

University Senate LGBT Concerns Committee Report August 2014-November 2015

Co-Chairs: Rachel Fox von Swearingen & Francine D'Amico

Members: Blythe Bennett, Nadaya Brantley, Mark Braiman, Rick Cieri, Erin Duran, Margaret Himley (*ex officio*), Margie Johnson, Andrew London, Laura Marhoefer, Dan Moeson, Charles Morris, Jackie Orr, Rob Pusch, Robin Riley, Emily Vey Duke, Eric van der Vort

Our committee's charge is to improve the campus climate for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and other non-conforming sexual/gender identified students, faculty members, staff members, and administrators, to educate campus leaders about LGBT issues, and to facilitate public dialogue on LGBT issues.

In past years, our committee has addressed concerns regarding university policies on health services, domestic partner benefits, gender-neutral housing and facilities, and services for transgender Faculty/Staff. A primary focus of our committee work for the 2014-2015 academic year was follow-up with the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics on several issues of concern.

1. Surveying Climate:

- The committee worked with Tommy Powell, Assistant Provost for Student-Athlete Academic Development, to add a section of questions on the annual student athlete survey. The survey was distributed in spring 2015, with results to be provided to the Committee.
- Jamie Mullin, Associate Director of Athletics, indicated in fall 2014 that a department-wide climate survey is under development. This was not complete as of spring 2015, but LGBT-related questions are supposed to be included.

2. Educating Our Campus Community and Creating Space for Dialogue

a. "You Can Play" video:

- The committee met with Athletics Department staff members and encouraged participation in the "You Can Play Project," which was established in 2012 "to ensure safety and inclusion for all who participate in sports, including LGBT athletes, coaches and fans, to guarantee that athletes are given a fair opportunity to compete regardless of sexual orientation/gender identity, and to challenge the negative culture of locker rooms and spectator areas" For more information, please see <http://youcanplayproject.org/>
- The committee provided a list of recommendations to Athletics media director Sue Edson for content, tone, and script in May 2015. Committee member Emily Vey Duke, faculty in Transmedia, was recommended as an artistic liaison.

- Athletics produced a draft video and shared it with the committee in late August 2015, and committee chairs provided feedback in early September 2015, followed by additional feedback from the committee as a whole in October 2015. Jamie Mullin indicated the draft video is being shown at home Dome athletic events this fall and that a revised video will be shown at spring athletic events. The consensus of the committee was to recommend that it would be better not to continue to show the draft video in its current form. The primary reasons for this recommendation are:
 - 1) First and foremost, the message of LGBT inclusion is muddled rather than upfront, consistent, and explicit;
 - 2) Second, the video does not direct viewers to campus support resources, such as the LGBT Resource Center and the Counseling Center, and additional resources, including the You Can Play Project;
 - 3) Third, the video does not include AD coaches/staff/administrators or other SU officials who affirm the message of LGBT inclusion and repudiate harassment/“gay-bashing.”

To refine and improve the video for use at future varsity athletic contests, the video should include an appropriate introduction for the video, as in the Notre Dame example at <http://youcanplayproject.org/videos/entry/you-can-play-university-of-notre-dame> and explicit text explaining the video purpose as LGBT inclusion. Therefore, the LGBT Concerns Committee plans to continue consulting with the Department of Athletics on this important initiative and to encourage follow-up discussions to actualize the specific messages of LGBT inclusivity and change of climate the “You Can Play Project” envisions.

b. Diversity training:

- The Committee recommended that all Athletics staff, administrators, and coaches participate in “Safer People, Safer Spaces” training through the LGBT Resource Center. Jamie Mullin agreed to contact the center to schedule training.

c. Athletic Policies & Complaint Procedures:

- The Committee received a copy of the *Student Athlete Handbook* from Jamie Mullin and reviewed the sections on Rape & Non-Consensual Sex, reporting sexual harassment, Transgender policy, Student-Athlete Conduct, sexual harassment policy and reporting options, and Student-Athlete Grievance Procedures. Jamie indicated that these policies are provided by the Title IX Officer.
- Committee members Emily Vey and Rachel Fox von Swearingen met with Title IX Officer Cynthia Maxwell Curtin in April 2015 concerning the manual contents as well as reporting and complaint procedures. Several manual sections did not reflect the newer documents and training that she conducts for students and staff annually, nor did it contain the updated Transgender Policy worked on by LGBT Resource Center Director Chase Catalano and Cynthia in late fall 2014. Cynthia submitted several edits to Jamie.

- Jamie Mullin reported that Athletics has only an informal process in place for dealing with harassment or climate complaints. The committee recommended establishing and publicizing a formal process as well as implementing an anonymous reporting mechanism.

d. Other recommendations to Athletics Department:

- suggested consultation between the Senate LGBT Concerns Committee and the Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) to assist with their initiatives on LGBT issues
- establish a SAAC “Diversity”/LGBT Subcommittee, and send representative(s) to LGBT Concerns Committee meetings
- establish an LGBT “Pride Night” for a football or basketball game

3. LGBT Resource Center Liaison

The University Senate LGBT Concerns Committee works collaboratively with the LGBT Resource Center to identify issues of concern and to address these at the policy level. The Committee bid farewell to longtime LGBT Resource Center Director Chase Catalano with many thanks for all his efforts to communicate with and support the work of this committee. The Committee also welcomes the return of Tiffany Gray, former Associate Director, who is now serving as Interim Director at the Center. We plan to continue and improve our collaborative work and to support and assist one another in our respective areas of community engagement.

4. LGBT Studies Program Liaison

Several faculty members and students affiliated with the SU LGBT Studies Program serve on the University Senate LGBT Concerns Committee, and the Committee supports the commitment of additional university resources to enable expansion of academic options in this program. Currently, only an undergraduate minor is available.

http://asacademics.syr.edu/LGBT/requirements_LGBT.html

5. Campus Pride Index

Each year the LGBT Concerns Committee reviews the annual Campus Pride Index report to determine how our campus climate and policies compare with best practices at other colleges and universities. For 2015, Syracuse rated 5 of 5 stars for LGBT Campus Safety and for LGBT Student Life; our overall rating was 3.5 of 5, and areas of concern the index identified are housing and residence life, counseling and health concerns, and recruitment and retention. The Campus Pride Index is at <http://www.campusprideindex.org/> and Syracuse’s most recent assessment can be viewed at

<https://www.campusprideindex.org/campuses/details/120?campus=syracuse-university>