



UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND

**Campus Climate for
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
(LGBT) Faculty and Staff**

A report on focus group and anonymous on-line survey responses

Prepared by the Center for Leadership and Organizational Change

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This is my 6th university as either student or staff and it is probably the 2nd most accepting of the 6. However, 4 of the universities were in Texas.

The situation would be much improved if the closeted people in leadership positions were to come out. Others would have to realize their effectiveness as contributors to the campus community.

The "safe person/safe place" signs are nice, but institutionalized inequities speak much, much, more than signs.

Acceptance and welcoming of people who are LGBT does not seem to be highlighted at the university in the same way that racial/ethnic diversity is.

I have always been treated fairly and equitably in terms of hiring, promotion, evaluation, professional development, and compensation.

[I hear] occasional references to the fact that somebody is LGBT, with the quick postscript "not that there's anything wrong with it." That's about all.

It is my impression that faculty and staff are not harmed by their LGBT, though they are helped less often by such status on campus than persons are helped by their race.

My office feels that "God" will punish those who go against "His" word. That is the daily office atmosphere that I have in my department. Only one person in my office is 'out' and nobody talks to her. When I put up my safe person safe place [card] I was treated differently. It made me want to take it down.

The choice of the Laramie Project as the first year book was a wonderful opportunity for ongoing campus-wide discussion.

I've been at UM for 10 years and have noticed a marked difference in the visibility of the LGBT community, events, and curriculum on campus. This has been a very positive move, facilitated by strong campus and LGBT leadership.

I think I feel more comfortable now than before. I think that is because I believe that UM is fighting for partner benefits in Annapolis and that sends a clear message.

Benefits, benefits, benefits, benefits, benefits, benefits, benefits, benefits...

The university goes out of its way to make this a very hospitable campus, with particular attention to dialogues around these issues. I do not know many other organizations that are as committed to this area as ours is.

It seems to be a somewhat safe environment in the university to disclose, however, I think many people hesitate to disclose such information if they are not yet tenured.

I believe because we are not able to bring our families to this family friendly campus we are welcome to work but we are not welcome to be a part of the campus community.

Is there a Safe Space card on Dr. Mote's door? I'm almost sure there is. So, I am thinking the commitment at higher levels is there.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

What is it like to be a sexual or gender identity minority – lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender – and work at College Park? This question has been of long-standing interest to the President’s Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Issues. This interest increased with the release of the 2003 Campus Climate and Community report produced by the Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG), which highlighted the fact that both LGB and straight students believed that the campus climate was probably least hospitable to students who were lesbian, gay, or bisexual. If this were true for students, would it also be true for faculty and staff? Dr. Robert Waters, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Assistant to the President for Equity and Diversity, contracted with the former Office for Organizational Effectiveness (now the Center for Leadership and Organizational Change) to explore these questions about the climate for LGBT faculty and staff on campus and, with the cabinet’s approval, this project was launched in 2004.

More than 350 faculty and staff contributed their viewpoints in focus groups and anonymous email and web questionnaires. Almost 25% of the participants self-identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender. All participants self-selected for participation in this project; there was no attempt to recruit individuals based on demographics of age, gender, race, sexual orientation or gender identity, education, employment classification, faculty status, division or department of employment, etc. The purpose of this project was to explore the range of experiences and perceptions in detail, and not to draw conclusions about what most faculty and/or staff believe.

Summary of Key Findings

The resulting report provides a summary of participant viewpoints and illustrates the range of perspectives of those participating in the process; again, it is not meant to be representative of the views of the entire campus community. This project has allowed faculty and staff to share their experiences, stories, and views. Some of these are summarized, but they are most frequently presented in the direct voice of participating faculty and staff. A brief summary of these views:

- LGBT and non-LGBT identified faculty and staff hold somewhat different views of the general climate, but frequently they were not startlingly different.
 - Most participants, both LGBT- and non-LGBT identified, expressed views of the climate that were somewhat or completely positive.
 - Non-LGBT identified respondents were more likely to have an entirely rosy view; LGBT views were more mixed, but also contained largely positive elements.
 - There were three reasons cited for the negative aspects of mixed viewpoints, and three reasons for wholly negative views: the specific behavior of individuals, a general climate or atmosphere, and, frequently, the lack of equal benefits for families

- of LGBT faculty and staff. The latter concern was raised by both LGBT and non-LGBT identified participants.
- A good number from both groups indicated that the environment could be expected to varied widely, depending on department, and so there was no way to comment on overall climate.
 - The largest area of difference between LGBT and non-LGBT identified participants' views was in their perceptions of equity of benefits. Non-LGBT identified faculty and staff were much more likely either to not know whether equal benefits were provided to LGBT faculty and staff, or to hold the mistaken view that equal benefits were, in fact, provided.
 - Some LGBT participants spoke of the individual burden they bore as a result of the lack of benefits; many more expressed the view that this exclusion sends a message that they are less valued than their colleagues, or that it is okay to continue to discriminate against this group of people. These views were often expressed with much more intensity than opinions on any other topic.
 - Both LGBT and non-LGBT identified participants frequently reported the view that LGBT faculty and staff were generally as safe or unsafe as anyone else on campus. Some LGBT-identified respondents believe their safety is contingent on their behavior or appearance – on not looking or acting outside the heterosexual norm.
 - Over one-third of all LGBT-identified respondents could not identify any campus resources for LGBT faculty and staff.
 - Almost all participants offered specific recommendations for improvement. Most indicated a belief that the environment could be improved with targeted efforts.

Recommendations

- I. Elevate the importance of securing partner benefits to the top of the university's agenda.** Appoint a Cabinet level task force to create and implement long- and short-term strategies to secure approval, as well as a plan to communicate continuously with the campus about the importance of this agenda item and inform them of the efforts and progress being made to achieve it.
- II. Increase faculty, staff and student awareness of LGBT issues in particular and diversity issues in general** through various targeted training and visibility campaigns.
- III. Ensure campus-wide understanding of the University's concept of diversity that encompasses the LGBT community and issues of importance to them,** through both the actions of campus leadership and the use of policy and procedure.
- IV. Increase funding and improve infrastructure for existing entities to provide expanded education and programming,** including the Office of LGBT Equity, the LGBT Studies

Program, the President's Commission on LGBT Issues, and other offices responsible for program additions approved. A nominal funding increase would make it possible to address many of the climate related concerns in this report.

Conclusion

The climate for LGBT faculty and staff is clearly an important concern for many campus citizens. While much of the environment is viewed as generally positive by both LGBT and non-LGBT respondents, the lack of equity in benefits remains the largest concern for LGBT faculty and staff. Both groups indicated that additional improvements to the climate can be made with targeted investments ranging from increased leadership communication to enhancing the infrastructure for entities that serve the LGBT community.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The President's Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Issues has long been interested in exploring and illuminating the experience of LGBT faculty and staff at the university. This interest increased when the 2003 Campus Climate and Community report produced by the Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) highlighted the fact that students believed that the campus climate was probably least hospitable for students who were lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Of particular note was the fact that this was recognized by both LGB and straight students. If this were true for students, would it also be true for faculty and staff? Dr. Robert Waters, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Assistant to the President for Equity and Diversity, contracted with the former Office for Organizational Effectiveness (now the Center for Leadership and Organizational Change) to explore the climate for LGBT faculty and staff on campus. In March 2004, the president's cabinet endorsed the project and offered to support data gathering in their divisions by encouraging faculty and staff participation. The Office for Information Technology (OIT) and University Relations offered additional resources and technical support.

In supporting the project, President Mote and the cabinet indicated that the study should explore the whole range of opinion on this issue, which necessitated gathering data from across campus, not just in limited divisions, and, most importantly, not just from faculty and staff who identified as LGBT.

This report provides a summary of participants' comments outlining their experiences, ideas, and personal stories in five areas: general climate, equity, safety, resources and miscellaneous themes. It includes both paraphrased and direct quotes from participants. The summary is followed by a group of recommendations; many of them were stated explicitly by participants, and a few were formulated from implicit comments.

Methodology

Because the goal of this project was to explore how the climate for LGBT faculty and staff was experienced, data collection was initially designed with a focus group methodology. Focus groups were deemed the most appropriate method of data gathering because they can help obtain background information, identify themes, provide narratives that illustrate those themes, explore causes of phenomena, and identify possible recommendations. This presented an obvious methodology problem due to the nature of the topic – would the participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender faculty or staff members be limited by the nature of the inquiry? If so, then a particularly valuable perspective on the experience of the climate would be missing – that of LGBT staff and faculty who did not feel it was safe to disclose their LGBT status or were uncomfortable doing so. Additionally, would the participation of non-LGBT faculty and staff be limited because this issue was not one of primary interest or sufficient concern to them to justify the time and trouble of focus group attendance, or because they feared there might be a stigma attached to participation? To bridge these potential gaps in the data, the focus group questions were offered to faculty and staff for their input through two media: a

web-based instrument that generated an e-mail response, and a webCT version designed by OIT that collected and reported data with complete anonymity. While this did not allow for the clarification, probing and interactive nature that are the hallmarks of the focus group methodology, it at least gave participants an unlimited blank slate on which to express their views. The two electronic versions were offered via email sent directly to all faculty and staff. The focus groups were designed as open forums; individual invitations were not issued. They were publicized by email notification to all faculty and staff, multiple “FYI” listings, and by flyers distributed to the President’s Commission on LGBT Issues.

Although 310 faculty and staff took advantage of the opportunity to provide written input, of the 12 focus groups that were scheduled, only two had sufficient attendance to proceed (11 participants total). Eight additional participants were interviewed individually or in pairs because they came as the only participants to a scheduled focus group that did not have sufficient attendance to proceed as a focus group. The number who participated in the written format would seem to indicate that there is not a lack of interest in this topic, among both LGBT and straight faculty and staff. It might also validate the decision to pursue multiple data gathering approaches. Finally, data was gathered from meetings with two constituent groups that have a special interest in and concern on this subject: members of the Equity Council and the President’s Commission on LGBT issues. See Appendix A for the questions that were asked in the focus groups and presented in the web-based e-mail and webCT versions.

Demographics

Respondents were not asked specifically for demographic information, *so this in no way can be viewed as representative sample of the campus at large*. In fact, through details imbedded in answers, it is clear that academic and student affairs were heavily represented in this process. Very few of the responses – in fact, almost none – could be definitively identified as coming from administrative affairs, university relations, OIT, or the president’s office. This underscores the importance of remaining clear on the intention of this project – to explore the full range of experience and opinion. *The information here cannot be used to draw conclusions about how the majority of faculty and staff experience the campus climate for LGBT faculty and staff*. In most cases, it cannot be used to provide specific information or draw conclusions about the ways in which people’s experiences may be shaped by their faculty vs. staff status, their exempt or non-exempt status, or their department of employment. These remain prime areas for further study.

While demographic data was not sought about sexual orientation or gender identity, there was one specific question, “If you are out in the workplace, how is it going?” that generated a means of classifying participants that self-identified as LGBT. As a result, much of the information in the report is identified as coming from one of two groups – those who identified themselves as LGBT, and the remainder of the responding population, who did not specifically identify themselves as LGBT (referred to as ‘non-identified’). That group may include undeclared LGBT participants. Only the direct response to the above question was used to classify LGBT participants; no assumptions

or inferences were made from other content (e.g. use of terms such as “we” or “they” were not taken to mean positive identification as LGBT or non-LGBT). Of the 310 email or web respondents, 64 (21%) self-identified as LGBT, as did 17 of 19 focus group and interview participants.

The ability to separate out LGBT responses and compare them to non-identified was invaluable in this process. It provided the opportunity to identify those areas where significantly differing experiences and perceptions were reported by LGBT-identified and non-identified participants. In some cases it also provided the opportunity to explore why there might be significant differences in experience or opinion in some subject areas.

Transgender Participation

Little information was received during this project that directly related to the experience of transgender faculty and staff. One written response and one interview subject self-identified, and their comments are included where appropriate. A few respondents indicated that their comments applied only to lesbian, gay and bisexual faculty and staff, as they had no known experience with the climate for transgender individuals. This did not cause the “T” to be dropped from this report, as this category was specifically included in every question, and the limited response might provide information in and of itself.

Report Contents

The following sections of the report are a summary of participants’ comments outlining their experiences, ideas, and personal stories. It includes both paraphrased and direct quotes from participants. Where individual departments, units, colleges, etc. were cited, either positively or negatively, that information has been removed from the quote. Division Vice Presidents were provided that information privately, to deal with as they deem appropriate.

FINDINGS

Overall environment for LGBT faculty and staff

Participants reported a wide range of experiences and perceptions of the general campus climate for LGBT faculty and staff. Overall, a substantial majority indicated that they believed the environment to be generally positive – maybe not everywhere, and maybe not all the time, and maybe not in all aspects – but at least positive to some degree. These positive responses are discussed here in two primary categories: those who unreservedly believe the climate to be positive, and those who offer a more mixed perspective.

Positive Perceptions of Climate

Among those whose responses could be categorized as wholly positive, there was a wide distance between the most enthusiastic and the most tepid expressions of positive feeling. Those who expressed the most enthusiastic perceptions or experiences reported the feeling that the climate not only appeared safe, comfortable and welcoming, but also that LGBT faculty and/or staff were positively supported in their identity. Almost all of the LGBT-identified respondents who spoke of the climate in unreservedly positive terms were in this most enthusiastic and positive group. They spoke of the great comfort of being able to be “out” and fully themselves in their environment, and of how positive it is not to have to hide parts of their lives that they would take great joy in talking about. *“Generally the climate is very good. It is easy to be out in my department and among other colleagues. The climate has created an atmosphere in which many GLTB are out; therefore it is easy to be one’s self.”* These positive evaluations were expressed by staff, faculty and even some former students. *“As a gay member of the faculty, I feel very quite welcomed personally and am able to be open.”* A former student who is now a faculty member commented, *“The climate is warm towards the LGBT community. I am personally a member of the community, and have found not only the students, but even the staff to be accommodating and understand to members of the community.”* Some LGBT identified respondents noted in particular the value of the routine inclusion of their partners and families as subjects of casual conversation or as participants in departmental activities.

Non-LGBT identified faculty and staff made comments in the same vein. *“In our department there are several people who are lesbian or gay, and they are able to talk about their partners or lifestyle with ease.”* Several answers were prefaced with comments that made it clear that the respondent was limited to commenting on their observations or perceptions, since they did not personally identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. *“Throughout my experiences on campus, I have*

“I am thankful every day that I work in an environment that does not consider my sexual orientation an issue. The vast majority of my colleagues know who I am and are considerate of my feelings. My partner is welcome at events and is treated with respect.”

“I feel that this department and college are very supportive of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals – whether they are faculty/staff or students... I feel that the environment is incredibly safe, comfortable and welcoming – everyone that I know in the department seems to fit comfortably into the community.”

“My recruitment was a local (i.e., departmental/college) issue and my department and college both treated by partner as my spouse. There are safe space postcards all across my department. I am out with colleagues and students and all reactions have been positive.”

“In general, I feel the campus is safe and comfortable for gay men. Although I am not 100% out to colleagues and students, I have not seen or heard anything that could be construed as hostile or homophobic.”

“As a gay person, I have felt reasonably safe and comfortable being open with respect to my sexual orientation. I have not felt unwelcome, but not explicitly welcome, either, to bring my partner to events.”

“I believe that outstanding scholars of any, all or no sexual lifestyles and gender identities will be welcome.”

“As far as my experience goes, the sexual orientation of a person is not relevant to the way they are treated in the workplace. The community is welcoming and supportive.”

encountered very welcoming and open people. The majority of departments I associate with are staffed with people of different sexual orientations... I think the education efforts of the campus are taking effect.” “I do not identify as LGBT, so I can only speak based on my observations. In my department I think we do a good job working to make LGBT members of our community safe and comfortable. Of course, I think that we can always do better.”

A number of somewhat less enthusiastic, but still positive perceptions and experiences suggest an environment that, while not affirming or welcoming, seems at least generally accepting of LGBT faculty and staff. Very few of the responses from LGBT participants who reported an overall positive experience fit in this less enthusiastic group, and their comments include: *“I think it is a very accommodating environment. I have never encountered any bias since the time I have been at UMD,”* and, *“As a new employee and a gay man, I have experienced a respectful and professional atmosphere at UM by my peers and superiors.”* Some of these LGBT identified respondents noted that they perceived an absence of certain activities or actions that somewhat dimmed their otherwise positive viewpoint, particularly if they had experience at an institution that did attend to those needs and interests *“My experience on campus is limited but from what I see, it appears to be welcoming. However, I have experience working at a New England university and I feel that school did more to make the LBGT community more welcome.”*

Non-LGBT respondents in this “middle-of-the-road” category often cited specific situations in their own domains that, to them, provided evidence that the campus climate was generally accepting of LGBT colleagues, such as: *“[The climate is] Supportive, in my experience. Of the several openly gay faculty members I work with, all seem to be respected and sexual preference, while acknowledged, has not been an issue,”* and, *“In my school, I believe it is generally an accepting group. We have gay men, no gay women (that I know of) and, I understand, a transgendered person.”* In general these participants expressed the view that colleagues who were, or were perceived to be, LGBT did not appear to suffer in any way from their sexual orientation (gender identity or expression was not commented on). Two non-LGBT identified respondents said, *“I think the environment must be comfortable because the gay and lesbian co-workers that I know are very open about their ‘gayness,’”* and, *“The LGBT people I know well feel accepted and are very successful.”*

Some responses that were positive but considerably less effusive described a climate that was safe, tolerant, professional, and non-discriminatory. There was frequently not much elaboration on these comments – they described a business climate in a business-like way. *“I have found most faculty and staff to be between tolerant and welcoming, “* and *“The LGBT*

climate at UMD, through the eyes of a non-LGBT staff member, is safe and open to personal preferences.” A few of these comments included a stated belief that “sex” “sexuality” or “sexual preference” were not topics they or their colleagues have any interest in, or have any business, exploring in the workplace. The quality of a person’s work or their performance was mentioned by a few as a more important factor. “Seems to be a non-issue in the part of the campus community I work in. Nobody seems particularly interested in sexual orientation. It’s not relevant to our work together.” There was more than one allusion to the military’s policy on LGBT service members as similar to the campus climate: “ I think it is sort of ‘don’t ask, don’t tell.’ I am not aware of the sexual orientation of my coworkers.”

The most perfunctory of the observations that can be categorized as positive, while certainly not ringing endorsements, do indicate a belief that campus climate is at least not demonstratively negative for LGBT staff and faculty. Many of these comments are based not on evidence of a positive environment, but on a lack of evidence of a negative one. All but one of these respondents were non-LGBT identified, and their comments included, “I have no reason to believe that the climate for lesbian and gay faculty or staff is any different than for anyone else.” A few of these comments indicated that the responder was not aware of any gay or lesbian co-workers in their unit, at least at the present time, “We have had several gay faculty members and I am not aware of any problems they faced. So far as I know we have no gay faculty or staff now.”

Mixed Perceptions of Climate

Aside from the responses that could be described as entirely positive, there were a number of responses that are more accurately identified as “mixed.” These responses can certainly be viewed as positive; when they are added to the positive crowd, they create an overwhelming impression of a positive experience. However, these mixed comments should also be read as indicating a negative environment; adding them to this category vastly increases the number of respondents indicating a negative experience or perception of the climate. LGBT faculty and staff offered a mixed picture twice as often as non-identified participants. When these respondents described generally positive experiences, they were much more likely to have also identified negative situations or events. This highlights the difference evident throughout the data between those with first-hand experience and those with a second-hand perspective.

Mixed responses were of two primary types. There were those who believe that the University’s decentralized structure has the same impact on the climate for LGBT faculty and staff as it has on almost every aspect of campus life: there is so much variation between units that one cannot reliably make conclusions about the whole. Thus the climate question has to be

“Everyone in this department is treated equally. The only thing that is asked of you is that you do your work. Your sexual orientation does not matter.”

“I do not know what a person’s sexual orientation is unless they tell me, and it is not something I try to determine anyway. It has been my experience that this is the way my colleagues feel.”

“I have not encountered any situation that was negative towards gays or lesbians on this campus”

“It varies by department and school. Our unit may move and I was warned by our business affairs manager not to come out in the new unit because they would hold it against me”

“In student affairs it is pretty good and welcoming. But not if you are a faculty member (or it depends on the department). Some academic departments are not welcoming.”

“My colleagues recognize my partner and me as a family. However, my days at the U of MD are numbered unless family benefits come through for my partner. We have paid thousands of dollars above and beyond what straight couples pay to make sure she has health insurance. This is not only an expense but it makes us feel unwelcome on a basic level.”

“The campus itself seems to be supportive, but the state legislature, governor and other members of the state administration are openly hostile. This has left me with a general sense of anger at the university, although I realize that this is not really a campus-level phenomenon.”

“The silence of the University says a pretty fair amount about where, when it all comes down to it, the loyalty is at – preserving the critical relationships with the government, and not necessarily fighting and advocating for something where the University has fallen behind.”

viewed department by department, and for LGBT-identified faculty and staff, it boils down to “location, location, location: *“I think the climate varies from unit to unit, in large part because, regardless of the official university ‘line’ of tolerance, discrimination does exist within units and unit heads are not held accountable for their actions on this matter.”* and, even more negatively, *“I think there are ‘pockets’ of safe, comfortable and welcoming environments but generally it is more ‘don’t ask, don’t tell and don’t talk about’ attitude/atmosphere.”*

The second group of responses that were identified as “mixed” were not referring to the different experiences that could be expected depending on department or location. Rather, these respondents indicate a generally positive impression of the climate but also indicated that there were one or more serious drawbacks or exceptions. The most frequently named concrete factor mitigating an otherwise positive experience was the lack of benefits for the partners and families of LGBT staff and faculty. This was cited as the primary, and frequently as the only, flaw in an otherwise positive environment. Focus group comments by LGBT identified participants included: *“There is a real disconnect between the way we are treated at the personal or individual level and at the policy/benefits level,”* and, *“Individuals are supportive, but where politics are concerned people make decisions and it becomes a matter of law or policy and it’s not very friendly.”* It was noted that this different treatment has an impact not only on current faculty and staff, but on recruitment and retention as well. As one department chair newly hired after a national search commented, *“I almost didn’t come to the university because of the lack of benefits. If we get an offer from an institution that provides them, we would take it.”* One LGBT identified participant noted, *“There are not benefits for same sex partners. LGBT job applicants have wondered if they should be out or if they will be discriminated against.”*

Among those who mentioned the lack of benefits as the only negative spot in an otherwise positive environment, there were as many non-LGBT identified respondents as there were LGBT identified. Comments by non-LGBT identified participants: *“The environment created by co-workers is generally collegial. However, it is my understanding that equal benefit packages are not provided to LGBT staff – domestic partners are not recognized,”* and *“On a daily basis, overall, I believe it is a relatively friendly environment. However, without policies that allow for leave, health care and other benefits for partners...we are not at all welcoming.”*

Aside from this absence of domestic partner benefits, another reason offered for a mixed response was the presence of individuals who were believed to be, or whose actions were interpreted to be, homophobic. These individuals were identified as being from virtually all segments of the university population. Some comments from non-LGBT identified participants

identifying sources of homophobic attitudes or behaviors:

- *“Mostly the intolerant, unwelcoming reception of gay and lesbians that I currently observe come from staff.”*
- *“I have encountered faculty in some units who speak prejudicially about gays and lesbians.”*
- *“The climate among colleagues is safe and comfortable. However, at the top management levels, there is homophobia which is expressed indirectly but clearly.”*
- *“Supportive in terms of faculty/staff/graduate students, but undergraduates still seem entrenched in a general culture of homophobia.”*

In addition to those who cited the actions or attitudes of individuals as a negative factor resulting in a mixed climate, a number of respondents cited more of a general feeling in the environment. *“I would characterize the environment as safe certainly, but certainly not welcoming. I don’t believe that the policy-setters at the university take it to be a serious priority to be proactive in terms of things that impact on LGBT faculty, staff and students.”* Notably, a few based this on the fact that they know LGBT persons on campus who aren’t out, and this indicates to them that the environment is not entirely supportive. *“I have a friend who is a member of a committed lesbian couple who expressed concerns, as she considered adopting a child with her partner, about informing colleagues about her personal relationship as part of that process. Her concern indicates to me that the university community is not as safe as it could be.”* As one non-LGBT identified focus group participant put it, *“I know of one gay faculty member of the 165 faculty that are in [my department, and closely related departments]. The very fact that we know of so few, I think that not everyone is convinced it’s a friendly community.”*

Negative Climate Perceptions

Far fewer responses expressed a view of the climate for LGBT faculty and staff that was entirely negative. LGBT-identified respondents had a higher rate of negative responses than those who were non-identified.

Some of those respondents who viewed the climate in strictly negative terms indicate a general assumption about the environment but cite no specific examples: *“In general I believe that the climate for faculty and staff, when surrounding LGBT issues, is predominately negative. There are a variety of factors that could be the cause but age, culture, awareness due to education,*

“I have observed hostile individuals in the past during the course of campus senate debates, and I know there are more out there, but my sense is that most faculty and staff are supportive.”

“It seems relatively safe and comfortable. I’m not aware of outright homophobia, although I know there are homophobic individuals.”

“I think the environment is open – alternative life styles are not prohibited, tolerance is encouraged, [but] I have one coworker who is a wretched bigot.”

“Mostly safe, though not always comfortable, especially when I get looks when I talk about my family, when it is perfectly okay for others to speak of their family.”

“I think the climate is warm. I however feel that LGBT faculty are underrepresented. I also feel there is a very traditional, hetero-normative, feel at MD.”

“My impression is that the campus is no different than anywhere else and it is not a safe, comfortable or welcoming environment. The general advice I’ve received is don’t come out and certainly don’t come out until you’re tenured.”

“I know of one or two faculty members who have made jokes about gay lifestyles, making me think that the environment for gay faculty may not be very welcoming.”

“In comparison to my experiences at the University of Michigan, I was shocked to find out some major differences in our support of LGBT persons on this campus.”

“The use of the word ‘gay’ as an insult was rampant. I also know of staff members making jokes and talking disrespectfully about a transgender staff member.”

and generation difference are several,” and, “I do not think this environment would be very comfortable for faculty or staff who are any of the sexual orientations described above. I do not have any examples, just a perception.” All of those who based their impression of a negative environment on this type of assumptions, rather than on specific examples, were non-LGBT identified.

For other respondents, the fact that there appears to be a general silence around this issue, or that there are individuals who are not comfortable being out, is evidence of a negative environment. *“My impression of the climate...is not welcoming. For this reason, many faculty and staff members are hesitant to reveal their sexual orientation for fear of the consequences,”* and, *“I believe many would say the climate of acceptance is conditional upon their personal silence,”* were comments by two non-LGBT identified respondents. All but one of those who based their assessment of the climate as negative on this perceived silence were non-LGBT identified.

The largest number of those expressing the belief that the university did not have a climate that was safe, comfortable, and welcoming for LGBT faculty and staff provided some form of evidence that supported this belief. All but one of the LGBT identified responses that identified the climate in completely negative terms were in this category and offered comment on what they saw as evidence supporting their views. Comments from some LGBT identified participants: *“Examples of the environment that I encounter on a daily basis are sexual slurs, degradation of women, use of terms such as ‘faggot’ ‘queer’ etc. in conversation, jokes and such,”* and, *“I do not reject the possibility that one major reason for the 18 month delay in my promotion (from instructor to assistant professor) might be traced to homophobia on the part of the former chair.”* The absence of equal benefits for LGBT faculty, staff and their families was specifically cited by a number of these respondents, particularly LGBT-identified: *“The lack of domestic partner benefits makes it a VERY hostile and disrespectful environment,”* and, *“I feel like a second class citizen. It is amazing to me that a University of this caliber does not provide Domestic Partner Benefits.”*

Some non-LGBT identified staff and faculty also defined the climate in negative terms and offered comments on specific instances, behaviors, attitudes or policies, including: *“I have contacted the LGBT office on occasion to report hostile talk regarding gay life,”* and, *“Subtle innuendos, jokes etc. persist and are accepted. Institutional decisions such as the reversal of partner-benefits reinforce the marginalization of GLBT faculty and staff at the university.”*

Other Perceptions of Climate

Worthy of additional note is the number of respondents who indicated they essentially had no idea what the climate was for LGBT faculty and staff. Approximately one in 10 non-LGBT identified respondents went to the trouble of completing the entire 12-question instrument, even though they generally identified their responses as guesses, suppositions, hopes, desires, or statements of ignorance about the issues in question. The bulk of these responses were matter-of-fact: *“I have little basis to judge,”* and, *“No examples in either direction.”* Some were more dismissive in tone: *“I have no idea what these people think,”* or, *“I have not knowingly encountered any Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or transgender individuals.”* A few were almost apologetic, with respondents indicating that they had not paid sufficient attention to this issue and wished they had, or wondered why they had not: *“I’m afraid that I’m not informed of these important details,”* offered one respondent, while another noted, *“I am not aware whether it is, or indeed it is not, a safe environment. Strangely, for such a progressive university, such issues, identities and experiences don’t seem to be readily discussed or even acknowledged.”* No LGBT-identified responses could be categorized as “don’t know.”

Finally, in discussing the overall climate, there were a small number of people whose responses could only be classified as hostile. Regardless of what the respondent’s stated views on the climate were, the overall tenor of their responses was angry, sarcastic, belittling, or even frightening. Some of those responses:

- *“Safe? Yes, until you force your special brand of mental illness upon me! Comfortable? I hope you are uneasy knowing you are a distinct minority. Welcoming? Probably, to the well behaved.”*
- *“LGBT isn’t a legitimate lifestyle, so why am I being asked to deal with such issues?”*
- *“The LGBT community has forced the rest of the nation to acknowledge and submit to their deviant behaviors.”*
- *“I am aware of the many institutional statements of support for this life style – to the exclusion of most others.”*

While these responses represented a very small portion of the whole, they did provide an honest and clear view into the true feelings of at least some number of campus citizens who hold strongly negative views of LGBT staff and faculty.

“I think the university setting is an extremely friendly environment for these groups. The environment panders to their needs and makes it extremely uncomfortable for those that happen to disagree with the lifestyles.”

“I do not believe that people should be in leadership roles who support the LGBT values.”

“I don’t agree with this behavior and don’t want to deal with it as work. I feel that surveying the campus only makes those who are LGBT stand out more. The older ones will never ‘come out’ because they know what they are doing should stay in the dark.”

Specific Issues of Equality

Participants were asked specific questions about how they viewed the equality of treatment between LGBT and non-LGBT faculty and staff in three areas:

“In the areas of policy and procedure, if the head of a unit or department is homophobic, needless to say, members of the LGBT community will not be included in anything.”

- Policy and procedure issues such as hiring and promotion, benefits, compensation, recruitment and retention, PRD, professional development
- Campus-wide services and programs such as the Campus Recreation Center, Employee Assistance, Health Center, security services
- Provided the same formal/informal leadership/mentoring opportunities as heterosexually identified faculty and staff?

“I would like to think that they are treated fairly but honestly, I do not know because I do not have any facts to support my statement.”

There were several findings of note in the responses to these questions.

Equity in Policy & Procedure (hiring and promotion, benefits, compensation, recruitment and retention, PRD, professional development)

When asked about equity in areas of policy and procedures, almost all of the respondents who said that treatment was *not* equal based that on the lack of benefits for partners and families of LGBT staff and faculty. This lack of benefits was noted by both LGBT and non-LGBT identified respondents. However, there was a marked difference in the rate of this response – where more than six of every 10 LGBT identified respondents remarked on this inequity, about two in 10 non-LGBT identified recognized it.

“Treated the same as everyone else – which is exactly as it should be”

LGBT participants who noted the lack of benefits were not speaking only in self-interest; in fact, many mentioned that they did not, personally, need the benefits for their families. These participants cited two larger concerns about the impact of the lack of benefits for families of LGBT faculty and staff. First, some believe that the lack of benefits stigmatizes and marginalizes LGBT faculty and staff in a way that perpetuates and even legitimizes the discriminatory beliefs and actions of some faculty, staff and students toward LGBT persons. Second, some indicated that the lack of benefits translates into reduced ability to attract and keep LGBT faculty and staff.

“I am sure they are not provided similar benefits/rights than the heterosexual populace.”

“I am nowhere near the political salary-makers but would imagine that LGBT people don’t fare so well.”

No other topic in this study received near the attention that this one did. Particularly among LGBT-identified, but also to some degree among non-LGBT identified, this was a subject on which there was wide agreement expressed, and it was often expressed personally and with considerable passion. A small sample of these comments follows.

“I am very troubled by the fact that our campus does not offer domestic partner benefits. I work quite a bit with the recruitment of new staff to our department and it is definitely a drawback in terms of our ability to compete for the most talented candidates.”

“My partner is working to complete his bachelor’s degree and has been obliged to take a full time job and drop his course load to 1-2 courses per semester. He also has to pay for private health insurance, membership in a gym, etc. – the net result is several thousand dollars in annual expenses that our heterosexual colleagues would not have. This serves as a constant reminder that the University of Maryland, as an institution, considers us to be inferior.”

“My colleague who has been married 18 months and has been employed here about three years has her husband on her policies – he gets everything. I’ve been here seven years and my partner of 14 years gets nothing. I hear a loud message.”

“The difference in compensation (which, of course, includes benefits) for straight vs. LGBT couples is appalling. Cases where a partner in an LGBT couple would not accept an offer of UMCP employment or has sought to/chosen to leave UMCP for an institution that would provide domestic partner benefits are well known. Surely, these instances will only increase.”

“I moved my partner to UMD and had to give up her health insurance in California and have been unable to secure adequate insurance here in the DC area. We pay \$500 month for poor health insurance for her. My heterosexual colleagues are not forced into this inequitable situation. Quite frankly, I will consider other offers at Universities that do not discriminate in these ways.”

“The climate may be safe – in so far as one doesn’t worry about being beaten or robbed by homophobes on campus. But it is not welcoming; the Board of Regents’ refusal to provide LGBT people with equal pay for equal work sends out a clear message that LGBT people are less welcome than straight people.”

“Other major universities and colleges that are competitive with UMD along with many major corporations offer benefits to partners. The state and University system need to enter the 21st century and grant FULL benefits.”

“I have applied for a position at Johns Hopkins because of their willingness to provide partner benefits. I love working here but fear that this issue may force me to look elsewhere.”

“We are second-class citizens in this regard on campus. This hurts recruitment and retention. I know of staff who will not come here because we do not offer competitive benefits.”

“Benefits are huge, a big deal, and I don’t understand why the campus is not taking more of a leadership role with the state legislature. It is embarrassing that we are falling behind the times with our aspirational peers.”

"I'm aware of neither discrimination against nor special programs for GLBT people."

"I assume everyone is treated equally and would be terribly disappointed if that were not the case."

"I believe it is stated University policy to assist all individuals equally. I am also sure there are individuals acting counter to this policy based on their own anti-LGBT bias."

"In my unit sexual orientation has nothing to do with advancement and professional development opportunities. Of the two of us who are out, we both receive ample opportunity to advance in our positions and within the organization."

"I think there is no noticeable difference. In any workplace, some people are not offered leadership opportunities. I very much doubt that there is some sort of epidemic of prejudice against LGBT staff on this campus."

More than a third of non-LGBT respondents indicated that they did not know if treatment in the areas of policy and procedure was equitable. *"I have no idea – from my standpoint it seems to be either a moot or ignored point."* *"I have perceived no difference, except that there is probably less empathy for their life situations than there is for those in heterosexual marriages with children."* Also, among non-LGBT identified respondents, more than a third indicated that they thought treatment was, in fact, equal in these areas. Their comments included, *"We are more forward thinking than most governmental groups,"* and, *"In hiring, promotion, compensation, recruitment and retention, it has been my experience that sexual orientation is not a consideration. I have served on many search committees, and I have never seen nor sensed discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation."*

Equity in Campus-Based Services (FSAP, CRC, Public Safety, etc.)

In the areas of services provided by the campus to faculty and staff, a large number of respondents indicated no awareness of whether or not there was equity for LGBT faculty and staff. Over half of all non-LGBT respondents and a third of LGBT respondents either couldn't comment on the equity in these services or were unaware of the services themselves. Of those who did indicate awareness, non-LGBT respondents were much more likely to express the view that treatment was equitable than were LGBT identified faculty and staff: *"To my knowledge, all campus wide services and programs are in conformity with our Human Relations Code that prohibits discrimination on sexual orientation."* *"My understanding (and expectation) is that LGBT faculty and staff are treated exactly the same as other faculty and staff."*

LGBT identified respondents who indicated awareness of these services primarily cited the difference between those services provided for families of heterosexual employees and those provides for families of LGBT employees as evidence of inequity. *"It is disgraceful, given the level of personal tolerance displayed by this university, that same sex life-partners of homosexuals can not have access to the same use of the Recreation Center as families of straight faculty."* *"Even the minimal local benefits would be a tremendous help."*

Equity in Opportunity for Advancement (mentoring and leadership roles)

There was a bit more agreement between LGBT and non-LGBT identified respondents on the question of whether there was equal opportunity for advancement, mentorship, promotion and leadership opportunities. More than a third of all respondents in both groups thought that LGBT status did not negatively impact opportunity in this area. Comments included:

“Because there are a number of LGBT faculty/staff in leadership positions, I’m unaware of instances where there have been lesser opportunities,” “These decisions are made by my chair who values a person’s skills over other aspects of their personal life,” and, “All of the LBGT staff I’m familiar with in my department are managers or have a high level of responsibility.”

There were those who did not share this belief in the equality of opportunity, with 1 in 4 LGBT identified respondents indicating that they either perceived that there was less opportunity or believed they had seen proof of it. LGBT identified respondents expressed these views at double the rate of non-LGBT identified staff and faculty. This was expressed with such comments as, *“While I do not think that sexuality always affects those chosen for leadership roles, I am convinced that in most instances it is better to, not lie, but to not disclose your sexuality,”* and, *“There are few if any LGBT people in positions of hierarchical authority who publicly identified as being members of the LGBT community,”* and, *“In my shop [sexual orientation] has everything to do with it.”*

It was in the area of professional advancement and opportunity that some LGBT respondents personalized their answers – they spoke not of LGBT faculty and staff in general, but of their own experiences and how they felt their LGBT status had impacted their opportunities at the university. Their responses indicated that they did not feel they personally had been impacted: *“My sexual orientation has not been the problem,” “Minimal effect. In our department, no one wants a leadership role, so those few who volunteer get leadership positions,” “I have been promoted and given many opportunities, it has not been a factor at all,”* and, *“My dean has been wonderful in hiring and providing opportunities irrespective of sexual orientation.”*

A few respondents specifically addressed opportunity for mentorship and how they believed this was impacted by LGBT status. Most of those commenting that they perceived that mentoring opportunities were reduced for LGBT faculty and staff were non-LGBT identified respondents: *“Since so few people are out in leadership roles at any level, I think that it stands to reason that LGBT people do not get access to the same mentorship opportunities. Certainly straight people can be good mentors to LGBT people, but it is not the same as having someone who can include in their mentorship work insights about LGBT identity in the workplace.”* (1106) LGBT-identified respondents tended to express views and experiences about mentoring that were more positive: *“I think LGBT staff seek out LGBT staff for mentoring.”* (199) *“Generally the same [mentoring opportunities], but not necessarily with other LGBT staff/faculty.”* However, not all LGBT identified respondents shared that perspective: *“Well, as in all things people mentor people like themselves. This is one way social advantage is reproduced.”* (1019)

“Academia has always been a refuge of sorts. I personally know of two individuals who were gay who rose to high positions on campus.”

“I think [being gay] works against us subtly. I have no hard evidence, but I think I’m sometimes considered less presentable than straight colleagues.”

“Having participated in a hiring panel, unlike with gender and race, NO weight whatsoever is given to creating a representative balance of LGBT people within the unit.”

“LGBT staff and faculty are rarely given the same mentoring opportunities because many LGBT staff and faculty are not open about their sexuality.”

“I have had two excellent mentors on this campus, both of whom are straight...”

"I think LGBT faculty and staff have MORE opportunities, since everyone is trying so hard to support them, and there are so many in student affairs the proportion of LBGST staff is likely to rise, perhaps to become the majority in student affairs fields."

"I do not have any fear about my physical safety. I also do not have any examples of any physical harm occurring to any individual I know."

"I have felt threatened occasionally from my students (teach 300 person CORE class). One incident of heavy breathing on phone and homophobic comments on evaluations."

*"I feel safe if I'm **not** openly displaying any form of affection toward my partner on campus."*

"Alcohol plays a role. I was tailgating during a football game, a bunch of [opposing team] fans were walking by and they had been drinking and used the term 'queer' in a derogatory way. It took alcohol to bring it out in these people, but I did not feel physically safe."

There were also a very small number of respondents (12 total out of 310 written responses) who indicated a belief that LGBT status was actually an asset and would potentially help in promotion and advancement. Some of these responses were quite negative and sarcastic in tone, and most of those came from the small group of truly hostile respondents: *"Because of the nature of the PC campus, LGBT members are given more opportunity to elevate themselves. Their unique characteristics make them more attractive candidates so that the campus can wave its flag of 'diversity' and 'openness' and 'progressiveness.' A regular Joe Schmoe hetero doesn't serve that need – no matter how qualified."* The majority of those indicating a belief that LGBT persons were actually given greater opportunity were more matter-of-fact: *"I have not seen any instances of discrimination against LGBT. In fact, I have seen quite the opposite in which they were given more opportunities due to their outed sexual orientation."*

Almost one third of non-LGBT identified respondents indicated a lack of knowledge on this issue, as did almost one in five LGBT-identified respondents.

Safety on Campus for LGBT Faculty and Staff

More than half of both LGBT-identified and non-LGBT identified survey participants indicated the belief that the campus was safe for LGBT faculty and staff – or at least as safe (or unsafe) as it was for anyone on campus. They expressed the view that an individual's safety was not connected to his or her LGBT status. Some LGBT faculty and staff comments: *"Any time that I have felt scared, it was because of being here late and being on an empty campus. It had nothing to do with being a lesbian."* *"This campus is not safe for anyone regardless of orientation. Do you read the police reports every week? Robberies at gunpoint! Give me a break! Physical harm due to sexual orientation is not what I fear."*

Among LGBT identified respondents, about a third of respondents felt that the campus was not a safe environment for LGBT faculty and staff. For many, this was a general feeling of fear, not necessarily tied to specific examples. Many in this category believed their safety was tied to their behavior or appearance: *"I don't know of instances of physical harm to LGBT folks, but I would never hold someone's hand on this campus for fear of physical harm,"* and, *"I feel safe on campus going about my business with nothing identifying me as a lesbian (although, as a woman, there are some settings I avoid). I also feel safe on campus with a group of LGBT people proclaiming our sexual orientation. I would be fearful walking by myself on campus with a large rainbow flag on my back."* Others indicating the feeling that the campus is an unsafe environment offered specific examples, including: *"I know of several instances of vandalism. I have had friends*

have things happen to their cars. I have heard hate speech used by students,” “I have a rainbow cat sticker on my jeep...someone slashed my window. Nothing else was wrong with the jeep and they clearly didn’t go inside. It felt like a hate crime.” “I know there have been instances (albeit rare) where an LGBT person or ally was verbally harassed, and I think in one instance either chased while on foot by a car, or had something thrown at them from a car. Other instances include more indirect forms of harassment, such as a message left on a dry erase board or on a poster hanging on a door.”

“I have used the safe space card in my workplaces on campus and have seen it widely used. I have had students remark on it as a reason why they felt comfortable speaking with me.”

“Safe Person/Safe Place” Program

One specific question participants were asked was whether they were aware of the “safe person/safe space” program on campus and, if so, what their views were on it. Many were aware of the program, and found it to be useful and supportive, although some of those ascribed its usefulness primarily to students, rather than faculty or staff. *“I see it posted in many places. I think it makes a palpable difference in the climate,”* said one LGBT identified participant. Another commented, *“As a former student, I remember the ease I felt in seeing the sign in someone’s office. I didn’t have to conform or pretend if I didn’t want to, and could instead focus on why I was actually there to see a given professor.”* A few questioned the implementation of the program, indicating that they had seen the card displayed by persons whom they believed not to be LGBT or LGBT allies: *“I display the safe space postcard on my office door, as does a colleague who I think shouldn’t,”* one said, and another commented, *“The only person displaying one of these ‘safe space’ cards in our office doesn’t seem like a very open-minded person in conversation about such issues.”* There were some comments that not only indicated a lack of understanding of the program’s intent, but also ascribed negative intent or affect to it: *“I don’t know what a Safe Space postcard is for. I drive by neighborhoods that have ‘drug free zones’ and I think to myself this place must have a drug problem or else why would they have to advertise that it is drug free. Labeling something ‘Safe Space’ would seem to have the same affect to me.”* And, more negatively, *“What is this card, a note saying ‘Hey I am gay, this is my safe space?’ If so, that is discrimination and ridiculous for them to do.”*

“I am aware of the safe space postcard. I have seen only 2 or 3 around here. I am embarrassed to say I lost mine.”

“The safe space card is used only two percent of the time. I don’t think it makes a difference.”

“Seeing the existence of LGBT people acknowledged at work, even by just a postcard, is a nice gesture.”

Resources for LGBT faculty/staff

Just over half of all respondents could not name any campus office or department that served as a resource for LGBT faculty and staff or as a source of information about LGBT issues. Over 1/3 of all respondents reported they “didn’t know,” were “unaware,” or knew of no resources; additionally, approximately one in five were aware that there were resources, but could not name them.

More significantly, among those for whom this information is arguably most

“I think [the card] gives a strange and ambiguous message. It took a while for me to figure out what it meant.”

important – LGBT faculty and staff – more than 1/3 could not name any resource for LGBT faculty and staff. *“The awareness isn’t there. If I hadn’t requested to be placed on the mailing list, I would not know of any at all.”*

“I know resources are out there but I haven’t sought them out and don’t know specifically what they are.”

The most frequently identified resource was the LGBT Equity Office; more often than not, this was referred to not by its formal name, but by the name of the director: *“Luke’s office”* or *“The LGBT Center (not sure of the exact name, but it is located in Computer Space Sciences and run by Luke Jensen.)”* The President’s Commission on LGBT Issues and the LGBT Studies Program were mentioned about half as often as the Equity Office, and the Office of Human Relations Programs was occasionally mentioned. A number of other departments were cited once or twice.

“I’m out in my job, was hired as out. For me it’s an advantage.”

Although asked specifically about faculty and staff, student resources were listed by at least one in five respondents (e.g. Graduate Lambda Coalition, Pride Alliance, Woman to Woman, etc.)

Out in the workplace

“I’m out, which has been very positive in networking with other LGBT people in my department.”

The vast majority of respondents who self-identified as LGBT indicated that they were “out” in their workplace and felt positive about the experience. Their experiences were described as, *“I am out at work. I don’t think there have been any negative repercussions. I don’t feel as though I have anything to hide, so why should I pretend I’m straight or be secretive? After about one month of working here, I had determined that it was safe to be out,”* and, *“I’ve been out for the entire 15 years I’ve worked here, and pretty vocal about lesbian and gay issues for the past 10 years or so. There are times when I think my colleagues may be uncomfortable with my openness, but the level of unease is similar to the minor disharmonies that occur in any office setting related to other types of diversity among coworkers.”* Just a few indicated that they were not explicitly “out,” but neither did they feel they were actively “not out.” They felt they were as open in the workplace about their personal lives as their colleagues and assumed those colleagues drew their own conclusions. Finally, there were a very few who were not out, or only partially out, because they believed there would be repercussions if they were. *“I have been out only to a very few people here. They have been very supportive. I generally keep a low profile with most of my co-workers. The climate here is not supportive of being out.”* A few non-LGBT identified participants chose to respond to this question as well, with their views on how they believed “out” LGBT colleagues were treated. Some of those comments reported a positive experience, but not all. *“The one LGBT person on our staff experiences support from peers, but marginalization from the managerial/upper level administrators. The observation has been made to me that the head of our operation is homophobic.”*

“I am 100% out in the workplace, as are all of my LGBT co-workers. It is just fine. We have a supportive department that doesn’t require being closeted. There is absolutely a difference in different offices around campus. Most are not nearly as open, certainly not in the academic realm.”

What faculty and staff hear

When asked specifically about what they heard others say about LGBT persons, more than half of the respondents indicated that they had heard nothing at all. *“This is not a topic of conversation. This is the private business of the individual outside the realm of the professional environment.”* For respondents who indicated that they had heard comments about LGBT persons, most reported having heard negative things:

- *“I hear people make comments about inappropriate touching or dislike of conversations where one staff member openly speaks of her partner. I often wonder if staff members would make the same comments if the person were not a lesbian.”*
- *“There is still a marked intolerance towards gays and lesbians. Remarks I have heard range from ‘immoral, indecent to unnatural.’”*
- *“I have heard various degrees of subtle homophobia expressed by some faculty.”*
- *“[I have heard] negative comments, such as ‘dyke,’ and I do challenge such comments.”*
- *“From comments/jokes told by some of the faculty and staff I can imagine that a transgendered individual could be made to feel uncomfortable.”*

Other themes

Several smaller themes emerged that were expressed by a number of participants, but not in response to a specific question or item. While the number of people commenting on these topics was relatively small, the fact that these topics emerged without specific prompting indicates that they are worth noting.

Religion

The intersection of religious beliefs and sexual orientation is sometimes messy in America; it is no different on this campus. Some non-LGBT respondents cited their own religious beliefs in comments: *“This is a moral and religious matter for some, and it is not appreciated that immorality is shoved down peoples’ throats, and young minds are encouraged to experiment and indulge in immoral behavior on campus,”* and, *“I am Christian and will be friendly and compassionate towards everyone and I will respect and obey the university, but if UMD contradicts the will of GOD, I will obey GOD.”* However, the impact of religious beliefs or religious people on the climate for LGBT faculty and staff was more frequently

“Our department is very gossipy to begin with, so the overall climate is not healthy. While LGBT individuals seem to be pretty well accepted, there is an overall tendency to put down the group as a whole.”

“I have one colleague that uses derogatory language about LGBT people generally, but I have never heard him or anyone else make a person-specific derogatory remark.”

“I hear ridicule and criticism of ‘sinning people,’ ‘to be gay is a choice’ ‘God says it’s a sin.’ I do not hear positive, human references regarding gays.”

“I do not feel comfortable coming ‘out’ as someone who is religiously and personally opposed to LGBT lifestyle. There are negative repercussions (sometimes extreme) for having an opposing viewpoint.”

“There are a number of people in my unit who are very Christian, some ‘born again,’ and since some people’s Christian beliefs involve a prejudice against homosexuality, that could be intimidating for people who are not hetero.”

“I think more needs to be done about the climate in the classroom. I don’t feel comfortable being out in the large classes. Every time we discuss a gay or lesbian subject there is a backlash in the discussion sections or on assignments.”

“I do not feel that the student body is particularly LGBT-friendly.”

“As long as the work environment does not allow any sexual behavior displayed, by hetero or homosexual personnel, I am sure most people will be oblivious to any personal choice.”

“No one should be forced to acknowledge anyone else’s sexual behaviors or deviances. I would make the work environment one in which sexuality issues are not exaggerated, emphasized or even a regular part of the work environment.”

mentioned by observers of the phenomenon: *“I feel that many individuals believe that the Bible forbids gay life and they use it to condemn it. I wonder if this is an excuse to not deal with a subject which is still taboo,”* and, *“I still think we have some work to do on this issue in our workplace, however – religious diversity in the office makes this most challenging. I think at worst we have some ‘love the sinner hate the sin’ culture in some places in the office.”* One non-LGBT identified focus group participant noted *“I have some sympathy for Evangelicals on campus who may feel that they are being told to accept something they cannot accept. People will not give up their religious beliefs, but they need to be told how to handle this issue.”* Finally, one LGBT identified respondent noted the internal conflict at this intersection of religious beliefs and sexual orientation, *“I am a Christian and have battled with my lifestyle due to my Christianity for years.”*

Undergraduate Students

One of the more interesting, unexpected, and perhaps troubling themes that emerged was from comments that a negative climate for an LGBT faculty or staff person is more often created not by faculty and staff peers, but by undergraduate students. This was an issue raised primarily by LGBT-identified faculty and staff; almost no non-identified participants recognized it. Their experiences included: *“Virtually every LGBT lecturer and TA with whom I have discussed this issue has experienced blatant homophobia in the classroom. Homophobia is still the acceptable form of discrimination in our society (written into our laws) and it’s very evident in our student body,”* and, *“It’s clearly not safe to be very out to undergrad students. The semester that I signed the ad in the Diamondback, students in my classes gossiped about me.”* One LGBT identified focus group participant noted, *“I work with undergraduate students, and they have this habit of throwing around the term gay, as in ‘stupid.’ I tried to get them to think about how that sounds. I don’t know if awareness helped them change the habit, or if they just stop saying it because they know it irritates me so much.”*

“Sex, Sexuality, Sexual expression”

A few respondents seemed to equate the topic of sexual orientation with sexual behavior, which they felt inappropriate in the workplace. Most frequently this mis-alignment was expressed by those professing ignorance about the presence of, or climate for, LGBT persons in their workplace, or those expressing direct hostility toward LGBT persons: *“I don’t need to know anyone’s sexual business, and I do not want it crammed in my face every day. Do the work, state taxes are being used to support an agenda for an immoral lifestyle,”* and, *“On no occasion in the department does anyone speak of anything to do with sex or sexuality. It seems quite taboo.”*

Additional Focus Group themes

A theme that developed in focus group discussions but was not as apparent in the written responses was a comparison of the treatment of LGBT persons to that of other minority groups; this was frequently tied to a feeling of marginalization or invisibility. These themes were particularly apparent in focus groups comprising all LGBT-identified faculty or staff, and in the President's Commission meeting. Comments such as, "*Anti-gay chalkings were left alone because of "freedom of speech," but if it had been a racial slur...*" and, "*I always ask the question, would the same rhetoric or silence be coming out if we were talking about race or gender? Are we being put into a second level of diversity category? Why are we not on an equal footing?*" by LGBT focus group participants illustrate this theme. Members of the President's Commission remarked, "*My attitude towards work is definitely affected by second-class status. My partner's father is ill, I would like to be able to take leave with her, but her father is not recognized as my father-in-law,*" and, "*If there is a racial discrimination problem in a department, people would be coming out and talking about it. I don't see the University coming to our rescue. From what I've seen, it's not equally enforced.*"

"I do not know of any situations in which a faculty member was recruited specifically because of sexual orientation, although I know of many recruited because of racial/ethnic background, which is a priority in the provost's office."

"Acceptance and welcoming of people who are LGBT does not seem to be highlighted at the university in the same way that racial/ethnic diversity is."

LGBT Studies

Because this study was focused on faculty and staff experience, there were no specific questions about the LGBT Studies Program. Very few respondents offered comments on the program in their responses, and those who did tended to be LGBT identified. When mentioned, the program was most frequently cited as a resource for LGBT faculty and staff on campus, which is of course not its primary focus or mission. Even though there were not many mentions of the program in the bulk of the responses, there were a number of specific recommendations about support for the program, and they are included in the recommendations section.

"They give a nod to LGBT people, but I think the reality of it is not at all proactive. LGBT people discover what they need for themselves."

Transgender participation and issues

Only two self-identified transgender individuals provided input in this process, one via webCT and one as an individual interview. One is out on campus, the other is not. The one who was not out indicated that it was a desire for privacy and normalcy that guided this decision, and not "*concern in any way about my safety, job security, social acceptance or anything like that at all.*" Thus there is very little data specific to the campus climate for transgender faculty and staff. Only rarely were transgender persons referred to by other respondents; when they were mentioned, it was often in the context of the respondent thinking or imagining that it might be a different experience for transgender persons, but not actually having enough information to speak definitively. Perhaps this very invisibility is the most important data about transgender faculty and staff that was gathered in this process.

"I am totally disappointed that my gay and lesbian peers don't see how important and far reaching the addition of gender expression [to the human rights code] is. I think the education has not been done."

RECOMMENDATIONS

These summary recommendations were either made directly by participants or evolved from their comments. More detailed recommendations are included in this report as Appendix D.

- I. **Elevate the importance of securing partner benefits to the top of the university's agenda.** Appoint a Cabinet level task force to create and implement long- and short-term strategies to secure approval, as well as a plan to communicate continuously with the campus about the importance of this agenda item and inform them of the efforts and progress being made to achieve it.
- II. **Increase faculty, staff and student awareness of LGBT issues in particular and diversity issues in general** through various targeted training and visibility campaigns.
- III. **Ensure campus-wide understanding of the University's concept of diversity that encompasses the LGBT community and issues of importance to them,** through both the actions of campus leadership and the use of policy and procedure.
- IV. **Increase funding and improve infrastructure for existing entities to provide expanded education and programming,** including the Office of LGBT Equity, the LGBT Studies Program, the President's Commission on LGBT Issues, and other offices responsible for program additions approved. A nominal funding increase would make it possible to address many of the climate related concerns in this report.

CONCLUSION

It is not possible to say, from the information in collected for this report, that we now know how *all* faculty and staff all across campus are likely to view the climate for LGBT staff and faculty. It *is* possible to say that we know the stories of *some* LGBT faculty and staff. Some of those stories are heartwarming; some are heartbreaking. We know that while the campus climate is far from perfect, the LGBT faculty and staff who shared their experiences largely believe it is certainly improved from the past. We also know what they think is necessary to improve it further.

It is also possible to say that we know the viewpoints of some non-LGBT identified faculty and staff. Some of these campus citizens are thoughtful and committed to equity. Some are personally warm and welcoming. Some are ignorant. Some don't think this is a matter of any importance. And at least some are frighteningly hostile toward their fellow faculty and staff.

We know that the very act of participating in this survey caused some (and maybe even most) respondents to think about and become more aware of a perspective or experience they might not have otherwise noticed. We also know that any positive effort undertaken as a result of hearing these stories will increase our capacity to continue to improve the climate. We know that a few of these efforts would take significant work and new strategies, but the vast majority would not – they require only resources targeted to existing efforts, commitment to achievement, and accountability.

On the issue of most concern to participants, access to benefits equal to those enjoyed by heterosexual faculty and staff, we have no ability to direct an outcome, and may have only a limited ability to impact the outcome. However, our willingness to exert effort to achieve that outcome, and our ability to reap benefits from that effort (increased loyalty from current faculty and staff and increased ability to attract outstanding faculty and staff in the future) is unlimited.

With limited targeted efforts it is entirely possible for this campus to move from a position of lagging behind our peers to a position of leadership among our peers. That said, it may also be necessary to systematically increase visibility for both accomplishments and efforts, and particularly efforts by the top levels of leadership. In this context it is not enough to have done; one must be seen to have done.

Further, we also know we may well need to refocus and concentrate our efforts on educating the student population. Interestingly, this returns us to origin of this report, the CAWG 2003 student climate report, where students, both LGB and straight, expressed concern about the experience of LGB students on campus. We can now see to what extent this concern might have arisen from what these students had actually experienced or witnessed in the classroom.

Additionally, we acknowledge that there were stories that we missed in this project, voices we did not hear. We cannot forget those who may not have been adequately represented in this data gathering. We suspect that there was serious under-representation from some areas, most visibly among those in lower level positions, particularly in administrative affairs and student affairs

front-line work (grounds and facilities, dining services, residential facilities, etc.). This is especially true where there is not routine access to computers or a significant population of employees who do not speak English as their first language.

Finally – and perhaps unrealistically – it would be of great benefit to all campus faculty and staff, including LGBT identified, if their work climate and environment were not so dependent on location, location, location. We know there are people who are sitting pretty and those who are sitting in abject misery, and when “everything depends on where you sit,” fairness requires that make a significant attempt to adjust the seating.

Focus group and on-line survey questions

CLIMATE STUDY OF FACULTY AND STAFF
ON
LGBT ISSUES

The Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs & Special Assistant to the President for Diversity, Dr. Rob Waters, has commissioned this project to gather faculty and staff perspectives and experiences in regard to sexual orientation on campus. The Peer Consulting Network for the Office for Organizational Effectiveness has organized focus groups to explore these issues with university faculty and staff. Because not everyone can make it to a focus group, the same focus group questions are being made available for your response.

The term “climate” or “campus climate” is used throughout the questions. For the purpose of this inquiry, climate describes a general attitude or feeling – the atmosphere of working at the University of Maryland College Park.

“LGBT” is an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender, and it will be used throughout this inquiry. We are mindful, however that each group represented by that acronym has a different set of experiences. We will, therefore, address each separately in the first question and ask that you consider these individual groups in your answers to the remainder of the questions

1. What is your impression/experience of the climate for Faculty and Staff members who are Lesbian? Gay? Bisexual? Transgender?

(Example: Do you think this is a safe, comfortable, welcoming environment? If so, why? Do you have any examples?)

2. What campus organizations are you aware of that serve LGBT groups and/or focus on LGBT issues?
3. How well do you think LGBT Faculty and Staff are treated in areas of policy and procedure?

(Example: hiring and promotion, benefits, compensation, recruitment and retention, PRD, professional development)

4. How well do you think LGBT Faculty and Staff are treated in areas of campus-wide services and programs?

(Example: Campus Recreation Center, Employee Assistance, Health Center, security services)

5. In your experience at your primary workplace, what is the climate for LGBT faculty and staff? Are you aware of the “Safe Space” postcard? Do you see it used in your unit? And to what degree do you feel it makes a difference?

6. For anyone who feels comfortable sharing, if you are “out” in your workplace, how is it going with your colleagues/co-workers, supervisor?

(Example: Have there been any repercussions, positive or negative, to coming out? Do you think there is a difference in the climate in different divisions/departments on campus?)

7. What do you hear others say about LGBT faculty or staff, if anything?

8. How physically safe do you think the campus is for LGBT faculty and staff?

(Example: If you are aware of particular instances where LGBT faculty or staff felt threatened or experienced physical harm, can you share that?)

9. To what degree do you believe LGBT faculty and staff are given the same formal/informal leadership/mentoring opportunities as heterosexually identified faculty and staff?

(Example: to what degree do you think sexual orientation influences whether one is selected for leadership roles or not?)

10. Peoples' experiences are often affected by multiple dimensions of difference such as gender, age, race, disability, ethnicity, levels of education, class and more. In what ways do you think these multiple dimensions of difference impact the climate for LGBT faculty and staff on this campus?

(Example: For example do you think the climate is different for LGBT people of color then it is for LGBT white people?)

11. What recommendations or suggestions do you have for the administration regarding the climate for LGBT faculty and staff on this campus?

(Example: Are there particular areas of campus to which you would like direct your recommendations? If you were President Mote, what three things would you do for LGBT faculty and staff?)

12. How has the climate for or within the LGBT community changed over the last 5 years and what factors, do you feel, have contributed to this?

For more information, contact the primary consultant on this project, Laura Nichols, at lnichols@umd.edu or 301-405-6880.

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EXPANDED RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations include more detailed items that elaborate on those offered in the main body of the report. These were either made directly by participants or evolved from their comments. The numbered items in bold are priority items.

- I. **Elevate the importance of securing partner benefits to the top of the University’s agenda.**
 - A. **Strategy Creation and Implementation**
 1. **Create Cabinet-level task force to develop strategy to win support of domestic partner benefits at Board of Regents and state level. Provide financial support for full-fledged campaign to win passage.**
 2. **Aggressively address issue with state legislature at every occasion.**
 3. **Extend campus-based domestic partner benefits (CRC, childcare, library, etc).**
 - B. **Communication Strategy**
 1. **Develop strategy to ensure that faculty and staff are aware of leadership actions in support of benefits.**
 2. **Use the extension of campus-based benefits to raise awareness of entire campus population** on the status of domestic partner benefits and to build larger campus community support. Create opportunities to address this as a human rights issue as well as an “ability to compete for top talent” issue.
 3. Use visible leadership action on domestic partner benefits to increase recruitment and retention of outstanding faculty and staff.
- II. **Increase faculty, staff and student awareness of LGBT issues in particular and diversity issues in general.**
 - A. **Undergraduate Students**
 1. **Ensure LGBT inclusion and equal emphasis in diversity curriculum in UNIV 100.**
 2. **Make diversity curriculum in UNIV 100 more uniform so students share more of a common experience/understanding.**
 3. Use existing mechanisms for longitudinal tracking of the development of student attitudes and understanding on various diversity dimensions, including LGBT status (e.g. Beginning Student Survey, University of Maryland Student Survey, etc.).

4. Look for opportunity to select another First Year Book that addresses LGBT experience and can repeat the recognized success of the Laramie Project.

B. Faculty and Staff

1. **Consider making diversity training mandatory for anyone in a supervisory/leadership capacity**, emphasizing role of leadership position for creating a non-discriminatory and inclusive climate for all, including LGBT persons (e.g. Office of Human Relations Programs (OHRP) module from Leadership Development Institute program).
2. **Disseminate information on university commitment to diversity and a positive working and learning environment through existing channels:** graduate and teaching assistant training, new employee orientation, new faculty orientation, new chairs training. Include specific information about programming and resources available to LGBT faculty and staff.
3. Routinely offer general diversity courses through Human Resources in cooperation with OHRP or external vendors. Create cascading communication mechanism that encourages deans, department chairs and directors to make this training available to staff.

C. Campus-wide

1. **Create new, visible campaign on tolerance/diversity support – posters in classrooms, etc.**
2. **Continue to offer Provost’s Conversation programs on LGBT issues, (in particular, the intersection of religion and LGBT identity).**
3. **Hold forums, sponsored by President Mote, to present findings of this report. Seek input and response to findings from LGBT groups and the larger campus community.**
4. Create higher profile Gay Pride events or forums.
5. Increase visibility of LGBT issues and people at Maryland Day.
6. Include more high profile speakers for campus-wide events (both LGBT speakers and speakers on LGBT issues).

III. Ensure campus-wide understanding of University’s concept of diversity that encompasses the LGBT community and issues of importance to them.

A. Leadership Action (high level administrators)

1. **Assign every recommendation that is accepted a high-level sponsor who will be directly accountable for implementation.**
2. ***Every time* campus diversity is mentioned, include LGBT category.**
3. **Take leadership/flagship position within UM System in support of LGBT concerns.**

4. Be more vocal about political issues of concern to LGBT community – domestic partner benefits, civil rights, etc.

B. University Policy & Procedure

1. **Promote hiring of LGBT faculty and staff with initiatives similar to those for racial/ethnic and gender diversity.**
2. **Provide visible support for faculty “partner hires.”**
3. **In charges to search committees, include President’s Commission on LGBT Issues recommendations and guidelines; add LGBT example to Equity Council’s “interview questions to avoid” web page.**
4. **Promote specific understanding of our human relations code as it applies across the board in policy and procedure.**
5. Recruit faculty and staff directly from the LGBT community. Employment advertisements in LGBT media and on LGBT professional listservs.
6. Identify and eliminate any instance where the anti-discrimination code appears without including sexual orientation.

IV. Increase funding and infrastructure for existing entities to provide expanded education and programming.

A. Office of LGBT Equity

1. Evaluate Safe Space program and Rainbow Terrapin Network allies training for impact and increase funding for expansion and/or revision.
2. Provide more space and a more high-profile location for LGBT equity office.
3. Provide a structure to allow LGBT community members to build and reinforce connections.
4. Provide support for development of student and professional mentoring program (perhaps as joint project with LGBT Studies).
5. Other programming as identified by the community.

B. LGBT Studies Program

1. Increase visibility for program.
2. Increase number of credit classes offered.
3. Provide more CORE classes out of LGBT Studies or with LGBT focus.
4. Provide library book budget line for LGBT Studies.
5. Other enhancements as recommended by program director, faculty and students.

C. President’s Commission on LGBT Issues

- Provide support for commission outreach to faculty and staff to solicit other input and ideas.

D. Other offices responsible for recommended program additions

1. Office of Human Relations Programs
2. Human Resources/Training
3. Orientation (Undergraduate Studies)