Daily Life

Lavender Graduation honors seniors in the LGBTQIA+ community

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The University of Connecticut Rainbow Center hosted its 19th annual Lavender Graduation ceremony on Friday, April 17 at the Student Union Ballroom. The ceremony was hosted to laud the academic successes of UConn seniors with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, including those who are a part of the LGBTQIA+ community. Roughly 35 graduates were honored at the ceremony.

Vergil Hart, a fourth-semester structural biology and physics student, said Lavender Graduation "gives us a chance to celebrate the members of our community, whether they spend every day at the Rainbow Center or whether they just popped in occasionally."

Hart also stated that the ceremony is "a chance for [the graduates'] friends and family to be proud of how far they've come."

The graduation began with opening remarks from Bailey Gaffney, the higher education and student affairs graduate assistant for the Rainbow Center. Gaffney welcomed everyone to the ceremony and gave a land acknowledgment.

Kelsey O'Neil, the director of the Rainbow Center and the next speaker, discussed the history of Lavender Graduation.

According to O'Neil, the very first Lavender Graduation ceremony took place in 1995 at the University of Michigan. The ceremony was incited by Dr. Ronni Sanlo, a Jewish lesbian who was barred from attending her children's graduation ceremony because of her sexual orientation. Only three graduates participated in the ceremony.

Since 1995, many more colleges began hosting their own Lavender Graduations, including UConn, which hosted its first in 2008.

In addition to sharing the history of Lavender Graduation, O'Neil explained the significance of the color lavender. They said it is a combination of the pink triangle that gay men were forced to wear in Nazi concentration camps and the black triangle that recognized lesbian women as political prisoners during the same period.

The next speaker at the ceremony was Angela Rola, the senior director of inclusion and cultural engagement at the Middle Eastern Cultural Programs. In her speech, Rola acknowledges how far the Rainbow Center has come within the 28 years it has existed.

"Watching this community evolve and be shaped so powerfully by student and staff leadership, courage, creativity and care has been one of the greatest privileges of my time here at UConn," Rola said. "I say that as an outline as the former director of the Asian American Cultural Center, and now as the senior director for Inclusion and Community Engagement, the accomplishments of students connected to the Rainbow Center are many and significant."

After Rola gave her speech, Ian Shick, the associate director of the Rainbow Center, went on stage and honored the center's graduating student staff members. Those members were Dahra Dy, Sam Arévalo-Hoefer, Hiis LaRose and Martine Remi. All four staff members were awarded certificates.



Art by Cosette Ellis
STAFF ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

The next part of Lavender Graduation was a marvelous speech given by the ceremony's keynote speaker, Vu Tran.

Tran is a UConn alum who graduated in 2010. He is the Emperor '22 and '25 of the Imperial Sovereign Court of all Connecticut.

In his speech, Tran shared his experience being a queer student at UConn. He mentioned his membership in Allies and Queers, Undergraduate Association (AQUA) and Queers United Against Discrimination (QUAD) and how symbolic they were to him.

"AQUA and QUAD meetings opened up a whole new world for me," Tran said. "I never felt so comfortable letting my guard down, and the friends I made, they were genuine ones because I felt like I was being seen for the first time. Through AQUA, I learned I was enough and really came out of my shell."

Tran also mentioned how QUAD benefitted his prowess in activism.

"At QUAD, I learned the importance of using my voice," Tran said. "From protests on the Red Cross to advocating for state marriage equality through our solitary of hate speech on Day of Silence to a road trip down to Washington, D.C., to join the March for Equality. If there was a cause, we were ready to go to that for it, and we have a privilege to do so."

To conclude his speech, Tran read a quote by Pablo Casals, a Spanish cellist from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The quote was about children and their uniqueness in the world and also declared that everyone needs to strive to make the world a valuable place for children.

At the end of the ceremony, all the graduates received their lavender-colored stoles while a PowerPoint slide consisting of each student's photo, name, pronouns and major was shown on the screen above the stage.

After the graduates received their stoles, they gathered on stage for a group photo.

Quinn Saltas, an eighth-semester geographic information science and applied data analytics student who was one of the graduates, said they enjoyed the personalization of the ceremony.

"I really appreciate how the ceremony was much more personalized than other graduations," Saltas said. "It really helps promote the LGBTQIA+ community and its peers like me."

'Tomodachi Life: Living the Dream': Yes we are

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This article includes spoilers for unlockable features and events in "Tomodachi Life: Living the Dream."

Nintendo finally released the sequel to the social simulation game "Tomodachi Life" after 13 years of waiting on Thursday, April 16.

Technically the third installment of the series following Japan exclusive "Tomodachi Collection" on the Nintendo DS and "Tomodachi Life" on the Nintendo 3DS, "Tomodachi Life: Living the Dream" is available on both the original Nintendo Switch and the Switch 2 for $59.99. A free demo is currently available on the Nintendo eShop as well. As a longtime fan of the series, the announcement of this game back in March of 2025 made me extremely excited, and after playing it nonstop since its release, I can safely say it did not disappoint.

The basic structure of the game sets players as the caretaker of completely personalized "Mii" characters on a real-time island where you oversee their lives and influence their actions. The island is fully customizable and expands as you play the game. The player decides everything about it, such as the layout, the name of the island, where the Miis live, what they talk about, their relationships and so much more. This is a major step up from the previous games in which the Miis mostly lived in an apartment building that was much more limited. Now, Miis each have their own homes and can live in joint houses with up to eight others, something that was exclusive to married couples in the first two games.

Fans are thrilled to see that "Tomodachi Life: Living the Dream" includes options to make nonbinary characters, choose pronouns and have same-sex relationships — all things not present in the previous games. On top of this, the Mii character customization itself has been upgraded from the base creator, including the addition of unique hair combinations, makeup, ears and the extremely popular face paint feature that allows you to draw anything on a Mii's face. My personal favorite customization feature that's been added are "little quirks," small details that change the way a Mii stands, walks, eats or even talks, which really adds to each Miis personality.

"Tomodachi Life: Living the Dream" allows the player to draw their own faces, food, items, houses and clothing, another feature widely loved by the player base. The major drawback to this, however, is that the online sharing of creations is not included in this game, something that was in "Tomodachi Life." Since the game is such a social and dramatic life simulator, players would share Miis of people like Barack Obama and Jesus Christ for others to have silly interactions with. Players hope that the online sharing feature will return in an update, but I personally don't think it will because it would be impossible to moderate and the game has zero content filtering, something I think is a fair trade off.

While there is a lot of control involved in this game compared to its predecessors, there is still a ton of random chance when it comes to how your Miis will interact with each other. In "Tomodachi Life: Living the Dream," you can drag and drop Miis to certain objects or characters to start an interaction, but you don't know if it will be good, bad or even romantic. Some users have complained that it's very easy to get Miis to fall in love, and while I did get my boyfriend and I's Miis to get married on the first day of playing the game, I haven't been able to get any other married couples despite trying my best. The gameplay is addicting, but the Miis also go about their own lives while you're away, allowing for unlimited possibilities.



Art by Colbi Loranger
ASSOCIATE MANAGING EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

"Tomodachi Life: Living the Dream" has broadened the content of the series a lot, but there are some beloved things missing from it. The big issue that people have is that you can only have 70 Miis compared to the original game's 100, but I personally don't see an issue with this because of how much more complicated the Mii relationships are. Some of the Mii minigames (Judgement Bay, Quirky Questions, etc.), the ranking boards, the compatibility tester and most notably the concert hall are nowhere to be seen. Another big thing missing is raising Mii babies. When Miis get married, they can have children, and in "Tomodachi Life" it would take at least a few days for the child to grow up and live on their own. In this new game, a cutscene of the baby being raised plays and they grow up immediately after, completely cutting out the baby and child minigames that were in the original.

Overall, "Tomodachi Life: Living the Dream" has proven to be a fantastic sequel despite some original aspects missing, which could be added in a future update. I most certainly see myself checking in on my island every day for the next few months.

RATING: 4.5/5