

University of Virginia School of Law
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Oral History Interview Transcript
Cover Sheet

Narrator: Cordel Faulk

Interviewers: Addie Patrick, Austin Mueller, Jonathan Greenstein

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Project Abstract: Lambda Law Alliance 40 is a multimedia project produced by Law Special Collections to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the University of Virginia Law School's chapter of Lambda Law Alliance (1984-2024). In collaboration with current UVA Law Lambda members, Law Special Collections conducted oral history interviews with past UVA Law Lambda members and officers from the organization's four decades to highlight individual experiences and document the organization's forty-year history.

Interview Abstract: Oral history interview with Cordel Faulk, class of 2001, via Zoom, on March 13, 2024. Faulk discussed his education, his time at UVA as a law student., and his activities to recruit more LGBT+ students to UVA Law while working in admissions.

Beginning of interview

Addie Patrick: All right. Hello, today is March 13, 2024. My name is Addison Patrick, and I use she/her pronouns. I'm the library coordinator here at the UVA Law Library, and I'm Zooming in from Charlottesville, Virginia. Today we're conducting an oral history interview with current and former members of UVA Law's chapter of Lambda Law Alliance, both to document the group's history in our archive, and also to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the organization. So, to get started, we're going to go around the room and introduce ourselves, starting with Austin.

Austin Mueller: Hi, everyone. My name is Austin Mueller (class of 2024). My pronouns are he/him. I am also Zooming in from Charlottesville, and I am currently a third-year law student here at UVA Law.

Jonathan Greenstein: Hey, I'm Jon Greenstein (class of 2024), but Jonathan also works as well. I am a third-year law student here and I'm a current Lambda student here in Charlottesville, and I'm Zooming in from Charlottesville as well.

Cordel Faulk: I'm Cordel Faulk. I am class of 2001 from the Law School, but I'm also a former dean of admissions at the Law School as well. And believe it or not, I also am Zooming in from Charlottesville, Virginia [laughs]. So, we're all in Charlottesville right now. [twenty second pause]

Addie Patrick: All right, whenever you guys are ready.

Austin Mueller: Great. Thank you so much for taking the time today to do this interview with us, Cordel. I'll go ahead and be starting us off thinking about some questions about your initial arrival at the Law School. And so, we wanted to start off by asking you, why did you decide to attend UVA Law?

Cordel Faulk: To me it was really easy. I knew I wanted to go to law school. And I knew specifically that I did not want a cutthroat law school. So, before I knew anything about UVA, before I knew anything about its history or its culture, I knew I did not want to go to a cutthroat law school. I wanted to find the least cutthroat law school I could possibly find. And so that's where I started my research, just looking and reading everything I could find, talking to people all over the place, just everything I could do. Talking to current students, talking to alums, of lots of different places. And I went to Virginia Tech undergrad, so I was in Blacksburg as I was doing this, because I went straight through from undergrad to law school. And as it turned out, as I was doing all of the research, I was like, Oh, wait a minute, it looks like exactly the place I need to be happens to be the University of Virginia School of Law. If I had done all my research, and I found out that I needed to be in California at that law school because it was not going to be cutthroat, UVA Law Archives

that's where I was going. But it turned out, Oh, this is just right up the road, and I have in-state privileges. So, this is great. So, for me, that's really what it came down to. And the other really important part of that decision was, I was like, Wow, it's not cutthroat, but also my entire life Bobby [Robert F.] Kennedy (class of 1951) has been my absolute hero. I—believe it or not, I have three commissioned paintings of Bobby Kennedy in my house. And it turned out that Bobby Kennedy also had gone to the University of Virginia School of Law. So, those two things, it was like, Wow, his makes sense. I need to be, I really need to be here, this is where I need to be. And so, it was honestly was never a decision. Once I got my law school admissions, it was never a decision where I was going to go. I was always going to go to UVA Law once I got in.

Austin Mueller: And did your identity, which—in various facets, whether that be sexuality, race, gender, religion, some other facet of your identity, affect that decision of wanting to attend UVA Law, and if so, would you be able to explain how?

Cordel Faulk: So, I think, believe it or not, for the most part, the answer to that is no. But I think the part of my identity that was most important in me deciding to come here, and it overrode anything else, it probably was my identity as a Virginian. I kind of felt like, no matter what—it turned out I had known a lot of people who went to UVA. I knew a lot of people actually who, my parents did, who had gone to UVA Law. So, I kind of felt like I understand the people who go there, who have gone there, the types of people who will likely go there in the future and be in my class. So, I really do think my identity as a Virginian just made it comfortable for me to be there, because I felt like no matter what I feel like, I understand the types of people who are there. So that made it, again, that was a big part of, Yes, I think this makes a lot of sense to me on a number of different levels.

Austin Mueller: And what were your first impressions of Charlottesville?

Cordel Faulk: I was, I went to Virginia Tech undergrad. [Laughs.] So, my first impression of Charlottesville was, Wow, this is kind of cosmopolitan [laughs]. I know there are not many people who would have that reaction when they first key in on Charlottesville, but I thought it was a quaint town. I—Blacksburg is rural Virginia; Charlottesville is not rural Virginia. Charlottesville to me, then and now, feels more suburban. I grew up in suburban Virginia Beach, and Charlottesville, then and now, feels to me like where I grew up. So, that was really my first impression. It was like, Oh, this feels like home, it feels like my suburb from back home where I grew up.

Austin Mueller: This is going back to what you had spoken about, about your identity as a Virginian. Just out of curiosity, did your identity as a Virginian impact the same decision of choosing to go to Virginia Tech, when you were making that decision to go to undergrad?

Cordel Faulk: You know, I did not set out to go to Virginia Tech, at any part of my college decision process. None of them did I want to go to Virginia Tech. I kind of just

wound up at Virginia Tech. Just you know, just it was like the price was right. You know, it was far enough away from home that nobody would be in my face, I would have some independence. So, I just kind of wound up there. But it—I really think the college admissions process works. I wound up there, I did not really make the decision to go there. I just kind of gave up and said, Okay, I'll go to Tech. And it turned out to be the exact place I needed to be for college. I grew there into an adult in ways that I don't know that I would have if I had been anywhere else. I had a lot of great support there, that I still have in my life that I got at Virginia Tech. And again, I didn't know that I needed it, I would not have chosen it. I did not in many ways choose it. But if—that one really worked out. That, I mean, to me, the mirror image of that was the UVA Law decision. I clearly did make that decision. And again, that also worked out for me very well. But as an eighteen-year-old, I just stumbled my way to Blacksburg. And I'm very thankful that I did, looking back on it this many years later. Jeez, it's thirty years ago at this point.

Austin Mueller: Were you involved with any LGBTQ+ student group while you were in undergrad at Virginia Tech? And if so, what did that look like?

Cordel Faulk: I was not. I was not. I was very involved at Virginia Tech, in a number of different organizations. Most importantly, I was the opinions editor of the student newspaper. And I was not the type of opinions editor who would just sit around. So, I wanted to be out and about, and I wanted to meet different student leaders. So, I was not involved in the LGBT organization when I was a student—I was not out. I didn't come out until I was working at the Law School. When I came out, I was, I think it was thirty, it was either thirty-two or thirty-four. I don't even remember anymore when I came out. So, I was older when I came out. So, I wasn't involved in the student organization when I was at Virginia Tech because I was in the closet. But, because I was opinions editor, I felt like, Okay, that's a student group and they have leaders and I should know who they are. So, I did know who they were and know what the issues were. And no matter what there was, no matter what the ideological slant of the opinions page was, there was always going to be somewhere open for people to come and to write. Whether it's young Republicans, Young Americans for Freedom, or whether it was the progressive students, or whether it was LGBT students, it was going to be open. And they were going to know my door was open and I was happy to listen to you, and our editorials weren't going to attack you. We were going to have a conversation and things were going to be considered. So, I felt like I knew what was going on. And I knew the students in the organization, and I certainly knew the leaders in it. But since I was in the closet, I can't say that I was out and about and a part of the organization, as much as I knew really well what was going on there.

Austin Mueller: Coming back to the decision to attend UVA for law school. I know you just had also spoken about your first impressions of Charlottesville, would you be able to talk about your first impressions at the Law School itself?

Cordel Faulk: I—what I've always told people when they're trying to decide what law school to go to, do not, don't put money down at a law school until you walk in the front door. And I at the time when I applied to law school, we did interviews, but they were very different interviews than are done now. They were optional. They were in person, and they didn't necessarily have a lot of sway in the admissions decision. That's very different now. But I decided, you know, I'm—I was a big splitter. My LSAT was great, no, no, my GPA was great, my LSAT was not. So, I was like, I need to do anything I need to do. So, I got a friend to drive me up to Charlottesville to do the interview, from Blacksburg to Charlottesville to do the interview. And I remember when I walked in the front door, nobody said a word to me, I had not said a word to anybody. I hadn't looked at a map, I hadn't even really looked around. And I remember thinking, This feels right. And I had at that point, I'd gone to a number of law schools, I had done a lot of visiting. And I walked in other places. And it was like, I don't ever want to be here again. This is awful. There were other places where I was like, I guess I could do this. But for me, when I walked in UVA Law, that was the time when I was like, No, this feels right. I got it. This is it. I don't I don't know why; I can't explain it. But that was it. That was it. Just walked in, felt right.

Austin Mueller: What did the admitted students programming look like at that time, once you had been admitted and you decided to go to the Law School? Do you remember?

Cordel Faulk: Yes. I—so I was admitted on—I was admitted March 21, 1994. I remember the date. And the admitted student open house was probably two days later. I was admitted really late. And I understand why, looking back at it now, with the knowledge that I have having worked in admissions, I understand why. I had a really big split. And the other thing is I had a really big split. So, knowing what I know now, I was probably going to be admitted, but it wasn't going to be early, because of the big split. The other thing that was in my favor was I applied to law school in 1990—oh, I said 1994, it was March 21, 1998. I applied to law school in 1998. And the importance of that is, and this is why I—this is how I know that I would have got—I was going to get in it now, and I didn't know then. I applied during the height of the dot-com era. Nobody was going to law school then; everybody was going into business. Everybody was trying to make money in a startup dot-com. So, applications to law school had plummeted at that point. So now it's like, Oh, yes, they needed my GPA to balance out the mediums at that point. So, I totally lost track of your question. I got off on my own sidetrack.

Austin Mueller: That's fine. It's top of mind for me right now, because we're in the Admitted Students Open House this week—

Cordel Faulk: Oh, so back to the admitted—okay, so I didn't go to the Admitted Students Open House. Okay, but— so, I came to law school the next year and I was on the—I was on First-Year Council, I was treasurer of First-Year Council. So, at that time, the admissions office did not run the Admitted Students Open House. The Student Bar Association and First-Year Council ran the Admitted Students Open House and, in my UVA Law Archives

opinion, and I don't think I'm alone in this opinion, it was an utter and complete disaster. Because most of the event, in a very UVA Law fashion, centered around, How much can we drink in any given part of the day? It was not informative; you didn't really even get to meet people because it was just kind of sloshy. I think very soon after that the admitted stu—the admissions office took it over. And it became a very different event to what it had been. But it was very alcohol soaked back at that point. I remember helping with the open house during my first year. And I remember being so embarrassed [laughs] by everything that happened, I went to the dean of students, and I said, "This wasn't good," [laughs]. It was Beverly Harmon. And I was like, "This wasn't good. What just happened wasn't good. I'm really embarrassed by it." I was not the only person who said something like that at that time. But things changed pretty quickly after that, because that was probably the nadir of the Admitted Students Open House was right around that time.

Austin Mueller: Thinking about starting your time at the Law School and your experience as a student at UVA Law, and understanding what you had mentioned earlier about coming out later in life, I know we were curious, from your perspective as a law student at that time, did you have a sense of what the sentiment was towards LGBTQIA+ individuals at the School?

Cordel Faulk: Yes, that's a—it's a great question. And it's a super interesting question. And it's one that I don't think gets asked a lot. I think, I think there's an assumption that the Law School was probably a fairly hostile place to LGBT+ people probably until the 2010s. And I don't think that was the case. I do think in probably the '80s and before, the Law School probably was a more hostile place to LGBT individuals than it was later. By the time I came in 1998, I don't—it wasn't a hostile place. But it also wasn't a welcoming place, if that means anything. But I think the process—I think the progress that had happened at that point was, I think things had gotten to the point that they were neutral, which was a really good thing, because things had been hostile. But I think things were neutral at that point. And when I came to the Law School, I didn't know that. You know, I was in the closet, and I wanted to stay in the closet, because it was UVA Law, it was Virginia, it has a fairly conservative reputation. It's like, Yeah, I don't want to deal with that while I'm in law school. It's already hard enough. And I went through three years at the Law School with that being my opinion, with my assumption being this is—no, not my three years, it was my first year—it was a fairly hostile place.

Cordel Faulk: But I remember very vividly starting law school, having orientation, I remember the Student Bar Association president speaking, and I remember seeing her and I remember thinking, Wow, she seems great. She seemed to have it together. And then during the year I would see her, and she really was, she was just—she was a very kind of commanding presence. She—very lawyerly, you know, I was like, Wow, that's what a lawyer should be. I really looked up to her. And I remember, I think it was the end of the year, and she, I think she wrote something for the student paper about her time as SBA president. And she mentioned in the piece that she wrote for the paper, that she was a lesbian. And I remember being taken aback. And she was, I come to find UVA Law Archives

out later, she was open. She was out. She was not hiding for anybody, which I really respect, because this was 1998 for goodness sakes, or 1999 at the point where she wrote the article. And that had a big effect on me. And it still has a really big effect on me. Because she was out, she was open, she was elected Student Bar Association president at UVA. She had a very successful tenure as Student Bar Association president. She was warmly embraced by the entire Law School community. And that had a huge impression on me, and it let me realize, Wow, I had some assumptions about what UVA Law was, and they just really proved to me that my assumptions were wrong. I thought this was a really negative place. It's not a negative place. I think it—like I said, I don't know that we were at the point where it was open and embracing. But nobody was embracing the Student Bar Association president because she was a lesbian, but everybody loved her. So, there was no rejection of her because of this, but they just loved her because of who she was. And that left a huge impression on me. And it said something to me about, Wow, this place isn't really what I thought it was. And it's not what a lot of other people probably think it is, either.

Austin Mueller: Yes, that's pretty powerful to hear about that story. I'm curious. I know you said maybe it wasn't quite like a warm embrace because she was lesbian. But maybe in addition to her story, or what you witnessed, in terms of students' interactions with her, did you have a sense of, I guess, what the sentiment was towards LGBTQ identified folks both—or not both, excuse me—whether it's from other students, from faculty members, from the administration, was that easy to tell? Did you have a sense of how those different sentiments might have differed from each other?

Cordel Faulk: You know, honestly, I don't think I really did. I didn't have a sense of it. It was—and I think that's where we get into the neutrality. And neutrality is not really good. In just that, it was like, it just—there was no, we support this community, which would have been good to have heard. There wasn't really any of that from the faculty, not from the administration. I think there were—there was hesitance amongst the students to be too out. That was the era when there would be no pictures taken at any—I can't remember what the name of the organization was at the time. But there would be no pictures taken at that era's Lambda, any events. But again, it wasn't—but the fact that it wasn't negative, to me, was shocking. It was shocking.

Austin Mueller: And in that environment, potentially, as you've described it, a more neutral environment, did you have a sense of what the level of openness was of the LGBTQIA+ students at the Law School?

Cordel Faulk: I would not say it was a high level of openness. I think there was probably—there was a protective shell amongst the people who felt comfortable coming out. People have since, I mean, obviously, even from my class, have come out after being at the Law School. So, there were folks who were LGBT at the time, but didn't feel comfortable saying it. But the ones who did, I think there was a level—there was kind of a protective shell to make sure that nobody hurt anybody, like, you know, these are our people. We're not going to—we're not putting anybody on the stage for anybody to get

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hurt. So, I do—that was kind of my sense. I feel like Lambda now is, Lambda is probably—my understanding, certainly when I left in 2020, I can't imagine that it's any different, Lambda had become one of the two or three most important student organizations at UVA Law. It certainly was not that in 1998, it certainly has grown into that now. But I think it was probably more self-protective then than it has to be now.

Austin Mueller: Were national or state LGBTQIA+ issues part of the conversation at the Law School while you were there? Whether that be student groups having events about these issues, or potentially the discussion of these issues within certain classes, maybe particularly thinking towards constitutional law and certain cases that touched on issues of LGBTQIA+ rights?

Cordel Faulk: Outside of, maybe outside of *Bowers* [*v. Hardwick* (478 US 186 (1986))] in constitutional law, I don't know that it ever came up. It was, I mean even in 1998 it was a very different era. I honestly do not know. I can't think of a single time other than that case where it came up.

Austin Mueller: Do you remember what the conversation about *Bowers* looked like when you learned about it in law school?

Cordel Faulk: I remember—thinking back on this, I remember my classmates thinking it was wrongly decided. I vaguely remember a conversation about Professor [Anne] Coughlin having worked for, having clerked for the justice while that case was being written. And I vaguely remember something about the justice later regretting it. The justice being Lewis [F.] Powell [Jr]. But that's as much as I can get into. I don't think—certainly there—nobody was cheerleading for *Bowers* at that point, because it was clearly silly. Yes.

Austin Mueller: Thank you. I'm going to turn it over to Jon now to continue on with some more questions.

Jonathan Greenstein: Hey, so understanding that you weren't out at the time, what was your impressions, more, of the LGBT group, that is now known as Lambda, around the Law School?

Cordel Faulk: You know, that's a great question. And I haven't—I never really thought about that now in the reference to my undergraduate experience. And I know this is going to sound odd, but I felt like the LGBT group, when I was an undergrad at Virginia Tech, was more activist than the group at the Law School, because they—remember, I knew the students at Tech really well, actually, in the group and the leaders. And honestly, I just didn't see the same level of presence at the Law School that I saw when I was in undergrad. And there are probably reasons for that, you know, professional school, you're thinking about different things than you're thinking about when you're an undergrad. But it's—certainly it was not as active as the undergraduate group had been when I was at Virginia Tech.

Jonathan Greenstein: Yes, do you remember any of the events that they did or anything that stood out to you?

Cordel Faulk: No. Which I know is sad, but no. And honestly, I don't think, I don't really—they wouldn't have been targeted in my direction, because I wasn't out. But no, actually, I really don't.

Jonathan Greenstein: Do you know if they—what the process for meetings was like, or were there flyers around the Law School?

Cordel Faulk: I, honest to God, I don't remember them. I don't remember them.

Jonathan Greenstein: So other than the Student Bar Association president, who you spoke about, did you know any other Lambda members?

Cordel Faulk: No.

Jonathan Greenstein: Even, you know, or LGBT people outside of the organization?

Cordel Faulk: I mean, yes, but I didn't know it. [Laughs.]

Jonathan Greenstein: Right.

Cordel Faulk: So, I [pause] I don't think so. No, I don't think so. I don't think I knew, Okay, this person is in Lambda, in the way that certainly would be the case now.

Jonathan Greenstein: So, what has that been like, having classmates come out after law school? You know, do you reach out to them? Have you had conversations with them about why you stayed in the closet? Or coming out later, or those sorts of things?

Cordel Faulk: You know, I don't think that I've had any conversations about why, but I think that's because there's an understanding of why, I think, even if we were mistaken. UVA Law has the reputation for being a fairly conservative law school, and it's just easier to not deal with that there, at a place that has a reputation for being conservative. So, I think that's a lot of why people wouldn't have at the time, just concern that, I don't know how these people are going to deal with this. I'm still dealing with this myself and I don't want these people who might have sketchy views on this to get in the way of me coming to grips with something that I've got to deal with on my own.

Jonathan Greenstein: So, you mentioned that the Law School was neutral. So how do you think you coming out would have been received, you know, then?

Cordel Faulk: I actually, I mean, I'm now embarrassed that I didn't, because I think it would have been fine. I think it would have been good, I think I would have been warmly

received. Anne Coughlin would have hugged me and kissed me. You know, I now look back and, why didn't I? Because it would have—I think if more people had come out, it would have moved from neutral to embracing, which basically is what happened when we went into the 2010s, as more people started to come out. We were still in a very neutral place through the 2000s. And the Law School became much more embracing as a lot more people were in the building. And I just think it would have been—it would have made the Law School a better place if I had, and if a number of other people had. Because Anne Coughlin has been sitting there forever, trying to welcome LGBT+ students, and we should have given her more to welcome even back then, because she would have made it, she would have made it easier than we thought it would have been.

Jonathan Greenstein: So, you also worked in admissions, of course, in many different roles and so you interacted with Lambda through that process. What was that like? And how have you seen Lambda change and grow within your different roles at UVA Law?

Cordel Faulk: So, I came out of the closet. And I was like, Okay, I'm going to, I'm, yes, I'm coming out of closet. So, I came out of the closet. So, I told Jennifer Hulvey, who was director of financial aid. And I was like, Okay, well, don't tell anybody, I'm not ready to tell a whole bunch of people. So fine. So, Jennifer was very nice and supportive. And she didn't tell a whole lot of other people. She didn't tell anybody else. But Scott Migliori (class of 2012), who was the chair of Lambda at the time, went to Jennifer, because Jennifer's always been—she's always been very warm, open, welcoming to LGBT+ students. And Scott said to Jennifer, You know what, if there was anybody here that we could come talk to, like any—who would identify with us and help us, it would be just really helpful. And it would be really nice if there was somebody. So, Jennifer just sat there, and she nodded in the meeting. And she's like, I think you're right, I do think you're right, that would be helpful. And then, as soon as Scott left her office, Jennifer came to my office and closed the door, and she said, Listen, they need you, come on. [Laughs.] She's like, Come on, they just need you. [Laughs.] So, I was like, Okay, well, I'll talk to them. I'll talk to them, I'll talk to the leaders of the group. So, to me, that was how everything started.

Cordel Faulk: So, it was Scott and Chase Cooper (class of 2013), I talked to Scott and Chase, who are both real giants of Lambda at the Law School. And I think they were right, I do think they needed the support of somebody in the administration who wasn't just an ally, but somebody who was a member of the community. But also, for me, me having the opportunity to get somebody who was coming out to interact with them was also super, super important to my coming out. And really, once we had each other it was helpful to both sides. But it was also, it was in fact helpful to Lambda. Lambda at the time was very small. So, we decided, Okay, Lambda is small. If we don't do anything about it, nothing's going to get done about it. It's like, okay, fine. So, the first thing we decided to do was to set up a meeting with the out LGBT+ 1Ls. Let's see why they came to UVA Law and then we can build off of that. To me that seemed like the most reasonable thing to do. Let's find out what our strengths are and then let's build off of that. So, we had a meeting of all the out 1Ls in that class, and I think this was, was this UVA Law Archives

2011? I think this was 2011-ish, 2010 or 2011. And I remember walking in that room. And, I hope my memory is not wrong in the number, I think there were four. And you have to remember, classes at UVA Law were bigger back then. We had classes between 360 and 380 at that time, so they were bigger. And honestly, that may have been one of those classes that was really big. So, we had a couple of classes that were gigantic after the '08 recession. And the fact that we had such big classes, and there were four out LGBT+ students. I remember walking in the room, and I remember thinking, Okay, well, we have a lot of work to do. And we sat down, and we had the meeting, and honestly, I was not—I was like, Okay, we're going find out what attracted these students to UVA Law, and then we're just going to do more of that. And it turned out that a lot of them came despite the reputation of the Law School when it came to LGBT students. And it was basically just scholarship money. And I was like, Wow, we're doing pretty bad here [laughs]. The only thing we can do is buy four people. And they're not feeling super comfortable otherwise being here. So that was an inauspicious start.

Cordel Faulk: So, I think this was Chase and I, so Chase Cooper. I think Chase and I had this crazy idea that, Okay, we don't ask—UVA Law at the time didn't ask an LGBT+ question on the application. But it didn't matter, because LSAT did ask the question. And we could look at the data from LSAT. So, I was like, Okay, we could actually pull a list of every single out LGBT+ LSAT-taker. So, everybody who's registered for LSDAS [Law School Data Assembly Service]—that's getting way too into the weeds. But LSAC [Law School Admission Council] would give us a list of all LGBT+ applicants in the country. And our thought was, I was like, Okay, we've got make some tough decisions here. We can't, there's no low hanging fruit here, we've got to pick the high hanging fruit. So, we've got to do some work, this isn't going to be easy. So, we decided to call everybody. We called and emailed everybody. Just to see if we could talk to folks and say, Hey, no, this is actually a great place. If you have any questions, we're happy to answer them. If you need a fee waiver, we're happy to give you a fee waiver. And we would give a fee waiver to everybody. But I think it was powerful to call people and say, Hey, here, we'll give you a fee waiver. And so we did it. We did. And the first time we did that was an utter and complete failure. Utter and complete failure. We did not—the next year, we did not move the number at all. I don't even know if we got back to four the next year. But when we came back together and realized we'd utterly, completely failed, we were like, Okay, what do we want to do? What do we want to do different for the next class? And our decision was, we don't want to do anything different. We decided we weren't wrong. We decided we were going to do the exact same thing all over again. And we did. We did the exact same—we called everybody and talked to them. If somebody wanted to talk to somebody in admissions, I then talked to them next. I think there were some who wanted to talk to Anne Coughlin, so they talked to Anne Coughlin. So, we just did it all over again, because we just didn't think we were wrong. Hubris working well, because the next year it actually worked.

Cordel Faulk: So we—I do not remember what the number was in the next class, but we were over double digits in the next class. And we just couldn't believe it like, Oh, wait, we weren't wrong. And it was a spectacular class of out LGBT students. Certainly

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more than the Law School had ever seen. And that group of students like—. So, then we, so we were like, Okay, let's do this again. So, then we had more people who were able to call and have conversations and talk about why they had chosen UVA Law. And we did it again, we called everybody again. And I don't know what had changed from the first year on, but after that, we started to have a lot of success with when we would call people. We would get more applications, and then more people would come to the open house. And when people would come to the open house, people would decide to come. And then Lambda started to do more events at the open house, just let people know this is a place that's open, welcoming, and we want you here. Jennifer Hulvey, Anne Coughlin, and I, we started to do a lunch at the open house for every out LGBT student. And we—I think we actually did it the day before the open house, we invited people to come the day before. And we did a lunch for folks. And we had everybody in the room, and we were like, Okay, ask anything you want. So, we had students there, we had us, we had faculty, we had administration, and we just talked and we answered any questions that they might have. And you know, people saw that we were different than they expected. And again, then the classes just started to get bigger, and things built and they built and they built, they built to the point that we didn't have to keep calling everybody. The applications just started to come. And then it was after that point, it really, it was—the Law School was for LGBT+ students, it was just a different place, it was just a very different place.

Jonathan Greenstein: Yes, so thinking about the future from a little bit, right, we went from the four students when you got there, or when you were speaking with them, to now Lambda is one of the biggest student groups at UVA Law. [Faulk speaking at the same time: Wait, one more thing.] What do you hope for in the future?

Cordel Faulk: So, before I answer that, there's one other thing that we did that I think was super important in those early years. So, the other thing that we did after people got there, after they were there for orientation, Jennifer, Anne, and I realized, Wow, we know, we had lists of all the out LGBT students, but we couldn't give that list to anybody. So, we were like, Wow, we know who they are, but I mean, we have one of those identities where you could look at another LGBT+ person and have no idea that this person in your class, this person in your section also is. So, the other thing that we did was, and we paid for this, this wasn't something that came through the dean's office or student affairs, we paid for this. We started to do a dinner in the first few weeks of the semester of the class of the out LGBT 1Ls. Invited a few students from Lambda as well, so that they could meet each other, because we kind of felt like well, we need to—we've gotten people here, we've got to start building, knitting the community together, building the community. And I think that was the other really important thing that we started to do, was to make sure that people met each other early and then all we had to do was that. Jennifer, Anne, and I paid for this dinner, got people together, and then we did not have to do anything else. Once people got—they knew who each other were, then the community really came together without us doing much other than then waiting to support when somebody came to one of our offices and said, Hey, we're running into X

problem, or we need X, can you tell us who to talk to to get Y? That was really all that was needed once we got people in the building and then got them introduced.

Cordel Faulk: My hope for the future is—I don't even know if this is a hope for the future anymore. I think this might be the present. I really wanted—I've really always hoped that Lambda would become as important to the Law School community and as important to the Law School conscious as BLSA [Black Law Students Association]. And I always hoped and wanted that. I don't know that we needed to do anything more than our support level, Jennifer, Anne, and I at the time. But I kind of think that's happened. To me that was the most important thing was that, because I don't know it's—Lambda is so good for the Law School. And seeing that level of engagement grow and continue, that's my hope for the Law School. Because I think it continues after people leave and go into other communities. So, it's the UVA Law community kind of growing out and helping other parts of the country and the world. And I think it's helpful that there's a lot of support for that starting at the Law School.

Jonathan Greenstein: What advice do you have for current and future Lambda students?

Cordel Faulk: I remember when Lambda was really small, when it was a few students a class, when in—a lot of times Lambda's membership was more allies than anything. When Lambda was really small, it was—there weren't fights, there were no fights in Lambda, because you weren't big enough to fight. You're small, you've got to support each other, there were no fights. As the organization got bigger, you could fight! [Laughs.] So, you know, there were some years where, you know, a fairly big organization, people are messy. And there were—rifts would grow in the organization, because it was big enough for there to be rifts to grow in the organization. My advice would be—these people—I know it's hard to realize it when you're in the middle of it, but these people are going to be very, very, very important to the rest of your life. Get to know each other, enjoy each other. Any small things that come up, just ignore them, they just don't matter as much as this community is going to mean to you for the rest of your life.

Jonathan Greenstein: I think that's really well said. I don't know if anyone else has any more questions they would like to ask?

Addie Patrick: I don't. That was wonderful. But Austin, I don't know if you had any follow-up questions?

Austin Mueller: I think that's a great place to end as well. Really strong sentiment.

Addie Patrick: Well, okay, with that, I will say thank you so much. I'm going to stop the recording and then we can say our goodbyes.

End of interview

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