



Education Department Resource

Making Colleges and Universities Safe for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Students and Staff

Contributed by Warren J. Blumenfeld

I. Policies

1. Enact non-discrimination and anti-harassment policies on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in matters of hiring, tenure, promotion, admissions, and financial aid.
2. Have policies and procedures for dealing with anti-LGBT violence and harassment.
3. Have a written, inclusive, and affirming definition of "couples" that is non-discriminatory towards same-sex couples in a way that is appropriate for each institution.
4. Ensure equal access and equality of all benefits and privileges granted to all employees and students.
5. Have policies of active outreach in hiring openly LGBT and/or LGBT-sensitive faculty, staff, and administrators in all segments of the campus community.
6. Actively recruit openly LGBT prospective students.

All of the above policies should be written, clear, consistent, accessible, and well-publicized throughout the campus.

II. Training and Development

1. Understanding anti-LGBT bias and heterosexism and other "diversity" workshops should be implemented for the entire campus community to sensitize and educate staff, faculty, and administrators.

III. Services

1. Colleges and universities provide official recognition, support, and funding of campus LGBT student organizations.
2. Physically safe, secure, and appropriate space with a welcoming, emotionally safe atmosphere should be available to LGBT organizations for meetings, social events, coffee houses, lectures, for a, workshops, and other events.
3. Legal and fundraising support services should be available to LGBT students.
4. Campus housing should include LGBT living options.
5. University leadership should make strong, clear, public statements on a regular basis that state the college's commitment to ending discrimination, conviction that violence and harassment are entirely unacceptable, and appreciation of the value of diversity on campus, including different

sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions.

6. Colleges and universities hire openly LGBT or LGBT-sensitive therapists/counselors, faculty, staff, and administrators.

7. Peer counselors and/or campus crisis hotline volunteers be adequately trained in sensitivity to sexuality, sexual and gender orientation/identity, and "coming out" issues.

8. Effective AIDS education, imperative for all people of all sexual and gender orientations, must be available and widespread.

9. Social activities through residence halls, Offices of Student Activities, and other organizations must be not only inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions, without pressures toward heterosexuality, but actively welcoming of LGBT people as well as same-sex couples.

10. College and university presidents have a standing advisory committee, panel, or board, appointed or elected in consultation with LGBT students, staff, and faculty members.

11. Student opinion should be assessed regularly, by the above-mentioned panel or in some other manner, in order to gauge the effectiveness of implemented changes.

12. Campus publications should take care to provide adequate and fair coverage of LGBT events and issues, both on and off campus.

13. Colleges and universities should aid students in alumni outreach.

14. Internship opportunities may also be cultivated among local LGBT-owned businesses and LGBT activist and community service organizations.

15. The diversity within the LGBT community should be recognized and affirmed.

16. The location and availability of resources of value to LGBT people should be published in materials distributed to all students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

17. Personnel at the Career Planning/Placement Center, like personnel in every college area, should be sensitive to LGBT issues and be aware of employment opportunities in LGBT owned or LGBT friendly businesses and community service organizations.

18. While needs differ greatly at each of the hundreds of institutions of higher education, it seems clear that for many, if not most, the most critically important and invaluable resource is a LGBT campus resource center with a paid administrator, staff, and resources.

19. In institutions where financial resources do not allow for centers and/or administrative support for any "minorities," there should at least be an ombudsperson or other clearly recognized, identified, and publicized as an official liaison to the campus LGBT community.

IV. Curriculum / Educational Materials / Academic Affairs

1. Issues relating to LGBT people should be formally and permanently integrated into existing courses across the curriculum.

2. Speakers on LGBT topics, and particularly those who present scholarly research on LGBT topics, should be brought to campus regularly.

3. Courses dealing specifically with LGBT issues in the humanities, natural sciences, education, social sciences, and other disciplines should be established.

4. A visiting scholar position in LGBT studies ("Queer Studies") should be created and supported on a continuing basis.

5. College and university libraries should increase their holdings of LGBT books, periodicals, and computer networking systems.

6. Campus facilities should be available for regional LGBT studies conferences, with administrative support provided.

7. Fellowship opportunities should be created and funded for teaching and research of LGBT topics.

8. Scholarship and research into LGBT history, culture, and theory should be encouraged and supported in faculty and students.

9. All multicultural education should be inclusive of the issues, history, culture, and experiences of LGBT people in the United States and worldwide. Multicultural awareness (social diversity) courses should be mandatory for all students at some point during the undergraduate years.

10. An archive and history of LGBT organizations on campus should be created.

V. Employee Concerns

1. Policies regarding equal benefits and nondiscrimination should be made clear in recruiting brochures, informational materials, campus publications, and orientation sessions.

2. The university should aid, support, and fund the creation of LGBT faculty and staff discussion, support, and networking groups.

3. Trade unions and professional organizations should have inclusive policies and supportive services available to their members.

4. There should be equality in all benefits, including, for example: bereavement leave, insurance coverage, library privileges, access to gym and other recreational facilities, listings in directories if spouses are customarily listed, housing for LGBT couples where the qualifications are analogous to the qualifying basis for heterosexuals, "couple" rates must be made available to LGBT couples, access to any and all other privileges and benefits by LGBT partners if access is available to heterosexual spouses.

5. There should be ongoing sensitivity training and staff development on LGBT issues for all employees.

6. Colleges and universities should cover the expenses of employees attending conferences on LGBT issues.

VI. Community / Off-Campus Concerns

1. Community LGBT groups should be invited to attend campus events as participants, guests, and event leaders and facilitators.

2. Information regarding social, religious, and other community resources should be made easily accessible to all students, staff, faculty, and administrators.

3. Counselors, administrators, and faculty should be available to parents or other community members to alleviate any concern that may arise out of the implementation of any of the above recommendations, as well as any concerns arising during their child's coming out process, if that is the case.

4. Representatives of LGBT student groups from different schools should meet regularly to keep each other apprised of upcoming events, plan events together, and strengthen the LGBT community.

5. Publications, fundraising materials, and all other publications distributed to parents and alumni should include relevant and appropriate stories, essays, and news regarding LGBT issues, organizations, and events.

6. Corporations, public agencies, and government, religious, and community agencies and institutions that do not have official written policies against discrimination based on sexual and gender orientation should be strongly discouraged or prohibited from on-campus employment or enlistment recruiting.

-- Warren J. Blumenfeld is founder and first director of the National Gay Student Center. (This organization exists today as the National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Student Caucus of the United States Student Association.) He is co-author of the book *LOOKING AT GAY AND LESBIAN LIFE*, editor of the book *HOMOPHOBIA: HOW WE ALL PAY THE PRICE*, author of *AIDS AND YOUR RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY*, and editor of the *JOURNAL OF GAY, LESBIAN AND BISEXUAL IDENTITY*. He is also co-producer of the documentary film "Pink Triangles," on the topic of homophobia.