

July 1, 2004– June 30, 2005

ANNUAL REPORT

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender
Student Support Services

Indiana
University

INTRODUCTION

The following article appeared in the November 2004 issue of the IU Home Pages. It is a fitting introduction to this tenth annual report of the GLBT Office at Indiana University.

“A Town/Gown Story with a Twist”

Chancellor Ken Gros Louis called the controversy the most divisive student issue he had seen in all his years as a university administrator. So stated an article in the “Indiana Daily Student”. The date was November 28, 1994, four days after the opening of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Student Support Services Office on the IU campus (GLBT Office for short). Self-identified gay and lesbian students argued and rallied for days and faced opposition from conservative students, some claiming objections to the establishment of the office based on religious grounds. A brand new president, by the name of Myles Brand, faced protests and press coverage just days after taking office. And a state legislator from Greenwood, IN threatened to hold the university hostage to the tune of \$500,000, if this new support service was publicly funded.

It hardly seems possible that that was 10 years ago, but so it was. And since that time hundreds of students and their parents, faculty members and staff, alumni and people from the larger community have found current information on glbt issues and solid support when those issues were personal in contacting the GLBT Office on the IUB campus.

Last month, an IU undergrad who has quietly identified as gay for years sought counsel and advice from the GLBT office staff as he contemplated sharing this truth with his family. That same day staff met with graduate students to assist in designing a course on homosexuality and religion for a course in the School of Education. That afternoon a social worker from a Bloomington elementary school emailed the office seeking advice on a child whose teachers and parents were concerned because he seems to be gender variant (desiring to live his life as a girl). On any typical day, staff may meet with students who are doing research on gay marriage, students who have been harassed in their residence hall, or students who have been cut off from their parent’s financial support because they decided to ‘come out’ to them.

And, while the majority of the scenarios which unfold in our tiny office on East Seventh Street involve IU students, staff has also provided support and information to individuals and entities in Bloomington and beyond, including providing training on glbt issues to teachers in the Monroe County School Corporation; organizing dialogues with various faith communities; collaborating with the Bloomington Human Rights Commission or Mayor’s Office. The office has also assisted in organizing two national conferences to assist youth-serving professionals to be more sensitive to issues of sexual orientation and gender identity; has consulted with dozens of campuses around the country seeking to establish services for glbt students; and, in cooperation with the Alumni Association, created a GLBT affiliate group which now numbers over 700 members.

“A Town/Gown Story with a Twist”Continued

Perhaps the most unique town/gown connection, however, began last April when the Theatre Department contacted our office to organize a panel on glbt issues following their first performance of *The Laramie Project*, the story of the life and death of gay student, Matthew Shepard of Laramie Wyoming. Among the people who appeared on the panel was Rev. Mary Ann Macklin, a former Board member of the GLBTAA and one of the pastors at the Unitarian Church in Bloomington.

The panel was well-attended and well-received, but when Mary Ann went home that evening, she found a note that someone had slipped into her purse without her knowledge. The note read : “The Bible condemns you!” Mary Ann’s initial reaction to this invasion of her privacy was more of anger than of fear. As she reflected on the experience and considered the way in which glbt students still face discrimination and harassment, she decided to turn this incident into something creative. She decided to preach a sermon on the manner in which holy texts are often used to abuse groups and individuals and, when her sermon ended, she invited congregants to slip notes of affirmation into her purse which she would, then, deliver to the GLBT Office with the intent of having struggling students know there were people in the community who cared about them. Those notes now sit in a large heart-shaped box and are regularly shared with students seeking a word of encouragement in their struggle to be true to themselves.

There have been a host of changes in society’s attitude toward ‘gay’ issues over the past ten years. Gay weddings, the election of a gay bishop in a mainline church, and ‘queer eyes’ on straight guys have caused all of us to look at life in new ways. And, during a recent lunch with that state legislator from Greenwood, I heard words of understanding that could not have been spoken ten years ago. Ten years of advocacy for another aspect of diversity has had an impact on this campus and, indeed, beyond the Sample Gates. We trust the next ten years will provide us with even more opportunities for understanding.

SERVING STUDENTS, STAFF, FACULTY, & ALUMNI

Every month, the GLBT Office Advisory Board receives reports from the Coordinator noting the kind of individuals who utilize our services and the variety of issues those encounters represent. Following are some highlights from the past twelve months (July ’04 – June ’05).

For the second time, the office sponsored a national conference during the month of **July**. The ‘Sexual Minority Youth in the Heartland’ (SMYHL) Conference brought 150 youth-serving professionals from across the country together to attend workshops, to network, and to hear nationally-known Native American therapist and story-teller, Terry Tafoya, challenge us to create a world in which queer youth can grow and contribute their gifts to the world. In addition to hosting the SMYHL conference, staff met with candidates who were interviewing for social work and psychologist positions in CaPS (Counseling & Psychological Services), as well as those interested in the position of Assistant Director for Student Conduct in the Office of Student Ethics. Staff also organized a panel of glbt students for the annual Munger Conference at the School of Education and assisted students in the summer Groups Program to host a panel on glbt issues on the college campus.

August affords us the opportunity to welcome new and returning students to IU. In addition to providing training (Straight Talk About ‘Gay’ Issues) for Residence Assistants, the office hosted a booth at the fifth annual CultureFest answering questions about campus climate while passing out 1300 fruit-flavored smoothies. We also co-hosted our annual Open House and Picnic, along with our good neighbors at La Casa. Over 100 students dropped by during Welcome Week Festivities. The Coordinator also welcomed the new Director of the Gender Studies program, meeting with her to discuss ways in which we might consider developing a ‘queer studies’ program within the next few years.

As classes resumed in **September** our staff met with several graduate students to continue the development of an 8-week class on homosexuality and spirituality, and with the staff of the IDS (Indiana Daily Student) to assist them in more accurately reporting glbt issues. We helped a student who was having difficulty sleeping find some books he was looking for on the topic of meditation. And we responded to a call from two former students who were ending a relationship after five years together. We provided email and phone support.

Scenarios in **October** provided us, once again, with the opportunity to assist students, as well as alumni, and colleagues on other campuses and individuals beyond Bloomington. The Campus Life Director at IU Southeast called us seeking information on dealing with harassment issues on her campus. Staff contacted her by phone, listened and offered insights based on the work of the GLBT Anti-Harassment team. A gay alumnus from 1971 wanted to discuss arranging for making a significant gift to the work of the office. We hosted him for lunch and provided him with information on estate planning from the IU Foundation. The Coordinator responded to a request from the PFLAG (Parents, Friends, & Family of Lesbian and Gays) in Indy to speak at a meeting, along with an IU student who was the recipient of a \$500 scholarship.

Our Tenth Anniversary was celebrated in grand fashion in **November** with two lectures – one on queer spirituality by author, Christian De la Huerta and the other on gay men in the field of historic preservation by author, Will Fellows – a GLBT Alumni social, a concert for students, the world premier of the movie, ‘Kinsey,’ and a brunch and reception attended by several hundred people. Featured speakers at the brunch and reception included the Chancellor, the Dean of Students, former and current students, and a mother and father who expressed their gratitude for the work of the office when their son, a former student, came out to them. In the midst of our celebrations, staff also assisted a student who was sexually assaulted by another student in his residence hall. And we provided resources to students who were troubled by the presence of a hate group on campus who were toting anti-gay signs one day at the School of Law. The group was not associated with the university and, unfortunately, made a number of appearances during the year. Our work goes on.

As the fall semester came to a close in **December** the office received a variety of requests. A Resident Assistance in one of the residence halls contacted us for assistance in organizing a forum to respond to issues of harassment on several of the floors. A student on Union Board called us seeking co-sponsorship of a one-man play on the life of James Baldwin. And the Director of the Safe & Civil City Program in Bloomington requested our participation in a program responding to the activities of hate groups who come to our community. Staff responded positively to all of these requests, while assisting students as they came to the office seeking information for final projects and papers.

In **January** the mother of a gay son called us to share her concerns and to seek some information. A former counseling intern contacted us about assisting her and her partner in the planning of their wedding. And a straight undergraduate, with a learning disability, grateful for the way he was welcomed when he had come into the office some weeks before, returned to volunteer his time. Mom received some needed support, the wedding plans were begun, and the student was referred to the Speakers Bureau to serve as an ally.

A faculty member concerned for a former student who is gay and who is currently serving a prison term; a former student now on the faculty at Duke seeking ways to be more supportive of glbt students there; and a faculty member of the Athletics Committee, troubled by homophobia in sports were among the individuals who contacted our office during the month of **February**. We were able to suggest some legal resources for the faculty member whose former student is in prison. We consulted on the phone with the former student now teaching at Duke. He was seeking resources for establishing a glbt office on his campus and we offered a variety of suggestions. And we prepared an anonymous report on gay/lesbian athletes who have contacted our office for a faculty member whose concern was the issue of homophobia in athletics.

In **March** a transgender (female to male) student met with our staff and provided us with insights and ways in which the campus could be more sensitive to transgender individuals. A number of students frustrated by the attempt on the part of state legislatures to propose a constitutional amendment banning gay marriages contacted our office for ideas and support. The staff agreed to assist students in their organization of a state-wide rally at the capitol in Indianapolis. We assisted with publicity and transportation and provided opportunities for reflection on the whole experience. Later in the month students who are involved in the Student Global AIDS Campaign (SGAC) met with the Coordinator to seek co-sponsorship of their first attempt at organizing an AIDS walk Sponsorship and advice was provided.

An undergraduate student requested a letter of recommendation for a summer intern position with the Human Rights Campaign in Washington D.C. Letter was written and job was secured. A professor in the School of Education's Counseling Program requested assistance in addressing glbt issues with the students in her master's class. A panel was provided that included two gay students who had been in therapy, as well as our current counseling intern. A staff member in the Department of Residential Programs and Services requested the Coordinator's input in evaluating the CUE (CommUnity Educator) Program. He agreed to assist. All of this happened during the month of **April** in the midst of a variety of planned programs related to the National Day of Silence and the annual Rainbow Dinner for graduating students.

May is the month of farewells to students and hellos to alumni. Staff responded to invitations to graduation events for a number of students. We also met with a HESA (Higher Education and Student Affairs) student regarding his summer internship at an LGBT Center on one of the campuses of the University of California. The Coordinator attended an alumni gathering in Indianapolis at which a number of new alumni joined the GLBT Alumni Association. And, a staff member in Gender Studies emailed us seeking an answer to this question: Would a member of the military, who is the partner of an IU staff member, jeopardize her job by applying for domestic partner benefits here on campus? Answer: Names are only released when required by law.

In **June** a staff member traveled to Indianapolis with an undergraduate to spend an afternoon at Christian Theological Seminary. The student, who is gay, is interested in pursuing a career in ministry, but is currently a member of a very conservative church. Staff also met with Seminary administrators to discuss ways they might be more supportive of their own glbt students. We also met with a student on the staff of the Career Development Center to brainstorm ways in which we might be able to collaborate together in the fall. And we responded to a request to meet with a staff member in the School of Education who is designing a national survey on campus climate which is intended to be more glbt-friendly and specific.

MINING THE MINUTES

Four times during the academic year, members of the GLBT Office Advisory Board meet to support office staff, to examine programs, to discuss policy changes, to share ideas and to exchange information. The Board is made up of 16 members 8 students (2 graduate and 6 undergraduate), 6 staff members and 2 faculty representatives. In reviewing the minutes and agendas of meetings from the past year, these additional items are worthy of mention:

- students working in the office took on a wide variety of activities including: providing counseling, hosting programs, organizing groups, re-designing the web, publishing a newsletter, and planning a trip to a film festival at Notre Dame
- in response to concerns expressed about comments made by emcees at the 2004 Miss Gay IU pageant which were interpreted as sexist and racist, guidelines were suggested and proposed for this years pageant
- Coordinator agreed to serve on the CHAMPS/Life Skills Advisory Committee in the Athletics Office when asked
- a growing number of incoming faculty (or those interviewing for a new position) who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender requested a meeting with office staff and/or students to assess the campus climate
- a record number of students applied for the counseling internship in our office, this year and, interestingly enough, all identify as allies
- the GLBT Alumni Association hosted a very successful Summer Picnic and Silent Auction, which, in addition to corporate sponsorship, raised monies so that 4 separate scholarships were offered to students in the spring – 2 based on needs and 2 based on merit
- our annual Spirit Award was presented, in November, to Rev. Rebecca Jimenez, Director of the Center For University Ministries for her strong support of glbt students over a period of many years

MINING THE MINUTES, Continued

- in response to needs expressed by several students a group entitled 'Black Like Us' was organized to provide support for African-American students who struggle with issues of sexual orientation and/or gender identity
- a variety of events were planned for the National Day of Silence in the spring, including the distribution of almost 1,000 shirts which read "Gay? OK With Me!"

CONCLUSION

A ten-year anniversary provides one with the opportunity to pause and reflect. That is true whether we're talking about individuals, couples, or an office. I will leave it to historians and social scientists to comment on the changes in our culture in relationship to 'gay' issues during the past ten years, but it's worth asking how the functions of the GLBT Office, itself, have changed in the past decade? The changes have been gradual, even subtle, but, I think, rather significant. While we continue to support students with issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity, my sense is that we are, now, doing more than just providing support. In many cases, we are empowering young people to make the changes in the larger society that these times demand. Students seem much more ready to advocate for their own issues than they did ten years ago. It is not uncommon for students who have received some support from our office to ask, soon after their first visit, how they can help us in our work or further the cause for equality on campus or beyond.

The internet has certainly changed the face of communication and has, I believe, fueled a greater level of activism among glbt students. Transgender individuals are more vocal and are helping all of us understand yet another aspect of the human condition. And, in the midst of our ongoing work with students, we continue to receive requests from community agencies, from other campuses, from recent graduates who are now advocating for glbt issues in the corporate world, in religious institutions, and in various social service agencies. Not long ago a nationally-syndicated advice columnist referred to the resources of our office when responding to some young people who were questioning their sexuality. Several students who worked in our office in recent years now head up similar services on campuses around the country. And requests for workshops continue to come in from individuals around the state and the region.

More students who do not identify as 'queer', but as straight allies use our services to advocate for their friends and to educate others. And, since 1994 we have created a network of support that includes close to 1,000 alumni from across the country. This past year GLBT Alumni Association 'chapters' were organized in New York City, San Francisco, Washington DC and Cleveland. These, in addition to groups in Chicago and Indianapolis, have planned events, participated in pride parades, and provided ongoing financial support for our scholarship program and for additional programs sponsored by our office. While our space needs continue to be woefully inadequate, we have found ways to extend our sphere of influence. The work continues to challenge and excite!

CONCLUSION, Continued:

A week before our Anniversary Brunch, a surprise package arrived in the GLBT Office from a local bagel shop. The store, a very popular eatery in town just a few blocks from our office, is lesbian-owned and has collaborated with us over the years in supporting legislation, in providing needed services, and in confronting hate groups who continue to visit our community from time to time. The container was filled with fresh bagels and delicious muffins. The attached note read:

Dear Doug,

Congratulations on your ten year anniversary! Thank you to you and your staff...you have provided our community with tremendous support, leadership, and love! Bloomington is a better place because of all of you! Much thanks – Sue & the BBC (Bloomington Bagel Company)

The ‘all of you’ referred to in Sue’s note include those who serve on our Advisory Board and the students who worked in the office this past year. Their names complete this report. Their work made much of it happen!

Advisory Board:

Tahirah Akbar-Williams	Nick Clarkson
Kim Davis	Anna Eaglin
Beth Ellis	Amy Ira
Rebecca Jimenez	Will Lonneman (IUSA Rep)
Michaela Martin-Almy	Tamiji Muto
Melanie Payne	George Pinney
Bill Shipton	Owen Sutkowski
Esther Tristanti	Carolyn Wiethoff
CAPS Liaison: Andrew Shea	OUT Advisor: Helen Harrell

GLBT Office Staff:

Carol Fischer, Office Services Assistant
Kendra Clark, Program Coordinator
Michaela Martin-Almy, Library Coordinator
Robert Clinton, Office Assistant
Jena Arnold, Office Assistant
En’yeto Moore, Office Assistant
Shannon Kelly, Counseling Intern
Misha Mikhail, Practicum Student

Doug Bauder, Coordinator