

Committee on LGBT Concerns

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Co-Chairs: Beth A. Ferri & Emily Vey Duke

Members: D. Chase Catalano, Robin Riley, Sivan Tuchman, Mark Braiman, Wes Scruggs, Rob Pusch, Vivian May, Francine D'Amico, Radell Roberts, Rachel Fox von Swearingen, Giovanna Albaroni.

Syracuse University is a national leader among colleges and university campuses that seek to support the LGBTQIA community. In 2010, we received a five star campus climate rating on the Campus Climate Index, a national non-profit survey that assess the LGBT campus climate at institutions across the US. This is the third year in a row that Syracuse University has received this honor, and we share this rating with less than twenty institutions nationally. The University wants students, faculty and staff members who identify as LGBTQ to know that their needs will not only be recognized, but will also be addressed thoughtfully, proactively, and wholeheartedly to help ensure a positive work & learning experience. (From the LGBT Portal)

This past year we have been following up on several boilerplate issues that we have been working on in recent years. These included:

1) Health Coverage Update

Update: along with domestic partner benefits, SU Insurance now includes transition related services for transgender Faculty/Staff.

2) Registrar and Trans Inclusion

Registrar and the LGBT Resource Center have been reviewing University forms and information related to name and gender markers on university forms. A Trans Inclusion Workgroup will be held in the Fall (2013) to address issues of transgender inclusion at SU within Student Affairs and across academic affairs.

Among the items discussed with Maureen Breed (Registrar) include software issues for transgender students and, particularly, HR forms, MySlice, etc. We are also working on drafting policy for transgender students to ensure that SU does not have to work out these issues on a case-by-case basis.

3) Health Services

Our committee has followed up this year with Ben Domingo, Director of Health Services, regarding several concerns that LGBT students had expressed to us about their experiences at the Student Health Service. We also discussed the importance of making the HPV vaccine at the Health Service for male students, as well as young women. The Health Services has responded by encouraging us to be in contact with a newly formed committee, composed of Health Services staff, charged with making "Health Services more inclusive to both LGBTQ community, as well as other under-represented groups." He appointed Deb Frank to be in charge of this committee.

Sivan Bomze and Mark Braiman have been designated as liaisons from the LGBT Concerns Committee to Deb Frank's committee, and their contact information was communicated to Deb Frank.

3) Gender-Neutral Housing

Followed up with *Bill Longcore (Interim Director of Residence Life)* and *Eileen Simmons (Director of Housing)* regarding the status of gender-neutral housing at SU. Currently, students can request gender-neutral housing during round 5 of the housing lottery. Any returning student can select gender-neutral housing online. The process is basically the same for any other housing request, except it is NOT blocked by gender (in Peoplesoft other housing requests will not allow two roommates of different sex). Residence Life has had no complaints or concerns regarding gender-neutral housing.

All two-bedroom apartments (on S. Campus) and two-person suites (in Booth, Watson, Haven, DellPlain) have gender-neutral housing.

As of Fall of 2012, 24 apartments/48 students were in gender neutral housing (similar to previous year). These numbers grew in first few years, but have remained steady over past few years. There was only one room in Booth last year; none in halls this year. First-year students and transfers can submit special request for gender-neutral housing, but preference is for them to live with class level peers.

Students who are in midst of transitioning and who request assistance from Housing are accommodated with single person rooms and private bathrooms

Gender-neutral restrooms have also been positively received (in Lawrinson, Flint, Shaw, Skyhalls, and half of Sadler—to be completed this summer). Other gender-neutral bathrooms have been designated in other buildings on campus.

4) LGBT Portal

We have been working on the development of an LGBT Portal, which is now up and running at [<http://lgbt.syr.edu/faculty-staff/index.html>]. The portal provides important links to campus and community resources and contacts for current and prospective students, faculty and staff.

5) Addressing Homophobia in Athletics

At the end of Spring 2012 Semester, we were made aware of some issues that student athletes at SU were having on and off campus with homophobia. We were unable to meet directly with these students and most declined to attend a student-organized meeting to discuss the issue. Given this reluctance to come forward in any sort of public way, we nonetheless decided that we needed to look into the issue more fully. As a committee, we committed to taking up this issue in a more studied way this year.

First, Pat Griffith, a leader in the area of homophobia and sport was invited to campus by the LGBT Resource Center to screen the film, "Training Rules" and do a series of public talks on campus and with the Athletics Department. Although she was not able to meet with Athletics, she did screen the film on campus and she met with our subcommittee to discuss possible steps we could take as a group to address some of the concerns we had been hearing and promote a more welcoming campus for LGBT student athletes. She suggested that we review a study that was just coming out on the issue from *Campus Pride*, a national organization that promotes LGBT issues in higher education.

After obtaining a copy of the *Campus Pride* study, *The 2012 LGBTQ National College Athlete Report*, we reviewed the findings and set up a meeting with several of our committee members and several student athletes who were willing to come forward and talk to us.

After briefly sharing the findings of the report and the concerns raised by students, we invited the chair(s) of the Women's Concerns & Athletic Policy Subcommittees of the Senate to meet. We also invited Daryl Gross, the Athletic Director, to join us or send representative(s) from the Athletic Department. Our goal in planning this meeting was to:

- Share information from the national report regarding homophobia and athletics
- Discuss student athlete concerns that had been brought to the attention of the LGBT Senate Subcommittee.
- Determine a list of recommendations for policy changes that would support the continued well-being of LGBTQ student athletes and create a more welcoming climate for all student athletes.

Among the findings reported to the Joint Subcommittee:

- LGBQ student athletes are 2x more likely to experience harassment than heterosexual student athletes (2012 LGBTQ College Athlete Report)
- LGBQ student-athletes report experiencing a more negative campus climate than their heterosexual teammates (2012 LGBTQ College Athlete Report)
- Local perspectives from student-athletes at SU confirm these findings. Student athletes' suggest that homophobia:
 - o Is an everyday experience for LGBQ student athletes;
 - o Is used as a weapon by opposing teams, fans, referees, and coaches;
 - o Creates an unsafe environment for LGBQ student athletes;
- Particular areas that students identified as problematic are included in the following recommendations (see below), which are also supported by members of this Joint Committee.

Proposed recommendations supported by the Joint Committee:

- 1) Remodel all locker rooms and shower facilities to provide adequate privacy for showering and dressing for all athletes of all sports.

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- 2) Ensure that until locker rooms and shower facilities are remodeled that no coaches (male or female) are allowed into locker rooms until athletes are fully dressed.
- 3) Ensure that all athletes staying in hotels are provided with their own bed.
- 4) In consultation with the LGBT Resource Center and outside consultants, establish on-going and mandatory anti-harassment training for all coaches, staff, and athletic personnel.
- 5) In consultation with the LGBT Resource Center, outside consultants, and current or former LGBT student athletes create a meaningful ally program for student athletes and encourage participation across every sport.
- 6) In consultation with the LGBT Resource Center and outside consultants, develop an explicit anti-harassment/anti-homophobia policy for athletes, coaches, referees. (There should be set consequences to violations to this policy and procedures to ensure that the policy is implemented consistently).
- 7) Consult NCAA and the LGBT Resource Center in developing pro-active policy for transgender athletes [see report: *NCAA Inclusion of Transgender Student-Athletes from the NCAA Office of Inclusion (August 2011)*].
- 8) Eliminate all gender-normative expectations and requirements for appearance for student athletes.
- 9) In consultation with the LGBT Subcommittee, conduct a survey of current and former student athletes to explore climate issues around LGBT issues.
- 10) Offer exit interviews with neutral party or exit survey for any student athlete that quits a team.
- 11) Ensure that NCAA officials or referees receive anti-harassment/anti-homophobia policy and ensure that any violation to this policy is included in any referee evaluation.

Future Work:

We are committed to continue to work on this initiative next year.