

# Dating The Board

*A series in which we get to know the members of the Options Board of Directors through dates with yours truly.*

KIM STOWELL



## Philip Hall

Director of Diversity Programs, Wheeler School

Graduated from the University of Virginia

Favorite Quote: “Homophobia comes up through the hole in the ice and draws a breath which helps all the other forms of prejudice survive.” (John Amaechi)

Recommended Film: Small Town Gay Bar

Philip Hall says being on the Options board has been healthy for him. “I’m very good surviving in the straight world,” he says, and I’m only semi-successful at not having my work take over my life. So my involvement with Options has helped me have more of a gay life. It’s also a chance to be in a majority group; it’s nice not to have to translate myself.”

Philip joked that, as a member of the faculty at the Wheeler School in Providence, he is always in self-censor mode. At the same time, it is important to him to be out as a gay man at work, both as an expression of diversity and pride to the Wheeler community as a whole, and perhaps even more so to serve as a role model for Wheeler’s LGBT students, a responsibility he sees as vital. “Kids who are members of other minority groups have role models at home,” he points out.

I met the first date in this series for lunch at 729 Hope in Providence, and we reveled in our chance to set the standard for this column. On the board since its founding in 2006, Philip says he “got on the short list because of connections,” adding, “You know Rhode Island!”

Although he laughingly referred to his liberal guilt as a motivating factor, Philip truly lives by the guiding principle that “everyone needs to take on a part of the work.” He has been instrumental in transforming the curriculum at Wheeler to include a consistent focus on diversity and unity studies – “The stuff,” he says, “that was once relegated to ‘the very special day,’” and although supremely humble, the pride he takes in this is evident.

There is so much more to be related regarding our time together, from his experience as a gay teen in an all-boys school (“not really fun”) to his time spent living in Haiti, helping to set up a system of health care for pregnant women there (“Imagine talking to a pregnant woman in rural Haiti as a gay white man.”) Then there is his charmingly easy style and self-effacing openness. Philip is also single and loves dogs. And, to add my own two cents, he’s a great date. ▼