT EMPOWERS COMMUNITIES

- "If you can... you can..."



If YOU CAN...



you can **AT VCU!**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Division for Inclusive Excellence



VCU
HEALTH SCIENCES
Office of the Senior Vice President for Health Sciences



YOU
CAN
PLAY

VCU
Office of Multicultural Student Affairs

Equality VCU

RECREATIONALSPORTS

SAVE THE DATE
OCTOBER 29, 2014
University Commons Theater

Dr. Pat Griffin
Beyond LGBT Inclusion in
Athletics: *An Institutional
Journey Toward Social Justice*

1:00 - 2:30 pm
Light refreshments will be served

Hudson Taylor
Allyship: *Becoming a
Champion for Inclusion on
Your Campus*

5:00 - 6:30 pm
Pizza & refreshments will be served