Okay, you can... All right. Thank you. All right, so hi everyone. Before we start the panel, would each one of you like to introduce? Sure, I can go first. So, my name is Leila and I'm the Service Learning and Community Partnership Graduate Fellow at the Center for Community Engagement.

I'll go next. I'm Dani Webber, I use they/he pronouns. I'm the vice-president of Queer Student Union.

Hi you all. I'm Liu or Sabrina. I use she/they pronouns. I'm the president of the Queer Student Union.

Howdy everyone, I'm Lindsay. I use she/her pronouns. I'm the treasurer of Queer Student Union.

Hello everyone, I'm Carter. I'm the secretary of Queer Student Union.

Hi everybody. My name is Luz Pimentel and I'm the Community Partnerships Scholar at the Center for Community Engagement at Suffolk.

Alright. So, thank you all for introducing. So, the trans awareness month is a moment that the Center for Community Engagement is dedicated to introduce and give information to people.

So the goal of trans awareness month is to educate students about trans awareness in our local, national and global communities. As well as to empower them with the information, tools and resources of ways they can address trans awareness.

Some of the learning outcomes that we'd like to include and hope to get out of, once we dedicate these events is to increase awareness and gaining understanding about
02:20 trans awareness issues surrounding our communities.

02:23 We'll also discover resources, programs, and organizations that serve transgender populations

02:29 and also be able to become self-aware of one's own personal thoughts in assumptions we may have.

02:38 [Ndiaye] Sure. So due to COVID-19, this year, so we have been limited to only hosting and participating

02:46 in virtual events like this panel. However, this by no means will limit the CCE passion to help

02:53 and educate the Suffolk community. So, in the past, the CCE has a lot of programming,

03:00 including workshops on gender identity, observing a trans day of remembrance,

03:06 and doing programming for trans awareness month for the past five years.

03:14 [Pimentel] And we would like to begin by thanking our community partners,

03:18 Sabrina, and Dani for taking the time to really speak to us, and for participating in dedicating

03:25 this time to educate the Suffolk community about trans awareness. Before we start, I'm not

03:32 sure if anybody has some questions, if you do feel free to ask, or throw them in the chat.

03:40 We also are going to have a couple of minutes once the panel ends for any questions as well.

03:48 But yeah, if you guys would like to start explaining a little bit about the organization

03:55 and your role, and we can get started on questions if that's okay with you.

04:03 [Liu] Yeah, sure. I can give a little bit of background about what QSU is. So, the QSU is the Queer Student

04:07 Union here at Suffolk. Really our mission is to create an environment where the LGBTQ

04:13 community feels safe within Suffolk and within the local Boston area.
04:18 We also celebrate our identity and our diversity through a lot of really fun events. And we know
04:25 that being a marginalized group isn't always very fun. So, we always try to have fun and we
04:29 come together and it's a really great safe space for allies and the community to come together.
04:39 [Webber] Yes, basically what Sabrina said. I really think that this particular club really takes
04:45 the time to create a nice safe space for everyone apart of the LGBT community.
04:50 Especially those trans folks as well. It's not just like... I know some people don't
04:57 fall under the queer identity. However, we're very inclusive. If you would like to come, we're always
05:03 Mondays at 5:30, which will also be in the fall in the CSDI office.
05:11 [Ndiaye] Sure, thank you. So, I guess I'll start with the first question, which is,
05:19 how did the environment of your organization change since the pandemic? What specific struggles
05:27 trans people and other people are facing during this pandemic?
05:34 [Liu] So I can definitely speak to the first half of that question. Dani,
05:38 if you want to tackle the second half? So, our organization, when the pandemic hit has
05:45 changed quite a bit, I would say. We used to have physical meetings, up at CSDI and ever
05:52 since the pandemic hit, it's been a lot harder on club membership I think. So, it's been harder for
05:59 members to make it to meetings, and along with that, all of our e-board this year,
06:04 we're all sophomores. We barely had a year to adjust into Suffolk.
06:09 So it's really been a learning curve for all of us, and we really appreciate the experience that
06:14 we've been through, but we do acknowledge that it has been more of a tough year.

06:21 [Webber] And to speak to the second part of that question. Personally,

06:26 moving back home from the pandemic was really hard on me. So, I can only imagine what others have gone

06:31 through, especially since college is typically the type of place where people will start to get into

06:37 their identity. So, all of a sudden having to move back home unexpectedly for a long period of time,

06:43 definitely took a toll on a lot of members of the LGBT community, especially those at Suffolk.

06:50 I also think that it is really important to acknowledge just the levels of how... We've had

06:58 a lot of Zoom fatigue recently, because a lot of people, they do love our club and they love coming

07:04 and they love the environment and the space and everything. But I think that all of us are really

07:07 Zoomed out at this point and it's unfortunate because you want to make those connections and

07:11 understand those around you. But we totally understand no harm, no foul, and we definitely

07:17 would encourage anyone to come to our meetings or events. We're very inclusive, you know?

07:26 [Pimentel] Great. Yeah, I definitely agree with the Zoom fatigue part,

07:31 it's definitely taken a toll on me for sure. Another question is,

07:36 can you guys tell us a bit of how you became involved with the Queer Student Union?

07:44 [Liu] Yeah. So as a high schooler even, I was really involved with queer affinity organizations.

07:49 As a senior in high school, I was the president of my school's Gender and Sexuality Alliance.
So I knew that coming into college that this was something I was going to be on the lookout for,

no matter what school I went to. So, coming onto campus, this was the first club that I looked for at the involvement fair. And I was deeply involved in all of the meetings.

I loved every second of it and it ended up landing me a position on the e-board. So I'm really grateful for my time on the QSU on e-board and not on e-board.

[Webber] I had very similar experience to Sabrina. Unfortunately, my high school, it's in the South Shore part of Massachusetts. So, Marshfield was actually the last school in the South Shore to have a GSA. And with that being said, it was formed when I think I was... I want to say I was a sophomore or I was a junior. And when clubs are first up and coming, obviously they're not going to be as strong as you would hope they would be. Even if there's a ton of turn out to events and such sort of thing. That being said, when I came to Suffolk, it was one of the biggest things. I just wanted to make a sense of community and a sense of community that was a lot of people from a lot of different backgrounds, because I feel like in that aspect of it, my community was not very diverse. Sorry, my cat is being so needy right now.

[Ndiaye] Thank you. And if anybody have a question, just feel free to put it in the chat or just unmute.

All right. So, the other question that I have is, how does the QSU support queer and trans students
09:30 on campus and what are some common issues that these students face? So, to be more specific,

09:38 what kind of programming does QSU do and what kinds of resources do you have for students?

09:47 [Liu] Yeah. So, starting off with the programming that QSU does, obviously this year, it's

09:51 been a little more different, a little bit more condensed. We try to offer a lot of programs that

09:58 either focus on discussing issues that affect the LGBT community. We have the Coming Out Day

10:04 luncheon. We usually have the president of the University come speak at that. We make a whole

10:08 day out of that. We have the AIDS quilt, usually when campus is open, and we just have a lot of

10:18 programming that also just highlights again, the diversity, the beautiful diversity of the LGBT

10:24 community. We have the drag performance usually. We're having drag bingo with program counseling,

10:31 coming up soon at the end of this month, which is going to be super exciting. A lot of fun prizes

10:36 and the winner of RuPaul's Drag Race is going to be there so that's going to be really exciting.

10:40 So yeah, I would say that our programming is centered around a lot of celebrating

10:47 the LGBT community, but also discussing what happens with us.

10:51 And in terms of resources, I find that the e-board is incredibly knowledgeable

10:56 on where to go if something happens. Especially as someone who was involved with the student

11:01 government association, I am very knowledgeable on if something happens, this is where you go.
And we try and broadcast those resources on our social media so that all of our members and people that aren't even in the organization can find them and that they're accessible to them as well.

[Webber] With our programming as well, there was gender inclusive bathrooms put across campus because of Queer Student Union, as well as just creating a space where students can come forward and if they see an issue, they can just voice what they are seeing. I know that I've had a couple of little ins and outs with professors, just about pronouns, things like that. And I think it's really nice to just be in a room or in a Zoom with bunch of people that have similar experiences and can talk about it and bring it forward. And even if not everyone necessarily agrees or disagrees, or if it's something, an issue that was just blown out of proportion or something, we can all talk about it and find a solution that helps everyone rather than just tearing everyone down.

[Liu] Yeah. And you reminded me, but as someone who was involved with SGA. This year, along with being the president of the Queer Student Union, I was able to pass a resolution that passed unanimously and now allows for a gender X option in the Suffolk databases. So I know that that wasn't something that you could do before, and they're also putting forth changing your name. So, you can have your preferred name on all of the student databases.
12:39 [Pimentel] Great, these are some great changes and I’ve definitely seen them throughout Suffolk. Building

12:46 on to that question, what are some of the Queer Student Union’s top priorities for next year

12:55 when we are on campus?

12:59 [Liu] I think a big thing for next year is just recuperating what we lost this year.

13:08 I think one of the biggest things is going to be raising awareness of the Queer Student Union,

13:12 saying loud and proud that we're still here, we’re still serving students and that we're not to be

13:17 forgotten, not to be swept under the rug. And to come back full force with programming and come

13:24 back better than ever, especially after a year as hard as this one. Because we know that queer

13:28 and trans folks are stuck at home and sometimes that’s just not the greatest environment for us.

13:34 So just making sure that we're coming in with 100% enthusiasm, coming in at a 100% with all

13:40 of the programming and just making sure that we’re seen on campus and that we're heard.

13:46 [Webber] Yeah, and to build off of that, I think we’re also trying to build a really big community.

13:50 Especially where things have been down recently,

13:52 it will be really nice to come back full swing with a large community behind us.

13:57 Large turnout of events when they are in person, and also just helping those transition back into

14:02 real life. Because I don't know about anyone else, but I'm like really nervous about that,

14:06 and I think that having a space where you can just talk openly, sort of thing where there's no
14:13 reason to be nervous or anxious about it is super comforting. Especially just after a whole year of
14:19 being an at home, on Zoom. The person to person contact will be really nice.
14:27 [Ndiaye] Thank you. And I think those are great goals.
14:30 And just as you, I'm also nervous about this transition. And one other question that is,
14:38 have you ever interacted with students that faced discrimination inside Suffolk?
14:46 [Liu] I personally can't think of... I mean I think I personally have been
14:52 in some few bias incidents. But I don't think I have met someone else, but I think if I had, I
15:01 think the resources are known to me, aren't known to everyone. So sometimes people will confide in
15:07 a friend and it's a responsibility as a student leader to point them in the right direction and
15:13 make sure that what's right happens and that, you know, things like that don't go unnoticed.
15:21 [Webber] Similarly to Sabrina, I have had my tiffs with certain issues, you know, I think there are
15:28 definitely students on campus as well that have felt similarly. Fortunately, with that being said,
15:37 I think that in the Suffolk community there, everyone is really focused on education informing
15:43 those. So, if they do make, if it's intentional unintentional, like just educating somebody so
15:49 that they can be better and they can be a part of the community and be supportive.
15:54 So yeah, that's kind of where we're at.
16:00 [Pimentel] All right. And what are some of the organizations from Suffolk or outside
16:07 of Suffolk that you guys are currently involved with or partner with when you have your event

16:14 and also what organizations do you want to partner with in the future?

16:22 [Liu] So currently we're working with a lot of on-campus Suffolk organizations. One of the

16:27 biggest partners we have is Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion

16:31 for obvious reasons. They're a great office.

16:34 They love to reach out to us whenever they have an event going on, we love to co-sponsor with them.

16:38 Additionally, we also do a lot with the cultural affinity organizations here, like

16:44 the Asian American association, the Black Student Union, Caribbean Student Network. We're just this

16:50 family, and whenever one of us has something and we need a little extra advertising or a little

16:55 extra money, we like to just reach out to each other and just collaborate on things so that

17:01 especially now we can get more membership at our events. And for the foreseeable future we hope to

17:08 partner with surrounding Queer Student Union like clubs, like the Boston University's Queer Activist

17:15 Pack. We are planning to do something with them and the Northeastern queer student union. I don't

17:21 know what it's called but if they're Queer Student Union-ish club and yeah, we just hope

17:27 to partner with as many people as we can just to get as many people as involved as possible.

17:34 [Webber] We've also been giving out gift cards to small queer businesses, especially in the Boston area.

17:40 So even though we don't directly work with them, we are trying to support small queer business
in the area, especially with the recent pandemic, but just in general.

[Ndiaye] Those are great. Thank you, and what is something that you believe Suffolk needs to do more onto us to increase transgender awareness?

[Webber] Okay. So personally, I have been seeing a lot of people... Pronouns are really big,

you know? And it's really great to see pronouns everywhere. But unfortunately for me, I've seen

a lot of just trans people will say their pronouns and that singles out the individual. So, they have

to announce it to everyone. I remember last year I was supposed to go on a trip with the university and we were all in our room, we're meeting everyone we're going on the trip with, and everyone went around and said their names and then I was the only one that said my pronouns. So, I felt I was immediately almost an outsider at that point for no particular reason other than I just wanted them to call me the correct, when they were referencing me correctly. So, it's just little things like that.

The inclusive bathrooms are a super nice thing that Suffolk has started, at least with the academic buildings. Unfortunately, I know that there’s an issue with ResLife getting the gender neutral bathrooms, just because of Massachusetts law. Which is something that could definitely be worked upon, but it's at the same time out of our hands. But really one of my biggest points with this is just introduce yourself and be like, “Hi." I would say, "Hi, my name is Dani, and I use
they/them pronouns. I use they/he pronouns. I use whatever pronouns you want to use. How

Make it informal, make it casual, just try to make sure that you're showing people that

if they're trans, if they're not trans, whatever the situation is, you support

them regardless and you want to correctly reference them when you're talking about them.

Yeah. Just bouncing off what Dani said. It is really important to have those environments

where it's almost an expectation that you introduce yourself with your pronouns,

and that can only happen when our faculty and our administration are aware of things like

teaching. We need to have mandatory trainings for our faculty and administration and they need to be

transparent. They need to tell students what is in these trainings so that we can hold our professors

accountable, because if they do something, if there’s a biased incident, we can know what

they should know and what they should have done. A big thing for me is just that teacher trainings,

because I find that a lot of the problems with trans awareness comes from the older

generation and that our generation, from my perspective is just a little more open-minded,

a little better with the new things and that it can sometimes take our professors

a longer time to do things, and that's incredibly frustrating and it really shouldn't be an excuse.

I think that our university definitely has the means to solve that issue.

Building on to Leila’s question. What are some of the challenges on educating
21:08 students about trans awareness issues at Suffolk, and even going beyond Suffolk in general, if you
21:16 may have an experience you want to share. What do you think are some of the challenges in doing so?
21:25 [Liu] Very broadly speaking, I think one of the biggest challenges to trans issues is you're preaching to
21:34 the choir, because people who listen are people who already know a little bit or already know all
21:41 of it. It's really hard to get through to people who just don't want to hear any of it and are not
21:47 willing to become educated. I think that's the most frustrating part of it because when you talk
21:53 about this topic, it's people who are already open to listening about the topic and it's people who
22:00 aren't going to fight back. Sometimes you wish you could just have those conversations that are just
22:06 a little bit harder and it doesn't happen because those people don't come to sit at the table.
22:17 I also think that it gets particularly exhausting when you are the only person standing for your
22:22 community and speaking up. Especially I’ll be in class, there'll be a... I remember
22:28 I watched this film in one of my freshman year classes and it was about this transgender
22:36 boy, but it was a French film, and I felt as though I had to choose that film and present
22:42 on that film because otherwise I didn’t think that it would have been correctly
22:45 discussed if that makes sense. I wanted to head the discussion so that it didn't
22:49 go into that range of uncertainty or just people saying things that shouldn't be said
idea. And also, it's really just looking for other people to speak up as well, but also

letting trans voices rise up and be the overall arching voices that speak for their own
issues.

[Ndiaye] Sure. Thank you. And so what types of events do you often host at the QSU
organization?

[Liu] I'm going to sneeze. Dani, you go.

[Webber] Okay. So, this semester we've done a lot more discussion and game-based
things. So, we did...

I'm trying to think, I have a list. We've been doing bingo, we played jack box, we've
played

a bunch of things. We have also worked with other organizations to co-sponsor their
panels,

a lot of talks on what do you think about what’s going on in the news with this queer
person sort

of thing. Current events that are upcoming tend to get a good discussion. We've also
held an open mic

night, which was pretty cool. It was just anyone that wanted to, could come and
perform and talk

and just hang out with us. And we're also planning the Zoom version of prom, which
is usually in

person, it's like a nice stance to allow for the queer community to almost redo their
prom, if

it was how they wanted it with their partner. You know what I mean? When you're
older

and unfortunately, we are doing it over Zoom this year, but we're still trying to jam,

pack it with a bunch of fun things for everyone and we really hope that everyone can
make it.

[Liu] Yeah, definitely this year, more than others. We're a lot more concerned with
just having
light-hearted events and having people come and have fun because
not a lot of things are fun right now and especially not on Zoom. So, we're just hoping
to have this laid-back environment where people can feel free to come and go as they please,
and just have a less structured event throughout the semester.

Yeah, I think that's great. Hopefully if we are on campus in the fall, people are just more inclined to be more involved and hopefully come in more eager to be at everything. So, I think that would be great. My next question is, as the president and the vice president, what are some of your day to day responsibilities for the organization?

Yeah. Since we've gone to the pandemic, there's not a lot of on-campus programming for me to do so I do take over a lot of the social media and I have to coordinate both the general and e-board meetings. Although the general meeting times are basically set throughout the semester and I'm the point person to delegate things in the QSU. I definitely can't take credit for all of that.

My amazing e-board definitely helps me through all of it, but really anything that's maybe contacting other people. I don't know anything about the budget. That's all my treasurer, like credit goes to her entirely. She's amazing. But yeah, I definitely do a lot of outreach of trying to do a lot of events. There was an event that we did last semester that I'm really proud of. It was called rainbow representation and we had newly elected LGBT officials come
and they were so amazing and I'm so proud of that event and yeah, that's my role. I'm anything goes,

that's me. I spend around anywhere from like one to five hours a week doing QSU things.

[Webber] I'm just Sabrina's right-hand person, if you will. I try my best,
as well as everyone else on e-board, we all just, fluidity, just helping each other out
as much as we can while still doing our roles at the same time. I think a lot of what I do,
especially with other members as well is just looking at the meeting schedule,
Sabrina also helps with this, it's all of us. Looking at the meeting schedule and being like,
"What do we want to do this week? What do we need for this? What needs to be ordered? What needs to be said? What needs to be posted?" Sort of thing, and just making sure that events are on time.

Things are on time and just trying to get our events out to people so that they see them.

[Ndiaye] Sure. Thank you. So, we wanted also to know what are the statistics
of students that often come to your organization
for transgender issues? So how many students does the QSU work with on a regular basis?

We're actually the only organization on campus that doesn't take attendance. So, we're really not
sure on any of the demographics or the statistics of the people who come into our organization.

It's very private, so that information isn’t really accessible for us, but rightfully so.

Yeah, just to touch upon that. We tend to try and make the space a safe space. So, if you do attend a
28:30 QSU meeting, it's just understood that you don’t discuss who you've seen in QSU because you might

28:37 not know who's out to who, who's out to their family sort of thing and just making sure that

28:43 the community is a private, small, safe space so that everyone can share their experiences.

28:49 I will say that a lot of people that do come to the meetings are invested in LGBTQ rights

28:56 in general. There's not really coming to the meetings for one particular issue. However,

29:02 most of the participants are very aware of current events going on with the LGBT community as they

29:12 should. You know what I mean? As we are trying to make sure that everything is as it should be.

29:21 [Pimentel] For sure, and what do you think are some of the biggest,

29:28 or achievements in general that the organization has accomplished?

29:35 [Liu] I think a lot of our accomplished lie within our programming. I think our programming speaks a

29:40 lot to how creative are e-board members are and how much work we invest into this organization

29:47 and just how much fun we can really have. And then I think a lot of our

29:53 achievements really, like I said, lie in that. They also lie within the

29:57 space that we've built for our members and that we’ve built for the LGBT community and that

30:04 we are that, if something happens to a queer trans person on campus, they know that

30:12 we're there, we're visible and I think that’s definitely one of our crowning achievements.

30:20 [Webber] Also with this e-board specifically, we had to take everything we had done in person
30:27 and then figure out how to do it virtually and we had never done anything in person because we were

30:32 a whole new e-board. So, it was just a lot of fun. One of the things that I remember very vividly was

30:39 making the bi tie dye kits in the beginning of the semester because that is one of our

30:43 staple events that we do every single year. A lot of people really do love that. It's just a simple

30:49 tie dying with friends with the colors of the rainbows, different flags and stuff like that and

30:57 just packing it all up and sending it out to people was really nice because even though

31:00 we didn't get to do it together necessarily, it still felt like we had that sense of community.

31:08 [Ndiate] Sure. Thank you. And one last question is what can we do to help your organization

31:14 or educate people about trans awareness?

31:20 [Liu] Yeah. I think one of the best things you can do is collaborate with us. This event is wonderful,

31:26 thank you guys so much for putting this together. So excited to work with you and I hope we work

31:30 with you in the future. But events like this are wonderful because it's putting queer and trans

31:39 folks in the spotlight, instead of speaking for them. It's widening our platform and that's really

31:46 some of the best things you can do. You can also follow our social medias and amplify our events,

31:52 that's also great too. But really just, don’t be afraid to have those conversations. Don't

31:58 be hesitant to have those conversations because those conversations where you get uncomfortable,
where you don't know anything going into it, that’s where, that's spaces that you learn in.

And also come to our meetings Mondays at 05:30, we would love to see you there. Even if you aren't a part of the LGBT community, but you are an ally, we would love to have you there as well,

just to uplift the voices of your fellow peers that are a part of the community. Yeah, just promote us on social media, get our word out there.

For sure. Thank you so much. And if Sabrina or Dani can send over the link for the meeting that you guys have on Monday, or not sure if that's listed on the website or social media, is it the same link for the meeting or?

We have a meeting every Monday and then we always post the meeting code on our Instagram.

Okay, got it. And then I just have one last question. It is, is the queer student union only targeted for undergraduate students or graduate students also welcomed?

So we mainly are an undergraduate student organization. Although I will say that we've had a few graduate students come. Graduate students are definitely welcome too, but we just find that our club meeting times are definitely, they definitely just fit more into the undergrad student schedule. We find that a lot of grad students can't make our meeting, unfortunately.

But they're always more than welcome to join us.

Sure. So, thank you all for coming. We appreciate your time and attention. And if you have any more questions, please feel free to email us. So, our emails will be included in the chat.
34:01 [Pimentel] Yeah. Thank you so much for taking the time. I know it's pretty late and everybody's probably Zoom fatigued, but we really appreciate that you guys took your time to really just answer questions and speak to us. So really appreciate it.

34:18 [Liu] Thank you all for putting this together. Really appreciate that and yeah, I really appreciate everyone for coming. Thank you guys so much.

34:31 [Ndiaye] Thank you. And if anyone has questions, you can just email us or email Sabrina or Dani.

34:39 [Webber] I'll put my email in the chat as well.

34:41 [Ndiaye] Thank you. All right, bye.