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Oakland University professor, transgender advocate to serve on National LGBTQ Task Force

Transgender advocate Charin Davenport, who teaches writing and rhetoric at Oakland University, has been selected to serve on the **National LGBTQ Task Force**, an organization that has been promoting equality for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer communities for more than 40 years.

"This kind of experience is invaluable not only to the OU campus, but in the lives of young Trans people," said Davenport, who began presenting as a female in March 2014.

"It connects us to a larger community and delivers the message that OU is a progressive and forward looking university that honors all of its students as equal partners in the pursuit of their goals."

Founded in 1973 as the National Gay Task Force, the organization became the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in 1985 and adopted its current identity in October 2014. Its stated mission is to advocate freedom, justice and equality for LGBTQ people, and to

and to "build a future where everyone is free to be themselves in every aspect of their liv

"For the OU community, the Task Force can be an incredibly valuable resource for training workshops and seminars for students, faculty, and the administration," Davenport said. "It also provides opportunities for students to be part of a statewide grassroots effort to raise awareness and work toward equality."

Davenport will serve on the Task Force through June while continuing to teach at the university, which was recently **ranked** as one of the state's top LGBTQ-inclusive campuses.

"One of my roles with the Task Force is to develop a statewide faith-based network of allies that is inclusive and safe for Trans people," she said. "So many Trans people do not feel welcomed in those spaces. So, a lot of what I'll be doing is raising awareness within the faith-based communities and training them to be effective allies in our struggle for equality."

Davenport will also be tasked with addressing access to safe educational spaces, health care, what it means to be an ally, employment, a training Trans people to effectively communicate and participate in their local communities.

"A big issue will be to amend the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act in Michigan, as well as local ordinances," she said. "As it is now, Trans people have no civil rights protections in Michigan, except for those communities with human rights ordinances. Nowhere is this more evident than within the TPOC (Trans People of Color) community, where the intersections of race, education, poverty and gender identity exist."

Grace Wojcik, coordinator of OU's Gender and Sexuality Center, called Davenport's appointment to the National LGBTQ Task Force a "huge asset" to the university community.

"It further demonstrates how committed faculty and staff are to making the campus a more LGBTQ-inclusive place," she said.

To learn more about the task force, visit www.thetaskforce.org.

For more information about OU's LGBTQ-inclusive initiatives, visit www.oakland.edu/gsc.



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