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**The Bard Queer Leadership Project to Host Next Queer Leaders Vision Forum  
with Advocate Paula Neira on December 7**

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**CORRECTION:** The location of the December 7, 2023, Queer Leaders Vision Forum will be the Clark Auditorium in the Fisher Science and Academic Center on the Simon's Rock campus, not the Daniel Arts Center as previously listed. All other details for the event remain the same.

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GREAT BARRINGTON, MA—The Bard Queer Leadership Project (BQLP) will host its next Queer Leaders Vision Forum with Paula M. Neira, JD, MSN, RN, CEN, FAAN (she/her), a nurse, lawyer, and renowned trans rights and healthcare advocate. Provost and Vice President John B. Weinstein (he/him) and Director of the Bard Queer Leadership Project, Dr. Carla Stephens (she/her), will join Neira in conversation.

The event will be held on Thursday, December 7, at 7 p.m. in the Clark Auditorium in the Fisher Science and Academic Center on the Simon's Rock campus. The event is free and open to the public. It can also be accessed via livestream following this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84963910511>

Paula M. Neira holds both a law degree and a nursing degree, but she didn't grow up thinking she'd be interested in either field. Neira graduated with distinction from the United States Naval Academy in 1985 and served primarily as a surface warfare officer until 1991, when she came to terms with her gender identity. At that point in time, serving as an openly transgender woman in the military "was not an option," leading her to leave the Navy and begin a career in nursing. "Nursing allowed me to have a career path where I could continue to serve," says Neira. Sticking to a "high-stress, life and death stakes career," Neira served as an ER nurse for five years before attending law school.

Neira decided to attend law school so as a nurse she would “have a voice at the table” during a time when nurses were not seen as “an interdependent, co-equal profession.” After completing an accelerated program at Thomas M. Cooley Law School, Neira relocated to Washington to pursue an opportunity with the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN), now known as the Modern Military Association of America. She served as a Staff Attorney and subsequently on SLDN’s Board of Directors and as the Co-Chair of its Military Advisory Committee. In her time at SLDN, Neira helped lead the efforts to repeal Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell. As an expert on transgender military service, she helped lead the efforts to change the regulations that allowed for open transgender service in 2016, before President Trump reversed that new policy in early 2017.

Neira began working for Johns Hopkins Medicine as the Nurse Educator in the Department of Emergency Medicine in 2008. With the founding of the Johns Hopkins Center for Transgender Health in 2017, she serves as its inaugural Clinical Program Director. In that role, Neira works with senior leadership to oversee an interdisciplinary service line that is aimed at providing comprehensive care for transgender people. Paula strives to match patients with the services they need and improve the health system’s ability to provide culturally and clinically competent care for the LGBTQ+ community. Additionally, Neira currently serves as the Secretary on the Board of Directors for GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ+ Equality.

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### **About Simon’s Rock**

[Bard College at Simon’s Rock](#) is the only college in the country specifically designed for highly motivated students ready to enter college after the 10th or 11th grade. Simon’s Rock offers a challenging program in the liberal arts and sciences, taught exclusively in small seminars by supportive, highly trained faculty, who are leading scholars in their fields. The College grants degrees in more than 35 majors. The Princeton Review’s *Best 380 Colleges* rates academics at Simon’s Rock higher than Harvard and Princeton.

[Bard Academy at Simon’s Rock](#) is the nation’s first two-year boarding and day program designed to prepare 9th and 10th graders to start college early. A student entering Bard Academy as a high school freshman will earn an Associate of Arts degree from Bard College at Simon’s Rock after only four years and a Bachelor of Arts degree after only six years. The Academy curriculum is designed and taught by students’ future college professors who are leading scholars in their fields.

[The Bard Queer Leadership Project](#) (BQLP) is a revolutionary, new Bachelor of Arts degree program designed for, and by, LGBTQIA+ college students to elevate LGBTQIA+ students and college graduates into leadership roles in school and across the workforce while serving as a space for actualizing educational practices designed for students to thrive. The centerpiece of BQLP is a four year dual major B.A. degree combining Queer Leadership with a second academic field.

For more information, visit [simons-rock.edu](https://simons-rock.edu) and [bardacademy.simons-rock.edu](https://bardacademy.simons-rock.edu)

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