



ILLINOIS

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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## LGBT Additions to the Diversity Planning Committee Report

1. The current University nondiscrimination policy should be amended to include discrimination caused by perceived or actual gender identity or expression. It should read as follows (added words in bold italics): "It is the policy of the University of Illinois not to engage in discrimination or harassment against any person because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, ***actual or perceived gender identity, gender expression, intersex status and sexual practice***, unfavorable discharge from the military, or status as a disabled veteran or veteran of the Vietnam era and to comply with all federal and state nondiscrimination, equal opportunity and affirmative action laws, orders, and regulations. This nondiscrimination policy applies to admissions, employment, access to and treatment in the University programs and activities. Complaints of invidious discrimination prohibited by University policy are to be resolved within existing University procedures."

**Rationale:** While the University's nondiscrimination policy does include sexual orientation among its protections, it does not include actual and perceived gender identity and expression as protected. People are regularly harassed and discriminated against because they appear to be gay or lesbian. Expressing one's gender at some level as different from one's original biological assignment, or having multiple biological assignments also often results in discrimination. Thus, transexual, transgender, and intersex people are not protected, and the policy needs to be expanded to include them.

2. The Office for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns is sadly under-supported. Creating and funding a fulltime director for LGBT Concerns position along with at least one additional FTE professional staff person (or two fulltime co-directors), one FTE graduate assistant, and sufficient undergraduate students to help staff the office so that it can be open 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays is needed. Larger, more visible space with private access is needed. Public and private space that includes meeting/lounge rooms, office space, and a resource room is needed. The space should provide multiple entrances allowing both high visibility for the LGBT community and privacy for those just beginning the coming out process. Increasing the budget line for programming to \$20,000 yearly and adding a \$5000/year resources line will begin to provide adequate support.

**Rationale:** While the Office of the Dean of Students consistently is very supportive of the LGBT Concerns Office and the needs of LGBT students here by achieving permanent funding for the Office, increasing its space, and providing additional funding where possible, more needs to be done. Currently, the Office has two 25 percent time professionals, a 50 percent time GA, and has recently added a 25 percent time undergraduate student worker. It occupies a single windowless room in the Illini Union, though it will soon move to an adjacent, somewhat larger two-room suite there. With these resources it is difficult to staff and promote the office, provide space for meetings and hanging out and adequate resource materials. Estimates of the LGBT population range from 2 percent to Kinsey's 10 percent, but virtually the entire campus population is now affected by LGBT people. Most students acknowledge that they have at least one LGBT acquaintance, friend or relative; they need resources to help them learn how best

to interact with and support those people as they go through their coming out processes and develop into happy, productive adults. Even if the oft-cited 10 percent Kinsey figure is halved, the resultant five percent falls between the campus populations of African-American and Latina/o students. Each of these groups has an entire building and two fulltime staff as well as graduate assistants and other support staff. Segments of campus, including athletics and the greek system, have long histories of homophobia and need education and training. The campus has not begun to consider the needs of trans- and intersex members of the community. Because LGBT people exist within all other categories of people, programming needs to be done that intersects with those categories. Because LGBT people are an invisible minority except when we make ourselves known, our needs are often overlooked. Because we are taught by society that our orientations are shameful and even sinful, we have to unlearn these messages as we learn to be proud of who we are. Because a powerful segment of the population, the religious right, actively seeks to oppress us and cause us physical and emotional harm, we need tools with which to protect ourselves and educate both ourselves and the straight community. Because we often begin our coming out process during our college years, we need resources and support as we question and explore our sexual identities. Therefore, providing a safe and supportive space in which LGBT students can navigate the difficulties of the coming out process, adequate programming to explore and celebrate our existence and educate the entire campus about our needs and goals, and an easily accessible set of current LGBT resources is essential and will require significant additional funding and space.

3. A three day symposium on transgender issues, funded by the Chancellor's office, that brings experts of the caliber of Lynn Conway, Leslie Feinberg, Loren Cameron, Kate Bornstein, Deirdre McCloskey, Debra Davis and others to campus should be held in spring, 2003. This symposium would introduce the issues and lead discussion on them to help us begin to understand what transexual, transgender, and intersex people face on a daily basis.

**Rationale:** As a campus we have not confronted the needs and problems of transexual, intersex and transgender students, faculty and staff or the impact of their presence on campus. We need to educate ourselves so that we can create a campus environment that is welcoming and healthy for these people and so that we have positive and productive responses to the discrimination they face. There are already transgender faculty members on campus, and if they have not already had to do so, Campus Housing will have to serve transgender students at some time. The symposium's purpose is educational for the entire campus; it would also provide a framework of understanding that would lead to development of policies that will allow trans- and intersex people to flourish on our campus. While here, symposium speakers should also have opportunities to interact with students and student affairs staff as well as campus administrators and faculty.

4. In order to look at the issues that LGBT people face on campus and provide an environment in which they can thrive, establish a Chancellor's Committee on the Status of LGBT people similar to the Chancellor's Committee on the Status of Women.

**Rationale:** UIC has had an LGBT Task Force for several years. UIUC has had a Task Force on the Status of Women for a number of years. A similar task force for LGBT people would say powerfully to the LGBT student/faculty/staff community that the University not only cares about its needs but also that it is willing to engage with us in the investigation of those needs and provide the support essential to create an environment in which we cannot only survive but thrive. It would also provide an advisory board that would help the LGBT Concerns Office most effectively meet the needs of both the LGBT and straight campus communities.