

Notes from the PCLGBTI Town Hall Meetings  
February 24, 2011

The following notes reflect audience participants' comments during the respective town hall meetings. The notes follow the proceedings of the town hall meetings in chronological order, with each speaker in turn being indicated with an asterisk (\*). Many participants offered their thoughts on multiple themes, which we've reflected in these notes through the use of paragraphing and/or bullets. Most of these comments were initially captured as participants spoke, and in turn projected to the audience, though they were later reviewed and revised for better accuracy using the video recording of the meetings for reference.

Over the summer, the Commission will work to create concrete recommendations to be issued before the beginning of the new academic year.

### **Faculty/Staff Town Hall**

\*The One Project, a first-year experience program for LGBTQA students aimed at student transition and retention needs

- In a survey of The One Project, a small group of first year students initially showed no concern about others (roommates, instructors, employers, teaching assistants, etc.) knowing their LGBTQ identity at the beginning of the fall semester
- Students also reported feeling comfortable being an LGBTQA person in most of the buildings on campus
- A follow-up survey of these same students showed a shift in some of their attitudes—more concern about classmates knowing identity, and less comfort at being an LGBTQA person at the gym
- Students reported being witness to homophobia on campus

Rutgers University student suicide/ Tyler Clementi

- Media firestorm resulted
- UMD response was slow, uninspiring, disappointing
- Hate and harassment does happen on our campus
- Bullying on UMD campus... a place that should be called home
- UMD is not a bubble for homophobia, and these problems cannot be ignored

Asking for continued support from the President for these issues.

- When the CDO is chosen, hopes they continue to support the LGBTQ issues
- Would like/need support from the top

\*All too often language is used to abuse the LGBT community.

- Phrases like “faggot,” “that’s so gay,” often used with no provocation
- Need to address why this language is used, by those outside of as well as inside the LGBTQA community
- Where does the desire for this hatred originate?

- Happens across campus, including in a gym environment
- First coming to Maryland, people would knock on the (fraternity housing) door yelling abusive words
- Safety is a constant concern
- Need to target areas of campus where we know such homophobic actions occur and examine the acceptance of homophobic language and their common usage
- Such language should be seen as unacceptable in all areas on campus

\*Inclusive University policies

Should look at same sex, domestic partner benefits and ask if they are appropriate in terms of sick leave, family/medical leave, tuition remission, etc. Especially looking at extending system level benefits to same-sex domestic partners.

Same sex marriage bill working its way through the state of Maryland assembly. There is hope that it will pass. If it becomes MD law, then EDI Committee will not pursue DP benefits further. So, current recommendation is that the 2012-2013 EDI Senate Committee should review this issue. If same-sex marriage is brought as a state referendum in 2012 and then shot down on the ballot, the EDI Senate Committee should revisit system level benefits for same-sex domestic partners.

\*Domestic Partner Benefits – This person was a university senate member when they worked for inclusive language and things like health insurance.

- Partner is over 65+ and could not be put on some elements of health care (because of the Defense of Marriage Act) and the University was unaware of this restriction
- Over 65 age restriction has resulted in higher costs to maintain health coverage for partner
- Obama has changed his stance on DOMA
- Important to know and be aware of these domestic partner limitations at the University levels so that things can be changed, especially for people over 65 who are concerned about these issues

\*New to campus. Working in study abroad and reaching out to LGBT students and letting them know this is an office they can come to.

- Holding panels to help spread awareness of the study abroad experience, especially in relationship to LGBTQA students
- One panel with The One Project
- One panel with out LGBTQA students who have studied abroad, sharing their experiences
- Met with students and offices on campus, had great support and have had positive experiences thus far

\*UMD is a vibrant and overall LGBT inclusive campus. However, it is such a wonderful environment that we often minimize the problems that arise and don't always realize that injustices do occur. Need to be more indignant, more often about injustice.

- Received an email from an alum identifying speaker as “the enemy”—an outlier incident, but one that frames the continued need to empower LGBTQ communities

Problems seem difficult to resolve because of twisted web of university, regent, and state politics

- UMD lacks a gender identity non-discrimination law
  - University practices protect us, but policies could go further
- Health insurance excludes transgender people from care related to transition
- Regents do not provide our partners equal benefits

Social inequities exist too

- “Coming out in the classroom” article, comments on the Diambondback website were disrespectful—minimizing LGBTQ community as sexual organs & animals
- These are hostile, non-intellectual, often anonymous comments
- Need to not render these incidents insignificant
- Need to respond—our non response points to what we are (or are not) paying attention to

Climate affects outcomes

- LGBT University of Maryland students had a lower sense of belonging than heterosexual counterparts. Belonging leads to involvement and leadership roles
- Without better policies, cannot be as competitive, cannot successful retain and develop our community

\*This person worked in the education abroad office and has only been here 6 or 7 months

- Work in a very open office
- Curious about what are other staff and faculty members experiencing?
- A sense of unity between departments is lacking. Would like to see a movement forward towards more unity and greater sense of belonging
- How are other people feeling? What is the experience of others?

\*Question about non-exempt staff members who are not English speakers

- What outreach are we doing for those people who may want to express opinions and experience?
- Not just Spanish-language, but also Vietnamese, Camaroon, etc.
- They also are not given leave time to attend events like this one, so keep in mind they are missing from today's event
- Need to make an effort to reach this community as well

\*Received email today from a colleague in administrative affairs... Westboro Baptist Church coming to Northwest High School. Wanted to mention the counter-protest people will be staging

and make people aware. “Pervert-run” is how the Westboro Baptist Church describes the high school.

Outreach to LGBT students by offices is great.

Part of a state department program where an international student was hosted to bridge the gap between Muslims and American students.

- International student was never introduced to anyone in the LGBT community. The introduction was very powerful; a big difference to know LGBTQ person personally. Student went back to Indonesia with a changed perspective and was more comfortable with the LGBT community when she returned home.
- There is opportunity for students who go abroad, as well as for international students who are studying at UMD

Generally feel very supported in own sexuality. However, in general, the term “bisexual” is often only recognized when in same-sex context, and not recognized when in an opposite-sex context. Need to talk about this further within our LGBTQA community

\*Fortunate to come to the university as an out professor. Has seen faculty and staff in own department suffer from “micro aggressions.”

- Need to be mindful of one-on-one encounters—shunning, questions raised about our colleagues
- Sees students from suffering from that as well

LGBT Studies Program is not an advocacy program. It is a rigorous program and most students in those classes are straight.

In the 90’s, this person testified before the board of regents for domestic partnership benefits

- Cannot believe we are still having this discussion about DP benefits on the UMD campus
- We are fortunate for both of us to have benefits. If they both had not benefits, would have left the university
- Seen stellar students turned away because of lack of benefits for partners

\*Need to highlight and have more conversation about micro-aggressions, in professional work and our conversations about inclusion across campus. Inclusiveness does not mean including intolerance and intolerant people.

Where is UM spending its money and resources?

- Troubled by the fact that Chik-Fil-A has a space in the union.
  - Gender norms enforced by their company, and they operate on our campus

\*Resident life perspective from a staff perspective

- Partner lived with her for a short time on campus. Partook in the university benefits she could.
- In residence halls, staff is reacting to problems faced by students by putting into place policies and procedures
- Still working to set the norms about appropriate behavior
- Try to do our best to know this is an inclusive environment
- Wants the students to understand when they come in – “you are a terp now. This is how we behave as terps. This is how we interact with one another.” Attempting to lay this foundation with students. Want to provide the best experience possible for all students.

\*Recently created Maryland Center for Health Equity with a new set of hires in School of Public Health. Want to be sure to communicate to the public that while most people discuss majority and minority populations in reference to race and ethnicity, we need to expand the definition of health disparities much more broadly. Encourage people to learn more about Center, and think about how Center can help address some of these issues.

Concerned about the public health issues concerning discrimination in every way.

- Bring strategies to Dean to improve the understanding of people on campus and across the state
- Discrimination happens in a lot of places and a lot of ways
  - When a faculty member is recruited by another institution, can request faculty retention support, but NOT staff retention support
  - Spousal hires – to recruit great hires, especially when big moves are involved. Want to make a request for “partner hire” support. Have lost high quality recruits because of the absence of partner benefits, but need to extend even DP benefits

\*Resident Life staff– very fortunate to be in his position, and overall experience is positive. As a grad student, met his partner here, and adopted a son. When move around the campus outside student affairs – people ask about his son and where his mother works.

- Campus is very heteronormative (sometimes in unintentional ways)– part of the climate that needs to still be changed

\*Maryland is very supportive... but what is the experience like of a brand new student?

- If I was a new student how would I know where to go for support on these issues?
- Our challenge is that UMD has so many resources that there is no ONE place to go for help
- LGBT Studies? Office of LGBT Equity? MICA? Student Orgs? Need attention to gateway experiences for new students (including heterosexual students)—orientation, admissions, etc.
- How are offices structures in the university? How are the students getting the messages at the right times to access the right resources?

\*Remembering 2005 UMD Climate study comment in respect to teaching assistants in the classroom and difference in power they experience

- Face dual role of being leader in the classroom, but also working with and under a faculty supervisor; both a teacher and a student
- How do we support them in being both a student/teacher?
- Hope this issues comes up in the student town hall forum
- Don't know if the climate has changed

\*Faculty member at another university and is getting PhD. at UMD, working as a teaching assistant. Chose Maryland because of its proximity to DC and quality of department (although none are openly LGBTQ identified). There is no support for new students and it is difficult to find a place to go.

- Doesn't see LGBTQ role models on campus
- Don't have LGBT mentors, people in power
- Difficulty in finding an LGBT doctor in College Park
- Found more support at UF than at UMD
- Other university he works at makes up the difference in health care and provides extensive health care coverage
- Dug on the health center website to find a supportive LGBT doctor. Looked for health insurance providers. Experienced a lack of organized resources and support.
- Handling LGBT issues in the classroom... where do I go? No idea. No training available and no discussion of LGBT issues.
- People he went to were VERY supportive, but nothing was organized. Received disjointed information, not always pertinent to specificities about local College Park area
- Appreciative for the support and the place to speak, but wishes there was a more organized and consistent forum for new faculty and staff looking for ample direction.

\*Here for 35 years... seen a lot of change. Remember when met in the basement of Tawes to lobby for domestic partner benefits, where closeted members would not be seen. Atmosphere has changed a lot but there is still not a lot of community in the LGBT community.

- Information should be more centralized and benefits made more apparent to people
- Expected to see a lot more people here and not just people from the LGBT community (which half of us seem to be)
- Something wrong that we're having a town hall meeting on the subject, but so few people here

\*These are not just issues that affect people in the LGBT community.

- A recent UMD alum who now works as a full-time staff member
- As an allied staff member through involvement with One Project and the Office of LGBT Equity has seen how inclusive university is, but as a UMD undergrad didn't see this inclusion
- We talk a lot about inclusion, but this is a theme that needs to reach all students, not just LGBTQ-identified students

\*Appreciates the forum. Relatively new to the community – came late last year. “I don’t know what I don’t know.”

- Have been listening to people share dimensions of the issues at different places and levels of the institution.
- Would like more insights about what I don’t know
- Want to know what are the experiences on different parts of the campus?

Want to know more and think about the people who do not identify as LGBTQ, but are in same-sex relationships. What are the issues, what are the dynamics, and what are our responses, what should we be considering in our departments?

Want more ways to access the information obtained at this meeting.

\*Been an UMD for a long time. When became an administrator and learned about anti-LGBTQ hate-biased incidents, was surprised and embarrassed.

- These incidents were something we couldn’t not address
- Know that we’ve done things around the campus in many areas to address these issues
- We have educational obligations
- Understood after knowing LGBT people that they are people and should not just be lumped together thoughtlessly
- Is an ally and will continue to be—know that we have support of incoming provost

\*MICA seeks to provide direct support to all students on campus in leadership development. Works in collaboration with other leadership programs and the Office of LGBT Equity to provide leadership development opportunities for LGBTQ student communities. Work to help student organizations advance their mission on campus.

- Focus on educating the campus on LGBTQ community issues
- One persistent challenge is notion of LGBTQ students being able to fully participate in other organizations that do not affirm the LGBTQ experience (e.g, shared racial experience or other affinity).
- LGBTQ students want to come together based on these other affinities, but don’t feel sense of belonging
- How do we work with student organizations to reshape norms within organizations that allow for affirmation and validation of all forms of difference, including based on sexual orientation
- A lot of work needs to be done
- Student leadership, especially SGA can take the lead on these issues, seeing as inclusion has a serious affect on retention of students.

\*Speaking to facilities

What is facilities doing in master planning to make sure that issues of bathroom, etc. are being considered for new buildings, as well as how existing buildings will be retrofitted to be accommodating

\*Brand new to the campus. This person is a staff members and a member of the transgender community. Wants to help any committee and move forward the issue of transgender healthcare benefits. Came from other university where he worked on faculty/staff steering committee for benefits for the transgender community. Very interested in the progression of the transgendered community.

\*UNIV 100 class instructor, professor in the sciences

- It may be worthwhile to have brown bags or training sessions for UNIV teachers
- Many try to make themselves a bridge between new students and administration and other advisors
- They deal with new students for a semester and sometimes make close ties
- Think LGBTQ-specific training would be helpful so that they can help students they sense are facing problem situations
- Want to be able to directly help students who are being treated poorly

\*Doctoral student in the College of Education

- Came to UM with high expectations of engaging in coursework with faculty around sexuality and gender minority scholarship
- Sadly, found that these courses are offered infrequently
- His scholarly pursuits are not affirmed, often feel isolated in research
- At previous research deemed perverted for wanting to pursue sexuality studies in education, but had more curricular opportunities there than at UMD which is problematic
- University emphasizes recruitment and retention, but has considered leaving because he did not feel valued in research pursuits
- Want to see intentional outreach in hiring of LGBTQ faculty, and faculty doing LGBTQ research, especially outside of humanities
- Embarrassed that there is no queer studies concentration for graduate students. Tired of hearing excuses that the LGBT Studies Program is in Undergraduate Studies and cannot host a graduate concentration or that there are no faculty to teach these courses
- Recruiting faculty with diverse portfolios is important to advance scholarship, but also to retain graduate students
- Wants UMD to recognize and value research pursuits and identity as a queer scholar

\*Power of staff members in higher positions to offer training and reference transgender students

- Had experience discussing resident life approach to transgender students.
  - Wasn't happy with response
  - Director reached out and talked about the issues and about disappointment around the situation.

- We are not there in gender identity protection – if you are the head of a department or in charge of training – need to send a message that everyone is included and important in this community and on the campus.

## **Student Town Hall**

\*Concerns from the student group Trans-U. As a group, Trans-U identified five/six areas that needed improvement on campus last semester.

### Bathrooms on campus

- There is a list of gender-neutral list of bathrooms, but it is only online.
  - Can't always look at online list when need bathroom
- Better signage is needed so it is clear where to go
  - At building entrances
  - On bathroom doors of all gendered bathrooms

### Health Center

- Can continue hormone therapy, but cannot initiate hormone therapy
- A great resource, but not public enough
- Where is it on the website?
- Understand that there is a fear that the health center would be overwhelmed with high demand, but have confidence that this will happen and don't think this concern is valid
- As next step forward, students should be able to initiate hormone therapy on campus
  - Some of us have ability/resources to go off campus for treatment, but others do not
  - Those who do not may resort to "do it yourself" methods that are not as safe and not monitored by doctors

Counseling services for trans students should be more readily available and more accessible

- Haven't been able to find information on the website
- Create a trans-health program that is more comprehensive and available
- Need to make information about the things that exist more public and accessible to students

### Dorms on campus

- No trans housing policy currently
- Housing will make "reasonable accommodations on a case by case basis"
  - Reasonable for whom? Needs to be make clear
- Want a better housing policy for trans students on campus
- There have been issues with students on campus changing their gender identity in the middle of the year/semester
  - Would be less of an issue if accounted for in policy
- Currently trans students cannot room with someone of the same gender they identify as

- Many trans students would be willing to room with someone of the same gender they identify with, and do not want to room with someone of the opposite gender than they identify with

UMD non-discrimination policy does not include gender identity or expression

- Understand that cannot be included until included in a state or local law
- President Loh should advocate for the MD state bill protecting gender identity on behalf of the University of Maryland
- There is nothing official right now and does not make students feel safe

Forms on campus designed to change preferred name and gender markers

- These forms exist, but there are problems with these forms exist
  - Their existence has not been made public widely
  - Difficult to locate
- Administration seen as not wanting students to hear about this option
- If don't hear about it, won't know about it, can't access it
- There is an existing reliance on word of mouth information sharing, but not all students have equal access to these channels of communication
- Need to make information public online, for all
- Name request form problems
  - The preferred name showing up in places they don't want it to
  - More work needs to be done here

\*Trans-identified freshman student living on campus dorms

Preferred name program -

- Told the name would only be changed on class rosters, certain online directories, and other places where not legal or official and that legal name would still appear on transcript and financial aid documents
- Thought it was fine, signed up for program, got new student ID
- Something was sent to the home with a preferred name on it
  - Problematic because some family members are unaware of gender identity of student
  - Provisions on the name change form were not adhered to

Housing/Dorms

- Had to change dorms after a month because was not comfortable
- Not being able to room with someone of their own gender is a problem
- Current housing policy says you have to live with someone with the same gender, but this is not the case for trans students who are placed with someone of their opposite gender
- In initial dorm, did not feel comfortable going to the bathroom, people did not, or were not willing to understand
- New dorm is more comfortable, but still feel uneasy that have to explain to others why he lives with a woman (when policy is same gender room assignments)
- Would like to room with a man next year but don't know if this will happen

- It's not just about comfort, but also about personal safety
- The housing questionnaire before moving in is not comprehensive (only asks about smoking and late night habits)
  - It would be nice to indicate gender non-conforming or trans status
  - Would like option up-front that allows student to make request that accommodates their gender identity, which might not be reflected by legal gender

\*OSTEM - Out in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics at UMD

- While there are official policies at UMD that support LGBTQ students, more than words are necessary to continue to create change in the minds of non-LGBTQ people
- UMD is thought of as progressive and liberal school, but campus does not provide level of queer acceptance that student personally anticipated
- Lack of visibility and gay presence in certain parts of the campus creates uninviting atmosphere
- The OSTEM posters being ripped down, but other similar affinity groups' flyers presence is pervasive (Black Engineering Society, Society of Women Engineers)
- Administration as supportive, but students don't seem to concur
- Has overheard other students maliciously joke about OSTEM flyers, counteracting OSTEM's mission to make queer people feel comfortable in engineering and become immersed in engineering community
- Sciences and tech areas of UMD have not kept up with other areas of the university, and more needs to be done

\*Dorm life - openly gay identified and a transgender ally

- Have a mutual desire to room with a friend who is female-to-male transgender
- However, trans student's legal gender marker prevents the two from living together in dorm
- There is no existing housing policy to help trans students live with people of their same gender identity

Also agree that want to see more progress in STEM fields (and all over campus, too) towards LGBTQI community

\*New graduate student at the University of Maryland - both an instructor of undergrads and a student

- There is a lack of LGBTQ faculty on campus. There is only one he can identify in the College of Education
- There is a lack of mentors, for both undergrads and graduate students
- Who can we turn to? Who can we talk to?
- Know about rainbow terrapin program, but we need faculty role models, especially those of us who want to be future faculty members

### Orientation and resources

- Office of LGBT Equity and other LGBTQ organizations on campus are drastically underfunded
- There is a lack of funding for LGBTQ issues across the board
- Understand that policy changes might take some time, but funding can be allocated immediately
- Loh being here and administration being at faculty/staff town hall speaks wonders and shows they care and are knowledgeable
- Want a funding commitment from Loh. Funding is important, and want dollars to show this commitment (fund graduate assistants, retain LGBTQ mentors through partner hires)

Other universities are much more accepting and have more/better resources

### Organized structure for resources

- Where do you go at first when you are a new student?
- A lot of undergrad organizations – but its hard for people to find them.
- Resources are especially important now with the rise in LGBTQ suicides and hate crimes.
- Need more structured resources

### \*Pride Alliance having trouble with room reservations for student groups on campus

- University changed their room reservation policy, charging for rooms
- Had to include money for room reservations for the first time
- Pride Alliance consists of numerous organizations (Women to women, Bro to Bro, Bisexuals at Maryland, Queer Straight Alliance, Trans-U, True Colors of Maryland) in one umbrella organization
- Tried to get an exception, but was shut down
- It was suggested that Pride Alliance break off into individual groups, but don't want to separate from one another
- Members don't want to choose between groups, and all groups important regardless of size because everyone needs support

### \*Freshman student – was scared to come out.

- Got involved in The One Project - program for freshman to help them be comfortable on campus
- Want more involvement and participation across campus in The One Project and their events
- In one of the Pride Alliance small groups and has found it very helpful, but need more recognition to encourage more people to get involved

### \*Safe space for students to meet from the Pride Alliance, i.e. Bisexuals at Maryland (BAM)

- Per UMD policy, groups have limited room reservations they can request
- There is a need for additional requests for Pride Alliance, not only because it is an umbrella group, but because of nature of groups

- These are small discussion groups, and need safe space to communicate on campus
- Have a problem with privacy and safety
- People would walk though the meeting and members were unable to communicate because they did not feel comfortable and safe
- Students need privacy and safe space to meet, a top priority
- Difficult to have discussions in small rooms that cannot accommodate all the people who want to attend
- Sense of safety, sense of family comes from being able to provide safe space
- Not just about a call for more space, but a call to encourage us to think about the great benefits of having a safe space

\*True Colors of Maryland – we are not only LGBT, but also people of color

- A lot of the African American mentors and leaders on campus don't know about TCOM
- Sought out co-sponsorship for TCOM, but many didn't know TCOM existed, or that there are many black LGBT students who need help from African American mentors and leaders on campus
- Have to deal with coming out on campus but they also have to adjust to college life and coping with the culture shock of transitioning to college
- The group needs mentors and more of them would like institutional support, and support from those in leadership positions

\*Throughout the experience at Maryland there have been resources available that have helped

- The One Project was helpful
- Also helpful was meeting other people in the LGBTQQI community
- Not a lot of support for people who identify as allies
- Would like to have known more allies so that it was a more comfortable environment for people to come out to
- Help allies to stand out more

Portrait Gallery trip with several universities from the D.C. area

- Introduced to a lot of people from different universities and communities
- Would like to see more inclusive with other universities, so that a community can be formed in the D.C. area
- Knowing there are plenty of other places, outside of UMD

More advertising for LGBTQ groups and programs, i.e. Bro to Bro

- OSTEM has issues putting up flyers that are often vandalized once they are put up
- Helpful if university allowed more advertising – so that people can discover these resources and meet people

\*There has been a lot of discussion about the need for greater visibility, but LGBT groups are some of the most discussed through abusive language, for example being called “faggot”

- Use of language and abuse via language. It is often overlooked and that language is accepted and legitimized
- “that’s so gay” - this language is used too often and it is used in traditional homophobic settings
- Had to leave through the second floor window because house members didn’t want him walking through their house
- Need to call people out on their use of language and speak out on issues
- Instructors play a vital role, need to speak out

\*Writers House student living on campus for the first time

- Absence of actual vocalized support from the start, even though Residence Assistants are trained
- Still feels uncomfortable in the dorms
- Comments made and words heard in the dorms are hurtful, even if they are not directed at you directly
- We had to go to lots of meetings about safety, but nothing said about language and respect

Reading a text about AIDS in class

- Author does not identify as gay in text
- Instructor asked if students realized author was gay, when they said yes, instructor commented if this was because author was funny and all gay people are funny
- Did not find conversation appropriate or funny

Shouldn’t have to wait until something bad happens to have training. Professors, students, and staff all need training upon entering the University community.

Room reservations for Pride Alliance – small groups director

- People rely on Pride Alliance to provide small groups with a safe space to meet
- They have resorted to meeting in open, public office spaces due to lack of adequate proper room reservations, which is not appropriate
- They need somewhere to that is private and safe, so can have open discussion
- Not asking for special treatment – just asking for needs to be met for all groups. Not willing to divide into separate groups to get accommodations, Pride Alliance is a larger community. Still, each member has individual concerns.

Intersections of sexuality and class are a very specific concern

- Class is an issue not sufficiently addressed
- Student lives in a hostile environment at home because of sexuality
- Almost didn’t come back to school because of financial concerns, even though in last semester before graduates
- Parents qualified for a loan, but they refused to sign it because of involvement in Pride Alliance
- Specific concerns in terms of finances for LGBT students that need to be further addressed

\*Graduate student who has worked with the President's Commissions - Invisibility of the heterosexist, white supremacist, patriarchal, and classist structures that undergird experiences we face, especially the ones that make some feel superior over others, while others are made to feel unwelcome and uncomfortable.

#### Campus Strategic Plan for Diversity

- Has many recommendations to improve climate, but does not address what caused climate to be this way, or what sustains this climate to be this way
- Important to focus on change, but focus also needs to be placed on what is the university, how is it operating and why is it operating that way.
- Causes of the climate issues are never approached makes it seem as if it is a minority problem, that minorities just need to feel included
- Must pay attention to the structures that continue to pervade in culture that allow the sense that there is a "right" skin color and a "right" way to love someone to continue

#### \*Living situation on campus

- Questions asked on roommate agreement are limited (Do you smoke? Do you stay up past midnight? Are you a messy person?)
- Came out as lesbian to roommate, who initially said she was comfortable, but they later said not comfortable
- Was damaging to not feel accepted
- Come to college hoping to be accepted and that is not the case
- Would have liked option on roommate agreement to say that "I'm out," "I'm homophobic"
- There should be an option for people who don't want to live with someone who is LGBT, don't want to live with someone of a particular race
- Understand that this might promote separation, but also helps maintain safety. You don't know what someone will do to you when they don't accept you.

\*Fighting with self-identity. Comes from a small town – predominately white society and was a racial minority. Didn't feel very accepted. Chose to come to UMD because it was big and diverse, and was hoping to be able to express himself

- Does not find family acceptance
- Has been on this journey alone, for a long time
- Was looking for resources and groups for people who are understanding of people still "in the closet" and who are still struggling with their sexuality and gender identity
- Not everyone in the LGBTQ community is out, need a safe space
- Need to recognize those difficulties for people who are unable to fully express themselves, and offer university support, protection, and encouragement

\*The One Project - first year experience, most comprehensive at Maryland and focused on academic and social goals for students, including retention needs of those who are LGBTQ and

allies. Survey was taken in UNIV 100 at the beginning of fall semester and again at end of semester

- At the beginning, most were never concerned if others around them knew their LGBTQ orientation. Felt comfortable being in residence hall, classrooms, gym, etc.
- Post semester data - students felt more concern over another student knowing their orientation, some concern about being an LGBTQ person at the gym, and witnessing homophobia on campus
- This was just a small cohort of students, so may not be generalize to entire campus community, but does paint a picture of student experiences

Rutgers University student set off a media storm over LGBTQ suicides

- Campus reaction was slow, uninspiring, and disappointing
- Leadership seemed to send the message that something like this could not happen at UMD, that if ignored problem it would go away

Freshman at UMD called a “fag” on two separate occasions. Spoke with various staff, and does feel more comfortable now than he did at the beginning of the year. These problems can and do happen at our universities.

Need continued support from President Loh. Chief Diversity Officer should have a strong understanding of LGBTQ issues

\*Teacher of UNIV 100 course in fall for LGBT freshman

- Need the university to take a firm stand on helping new students realize resources that are available
- Incoming freshman need to know before halfway through the first semester

\*On the topic of resources being available

- Only so much can be done by students to inform other students
- Many students only find resources in their junior and senior year
- Administration needs to support these groups
- There are resources available, but need campus-wide support of every college, school, and group to help increase visibility and promote resources

\*LGBT Studies Program student involved in Speaker’s Bureau, which talking to classes and students about LGBTQ issues

- Education is important
- Amazing to see a light bulb go off in the students’ heads when they are given information and realize all the resources available
- Need to publicize that there are resourced like the Speaker’s Bureau where students are educating other students

\*President Loh's comments before leaving meeting

- An impression has been made on him in terms of housing, climate, respect and abuse and verbal behavior that can lead to worse forms of violence
- He has no answers to these questions but will do everything possible to provide support that's needed
- Know that more money is important, but that it doesn't necessarily solve issues
- Education is terribly important. Building into the curriculum and have courses that extend people's awareness of LGBTQ issues is essential to university mission
- Chief Diversity Officer elevated to the VP position, reporting directly to Dr. Loh
- If President's Office can be of any help, do not hesitate to contact

\*Addressing issues in the university itself at this town hall meeting, but also need to reach out to high schools and other places in the surrounding community.

- The university has enough resources to spread resources to neighboring high schools, middle schools. Already doing it around issues of nutrition, but could also do more to address issues with identity and sexuality in the greater community

\*Counseling center works to give voice to what you're feeling emotionally

- Rainbow walk-in hour is offered daily
- Services are free to students
- Located in Shoemaker Building, on the south side of campus

\*Getting information about resources out there is important

- One problem Pride Alliance faces is that advertising budget is first to get cut from requests to Student Government Association (SGA)
- Wants to see signs, posters, etc. across campus advertising LGBTQ resources, provided and funded by the university

\*Health Center student experience

- A nurse in the health center said, "Lesbians don't get STDs, you don't need an STD screening." Training for nurses so they can better deal with LGBTQ health issues

\*Was an undergraduate student at UMD, is now a graduate student

- There is a need for more Resident Assistants (RAs) who identify as LGBT
- People assume heterosexuality
- People cannot be their whole self when they are outside Pride Alliance.

\*Grad student – hearing the shared stories brought them back to undergraduate years and groups who are not accepting of identity and sexuality

- There could be a stronger push to make groups that are not LGBT or focused on sexual orientation and make them more aware of LGBT issues. Groups focused on race – still need to be accepting of sexual orientation and identity.

\*Transgender care provider at the Health Center is a nurse practitioner

- Is currently only one person providing transgender health care on campus
- Transgender health care on campus is a work in progress, and appreciates the comments given today
- Trying to grow the program and grow as a practitioner
- Working really hard

\*Grad student was having a difficult time dealing with a loss. Went to rainbow walk-in because she had just lost the person who was close to her during her coming out process

- Told 2.5 weeks ago was told the walk-in hour had not been set up
- Grief counseling group had not been set up either
- Wanted immediate help, was told to set up an appointment
- It is important for the rainbow walk-in hour to be set up so that it is available at start of semester
- Thought could rely on advertised resource, and situation was harder because had to deal with resource that was advertised but not available

\* Master of Public Health and an undergrad student a generation ago. Academic foundations here need to be sure LGBT people are not objectified by academic material

- For example, in a class discussion about HIV/AIDS, don't have conversations assuming that HIV/AIDS positive people, and others that have first-hand experience, are not in the room. "I'm here."

\*Director of Resident Life – appreciated hearing comments about housing

There is a disconnect between what director wants for students, and how wants students to feel  
Wants to identify herself and assert that she is a person who you can talk to  
Knows that concerns exist and need to be worked on and she is committed to doing that

\*Important for students to take leadership positions, and to stay involved

Since town hall is not an annual event, wants PCLGBTI to report back to community on an annual basis about what has changed so that commission and President Loh can be held accountable

