Dear Faculty, Staff, Students, Board of Trustees, and Administration of the College of Charleston:

First and foremost, the Executive Committee of the Urban Studies Program wishes to affirm that our courses, our offices, and our programs are safe spaces for LGBTQ people, and that we will continue to value productive, open, and non-threatening inquiry of all dimensions of human life (including those viewpoints and experiences with which we might deeply disagree).

Second, we support activities that promote understanding and explanation of the human condition in all its diverse forms. The Urban Studies Program examines city life in all its dimensions--and that includes gay as well as straight people. Any effort to marginalize or demonize any group in the city also attacks the sense of community necessary for a better quality of life in urban [as well as rural] areas. Cities thrive on the diversity and energy of the people within the city--all of the people. We seek to understand this diversity of urban life, and we promote activities, instruction, and research that help our students and our larger society face the challenges of that diversity as our world becomes increasingly urban. People are deceiving themselves if they think that their children and/or constituents aren’t already getting this exposure in the mass and social media venues that abound. In the Urban Studies Program, we try to provide a context that values understanding above condemnation of diversity. We seek to give an interpretative framework to help our students understand their lives and the lives of others. This includes visualization of those lives as they are lived.

Third, we believe that academia has always been about embracing the changing realities of our times; these changing realities do not stop when a student graduates. If we can give our students the skills of listening, thinking, and learning before or even instead of judging, we believe they will be happier and more successful human beings. We believe these activities promote a better society than the one we currently have.

Fourth and finally, we believe at this moment in speaking up, in a unified way, to promote dialogue about gay and lesbian issues in urban spaces and on our campus, as well as about all other dimensions of human identity and experience as influenced by urban environments. We support this dialogue to reduce fear and the experience of injustice, as well as to promote a sustainable social future.

The Executive Committee of the Urban Studies Program
• Deborah Auriffeille
• Richard Bodek
• Deidre Carr, student representative
• Lisa Covert
• George Hopkins
• Kevin Keenan
• Melinda Lucka
• Barry Stiefel
• Carol Toris