The Vassar College Department of Athletics and Physical Education, the Engaged Pluralism Initiative, the Dean of the College and the President's Office hosted the LGBT SportSafe Inclusion Program. LGBT SportSafe Inclusion Program utilizes a benchmarking framework, the 3-Peat Model, to help athletic leadership champion a culture of respect and inclusion. The 3-Peat Model addresses the importance of programming, policy and public awareness at all levels of sport, while offering incentives to institutions, teams and leagues that reach inclusion goals.

The goals of the program: create an environment where everyone is valued and respected, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression; address sport-specific challenges athletic administrators and coaches face in creating an LGBTQ inclusive athletics community for student-athletes; and develop an action plan for coaches and athletics administrators to champion respect and implement best practices and policies for LGBT inclusion.

Nevin Caple and Eric Lueshen, the co-founders of LGBT SportSafe, visited Vassar’s campus in late March. Vassar’s Queer, Trans & Non-Binary (QTNB) student-athlete working group felt that the campus community could benefit from LGBT SportSafe, and the campus as a whole, including President Bradley, was committed. Nearly 200 community members took part, showing Vassar’s investment in LGBT inclusion.

During the one-day workshop, they met with 25 students, members of our Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) and varsity team leaders. This was an informal conversation with student leaders to discuss climate and learn about opportunities to create a more inclusive athletics department.

The facilitators then led a discussion with athletics administrators and campus partners on climate, challenges, concerns, best practices, and policy implementation.

All athletics department personnel and student-facing campus partners attended a lunch and learn on LGBTQ inclusion training. This ensured coaches and athletic administrators and staff had the knowledge, tools and resources to support student-athletes and colleagues, while upholding institutional values. It was also an additional opportunity for folks from across campus to connect with the athletics staff.

The most successful event of the day was the keynote with 150 student-athletes in attendance. The LGBT SportSafe facilitators shared their personal journey from athlete to advocate and engaged student-athletes with interactive games and thought-provoking questions. Students learned how to champion respect on the team and around campus.

Overall, the feedback of this program was positive. With Vassar’s commitment to LGBT inclusion, this program helped Vassar develop a baseline of understanding within the community and allows the department to add additional educational programming going forward.