

08 - 10 August 2025  
Berlin, Germany

## **LGBTQ+ Organizations Throughout Old Dominion University's History**

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### **Abstract**

This paper explores the LGBTQ+ history of college students at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, from 1968 to the present and highlights the struggles of LGBTQ+ students facing discrimination on campus. Students addressed homophobic vandalism on campus; advertised in *Our Own*, Norfolk's gay newspaper from 1976 to 1998; worked closely with the Unitarian Universalist Gay Caucus, a small group that started the newspaper and organized in the area; and put on an LGBTQ+ conference on campus in partnership with local LGBTQ+ organizations. The LGBTQ+ organizations at ODU often faced discrimination from within the university and focused on goals such as educating the community about the acceptance of gay and lesbian people. While they initially seemed to have little awareness of transgender and gender non-conforming communities, they did eventually become increasingly inclusive of those communities.

Student organizations are often overlooked as merely communal spaces, less relevant than the more nationally recognized and respected organizations, such as the Mattachine Society, Street Transvestites Action Revolutionaries, or the Daughters of Bilitis, and modern national organizations such as PFLAG, Act Up, GLAAD, Lambda Legal, Trevor Project, or the Matthew Sheppard Foundation. The contributions that LGBTQ+ student organizations have made are often overlooked due to the constantly changing leadership and smaller scale that LGBTQ+ student organizations work on; however, that does not diminish the value of student organizations' impact on organizing for LGBTQIA+ issues. Therefore, I will discuss the history of LGBTQ+ organizations at ODU chronologically, from the Tidewater Homophile Society Old Dominion College chapter, founded in 1968, to the present day with the Old Dominion University Sexuality and Gender Alliance. I show the challenges each organization faced and how they were able to slowly change campus-wide perceptions of the LGBTQ+ community. I also include information shared by former members of these LGBTQ+ organizations and an analysis of archival documents produced by these groups.

**Keywords:** LGBTQ, history, student organizing,