

Few words of summary from Dan Klein, Head of the LGBTQ Association:

As our formal pride events for this year are over, I am stepping down from heading the WIS LGBTQ Association. The new head of the Association will be announced at a later time.

And now, as is customary, a few words of summary.

The first meeting I hosted in this role was nearly three years ago (before even Zoom knew it would be so popular). Those who were there may remember our icebreaker games that lasted for almost the entire meeting because we were enjoying them so much. I left that meeting energized and motivated to take an active role in promoting the visibility of and acceptance towards the LGBTQ community on campus. That semester culminated in the lecture by Prof. Uzi Even, who, in unprecedented bravery, managed to update the IDF orders to allow LGBTQ people to be drafted to military service without discrimination. This meeting is where I first met the future head of the Diversity and Inclusion office, Dr. Meytal Eran-Jona. Little did I know our work together would be so fruitful.

The second semester saw the advent of a novel idea – on-line meetings. I admit I myself was rather hesitant at this stage, but felt that we should try to keep some stability in the activity of the Association. However, the meetings very quickly lost popularity and thus we no longer held them. Even under the pressure of the pandemic, we were able to make progress on several fronts: we were planning the first pride event fully supported by Institute management, and the president of WIS sent out an Institute-wide letter commemorating Pride Month. Later that year, realizing that Zoom allowed us to host speakers from abroad, the planned event was converted to a webinar hosting Prof. Claire Thomas. Claire spoke openly about transitioning in academia after already becoming a member of faculty at Pennsylvania State University.

The second year saw a rollercoaster of changing instructions to mitigate the spread of Coronavirus, resulting in another webinar, this time hosting Dr. Ben Johnson from Springer-Nature. Ben spoke about what steps institutions can make to become more inclusive of their diverse community. The meeting ended with a beautiful quote from James Baldwin: “The place in which I fit won’t exist until I make it”. I took his advice to heart, and I hope reading it again will inspire those of you who have read this far to adopt its message.

The same year, we hosted the first pride event supported by Institute management and attended by the president of WIS. Who would have thought that drag queens could perform here? During a time of personal hardship, this event kept me afloat and convinced me that our work at WIS had value. Weeks after the event, I was still approached by people who wanted to express their support. The Institute newspaper also published an article about our activity on Pride Month.

This year we hosted Dr. Roy Zucker to talk about LGBTQ personalized medicine, and held another fabulous pride event. I was astounded by the amount of support we received when the idea of organizing a bus to the TLV pride parade came up. I hope everyone wears their WIS pride shirts proudly, and again thank the people who came to me with the idea and made it a reality. The LGBTQ roundtable we recently held has brought to light issues that I had been unaware of, and I am glad they have been raised so they receive proper attention. I apologize to anyone who feels their needs were not met by the activity of the Association.

The past three years have been challenging yet fulfilling, both personally and professionally. I consider it a privilege to have led the WIS LGBTQ Association, and take pride in our achievements. On the other hand, like I tend to say whenever I get the chance, the road is long still. We continue to face opposition in certain forums, especially in the wider Rehovot area, but also inside the walls of our protective bubble. For example, I haven’t seen a pride flag raised on campus in commemoration of Pride Month (though I have seen it outside campus here, on the post from July 19th 2022J). I encourage everyone to take an active role in promoting diversity and encouraging their fellow group members and Pls to voice their opinions in relevant discussions! The power of a group is much greater than that of individuals.

Finally, I’d like to thank everyone who supported the Association – the International office, the Feinberg Graduate School, the Institute’s management, the student council, my dear friends at the Diversity and Inclusion office and all others who gave their wise words, clever ideas and funny jokes throughout this period.

Here's to a colorful and diverse future for WIS and Rehovot!