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Dr. Wendy L. Hill
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Dear Dr. Hill,

I had an opportunity, while spending a day on campus last Friday following Thursday evening's Schlueter Lecture, to meet with Chris Vinales, the President of QuEST. I was keen to learn what progress the college has made in its efforts to welcome and embrace diversity, in particular with respect to the gay and lesbian student population, since my time as an undergraduate at the college in the early 1980s. You know or can surmise the dismal environment for LGBT and questioning students at that time, and I was encouraged to learn from Chris the progress the college has made in the more than 25 years that bridge then and now. I came away encouraged by the feeling that the college is doing good things. I got no sense, however, that the college -- still far behind its more progressive peers among elite liberal arts colleges -- is acting with anything like the sense of urgency, commitment, or focus required to create an environment that is authentically safe, welcoming, encouraging, nurturing, and celebratory of the needs of the LGBT and questioning community, and of this community's ability to make unique and important contributions to the college.

Lafayette's continuing challenge (and opportunity) appears to involve every part of the Lafayette experience: from recruiting the very best high school students; to fostering an environment in which current undergraduates can make their best contributions to the college's social, cultural, and intellectual life; to helping graduating students seeking jobs; to tapping into the vital support alumni can provide through advocacy, continued connection to and affection for the college, and giving.

Following my conversation with Chris (a treasure: his engagement, optimism, and talent are credits both to the college and the LGBT community), I am committed to the *necessity* of an association of gay and lesbian alumni. I cannot imagine that such a group already exists, and I understand that forming an association from a group long defined by invisibility and a feeling of marginalization will not be without challenges. I am certain, however, that the benefits of such an association are enormous, akin to those of other alumni affinity groups, such as those associated with various varsity sports or fraternities. From the perspectives of community, advocacy, mentoring, and financial largesse, an association of gay and lesbian alumni can be instrumental in helping effect change -- on campus, in recruiting, in job placement, in alumni support.

It is because this issue has broad-based application to and implications for so many aspects of college life -- before, during, and after students' time on campus -- that I am writing to you as Provost. I am happy to speak with others in the college's administration whose roles are more narrowly focused on, for example, alumni affairs, and am happy to play a role in leading the effort to organize and convene an LGBT alumni

group. The formation of such a group, however, will necessarily require the college's endorsement and initial "recruiting campaign" through a general communication to all alumni. Can you and I (and others, as appropriate) schedule time to discuss this issue? If meeting in person is preferred, I can easily arrange to find myself in Easton.

I look forward to discussing this important issue with you in more detail.

Sincerely yours,

Stephen Parahus, '84