

# **ANNUAL REPORT**

## **Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Student Support Services, Indiana University**

### **July 1, 2000 – June 30, 2001**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Returning to places that once held special significance in our lives is an interesting phenomenon. During the past year, I had the opportunity within the period of a few weeks to do that very thing on two separate occasions. In April I was invited to speak about working with glbt students at a conference sponsored by a number of colleges in eastern Pennsylvania, including my alma mater, Moravian College in Bethlehem. Later that month, I spoke at a symposium on gay issues in the church at Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, NJ. While having returned often to Moravian, which is located in my hometown, I had not been on the Princeton campus since my graduation in 1975.

Reflecting upon some of the issues I had confronted in college in the late 60's and the values I had affirmed during my seminary days, it was interesting to think about where my life has led me and how it was that I now find myself working with students in a university setting and helping them to grapple with issues related to their sexuality and, often, in turn, their spirituality – their deepest sense of self. It was gratifying to think about those who had inspired my life in days gone by. It was fascinating, in preparing for my presentations, to read over what students and parents and colleagues had to say about the important services which our office provides.

Here are excerpts from a few notes that crossed my desk in the past year.

From a student... "Divine influence must have allowed our paths to cross... I am so thankful that I still have two more years to work with you and Carol and others in the office. I still remember the first time I met you, when I was timid and seeking reassurance. You helped me hold the torch and discover my way to daylight."

From the mother of another student... "I want you to know how grateful I am that Mike found his way into your office. God sure does work in mysterious ways."

From a faculty member in sociology... "I am writing to thank you for taking time to talk to my class about diversity... the students were challenged to see the world from a different lens... I always learn something new when you visit us... thank you for making my teaching experience so meaningful and so deep."

From a colleague at the University of California, Irvine... "I want to thank you for a copy of the survey your university did on campus climate. It was a great help to our project. We were able to draw a lot of ideas and inspiration from your efforts."

From an alumnus... "I have read your annual report with much interest. Thank you for your commitment in support of glbt issues. How I wish an office like yours had been there when I was on campus in the 1970's. Your superb efforts are appreciated by many!!"

The common theme in these messages is one of gratitude – gratitude for those who guide us along life's way. I, too, am grateful for the opportunity to work with amazing colleagues and gifted students in providing the services that we do. The following report documents some of the highlights of this past year.

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### **SERVING STUDENTS**

Direct student services continues to be the main emphasis of our work, relating daily to students who stop by our office, who call on the phone, who write or email or contact us through our Web page. A brief glance at the 'Overviews', which are shared each month with our Advisory Board, will serve as an introduction to some of the individuals we are privileged to share.

Summer on the Bloomington campus provides us with a unique opportunity to interact with many incoming students and their parents during five weeks of Orientation. During the month of July our staff chatted with scores of students, moms and dads about the services we provide. More and more people stop by our resource table each year, as society becomes more comfortable dealing with issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. One parent made a point of introducing her gay son to our staff. A dad who suspects his daughter may be lesbian said he was really glad that an office like ours existed. This was also a month when we related to a variety of international students, including a graduate student from Pakistan who was struggling with coming out and a student from New Zealand whose brother is gay and who wanted to help organize an 'allies' group on campus. He did so with amazing success.

During the month of August we visited with an African-American staff member who was seeking ways to be more supportive of lesbian/gay students of color, with a graduate student in psychology who was seeking resources for parents of gay and lesbian students, and with the fiancée of the IU student who was shot and killed the previous summer in an incident of hate who was interested in gathering resources to combat homophobia. The Coordinator also met with the President of the Board of Trustees, the Dean of the School of Business, and other campus leaders to discuss the issue of domestic partner benefits. The month ended with our participation in the first Culture Fest where we interacted with hundred of students distributing refreshments, literature and "Straight But Not Narrow" and "Queer But Not Quiet" buttons.

In September we welcomed dozens of new students at Welcome Fest and worked with several students interested in creating a better climate for glbt students in their respective work areas. One of those students worked with the Athletics Department. Another advised leaders of the Greek system in the Student Activities office. Resources were provided in both situations. We also assisted a doctoral student in education to find videos for her dissertation and provided a referral for an IU alum who was calling from Texas where he was seeking legal help for an 18-year-old Vietnamese student with special needs who was sexually involved with a 16-year-old friend.

Staff members were busy in and out of the office during the month of October. In addition to meeting students during regular hours in the office, staff met with students in the School of Law to assist in programming; worked with the GLBT Alumni Association to plan a Homecoming Dinner which 40 people attended, including the proud parents of a current student; facilitated a support group for transgender individuals, and participated in an all-day COMU (Commission on Multicultural Understanding) retreat.

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Journalism students kept us busy in November seeking information on everything from gay men in fraternities to issues related to gay/lesbian parenting. An undergraduate doing research on homosexuality and Nazi Germany found resources in our library. And several graduate students interviewed our staff for their functional area report. We also provided assistance to a former volunteer who is now directing glbt services at Texas A&M in his search for the history of our office and we worked with several Community Educators in designing a bulletin board for a residence hall on glbt issues.

As the fall semester came to a close we provided support for a student who was failing several courses related to a series of personal concerns. We met with her and referred her to Counseling and Psychological Services. We brainstormed with a staff member in the School of Business who wanted to be more sensitive to gay/lesbian students in their pursuit of careers. We also wrote letters of reference for several work-study students and volunteers.

In January we provided information or support to a student who was harassed in one of her classrooms, to an undergraduate who was seeking to be more involved in glbt political issues, and to a gay man who was seeking ways to address homophobia among his fraternity brothers. We also wrote a strong letter of recommendation for a graduate student who, eventually, won a sizable fellowship. And we worked with a student who was concerned about the lack of sensitivity on the part of his academic advisor in dealing with his struggle to come out and how that was affecting his grades. We invited him to share his thoughts in writing and pass them on to the Director of University Division who, in turn, forwarded to all academic advisors. A training session with staff was also proposed.

Faculty members, students and staff contacted us during the month of February. A professor in the School of Social Work met with staff to discuss diversity initiatives on campus. Two doctoral students visited us to discuss a research project on how glbt students make career decisions. A staff member and coach emailed glbtserv regarding a program on Homophobia and Athletics, which we sponsored and we passed on his questions to the speaker. A graduate student seeking assistance with a project on guilt and shame met with staff to discuss 'reparative therapy' and another student, applying for a position at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, asked us what we knew about the response of their campus to the death of Matthew Shepherd. Information was provided for each inquiry.

In March a student who identifies as bisexual and who was quite distraught came into our office seeking assistance. We introduced her to our practicum student in education who provided her with guidance and insight. A doctoral student in Higher Ed, doing research on harassment, was provided with Team statistics and other information from our library. Another graduate student in Communication & Culture was sent information when it arrived in our office about the Gay Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation regarding glbt issues in the media. She was delighted.

Organizing events for the National Day of Silence took time and energy during the weeks of April. Staff also participated in several classes in sociology and education.

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In addition we provided support for a young man who having learned that he was finally accepted at the National Film Institute in CA found out the same day that he is HIV+. We referred a staff member to the Office of Affirmative Action when a colleague referred to her as a dyke. And we provided information to a student on the procedure for declaring independent status in the Office of Student Financial should his parents cut off financial support when he, eventually, comes out to them.

As graduation approached in May we spent time bidding farewell to a number of students, including the facilitator of our Peer Support Program. We also hosted our third annual Rainbow Reception for graduating students. We visited with a candidate for the IU Board of Trustees as she sought more information on our work and the issue of domestic partner benefits. We also provided support for several couples – two gay men who are seeking to celebrate a service of commitment and two other students (one female who identifies as lesbian and one male who identifies as transgender) who are seeking new ways to define their relationship.

## **POSITIVE PROGRAMS**

A wide variety of programs with glbt themes were planned and presented on campus over the past twelve months and several new support groups were organized. In addition over 1665 students in education, sociology, psychology and human sexuality classes heard panels with at least one of our staff members participating. A Trans Dialogue group for women and men who identify as transgender was organized in the fall and met monthly throughout the year offering students and people from the community a chance to discuss issues related to gender identity. An Allys group was also organized to encourage straight friends and family members of glbt students to speak out against bigotry. In the spring our practicum student organized a social/support group for students who identify as bisexual. All three groups plan to continue their work in the new year. Throughout the fall and spring, monthly potluck socials were also organized by our program coordinator providing a relaxed setting for students and others to gather around a meal.

In the fall a lecture on queer film featuring Anne Chamberlain was presented to a group of 50 individuals Over 75 students attended a program co-sponsored by the office and OUT featuring slides from the Kinsey Institute depicting gay and lesbian erotica. In November a lecture on domestic partner benefits was co-sponsored by the office featuring Cummins CEO Tim Solso attended by over 100 faculty, students and staff. In November, the GLBT Office celebrated its sixth anniversary with presentation of the second annual “Spirit” Award to health educator, Kathryn Brown and community activist, Duncan Mitchel at our annual gathering.

In the spring a lecture was sponsored by the office featuring nationally acclaimed soccer coach and award-winning author, Dan Woog. Woog spoke on the topic of “Homophobia and Athletics” to a crowd which included several coaches from the IU Athletics Department. The National Day of Silence was commemorated with a luncheon for faculty, students and staff the day before the event. A silent march followed by a rally at the Sample Gates ended this annual tradition. The GLBT Alumni Association worked with the office in planning our first-ever ‘Silent Auction’ in Indianapolis, which proved to be a very successful fundraiser for the office. The semester ended with the third annual “Rainbow Reception” honoring graduating allies and glbt students.

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### **MINING THE MINUTES**

Four times during the academic year the members of the GBT Office Advisory Board meet to support the office staff, to examine programs, to discuss policy changes, and to exchange information. The Board consists of 8 students (2 graduate and 6 undergraduate, including an OUT and an IUSA representative), 6 IU staff members, and, at least, 2 members of the faculty. In reviewing the minutes from the meetings each semester, these additional items are worthy of note:

- Coordinator, Doug Bauder, has taken on some additional responsibilities as Associate Diversity Educator with the Office of Multicultural Affairs
- Counseling student from the School of Education, Stephanie Burnett, will offer counseling support to students through the summer and into the fall
- Office Assistant, Carol Fischer announced that the activities calendar is now on the Web
- Middle Way House and the GLBT office are entering into a dialogue to deal with same sex domestic violence
- Bill Shipton reported a record number of incidents of harassment (128) were reported to the GLB Anti-Harassment Team during the last academic year
- The Peer Support Project will continue. Now in it's fourth year, a full-page feature article will appear in an upcoming issue of the IDS, highlighting the story of Mike Gregg, IU sophomore and Board member
- Graduate student in Higher Education and Student Affairs, Joanna Adler will work as a practicum student in the spring concentrating her efforts on a support group for bisexual students and assisting in the distribution on a campus climate survey for glbt students, faculty, and staff
- GLBT Alumni Association planned a reception, especially for women, prior to the Women's Basketball game in February
- Library Coordinator, John Pitman announced plans to revamp the library system to make it more user-friendly
- Work-study student Miya Tamura continues her work updating the Professionals Listing
- Program Coordinator, Sharlene Toney, in addition to planning several lectures on campus, is coordinating a series of potluck dinners for women and men
- Dean of Students, Dick McKaig, has given the office the green light to host a conference to honor the work of youth organizations, which welcome and support glbt youth. This conference will be held prior to the Order of the Arrow (Boy Scouts) conference to be held on the IU campus during the summer of 2002
- Retiring Chancellor, Ken Gros Louis will be honored at the National Day of Silence Luncheon with a letter of appreciation for his strong support in establishing and sustaining the work of the GLBT Student Support Services Office
- Over \$1500 was raised during the Silent Auction in Indianapolis to support the work of the office

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### **CONCLUSION**

The past year has been an amazing year of growth. Three new groups were organized and served students throughout the year. Several new activities took place on a regular basis. We spoke to a record number of students in various classes. We added a third work-study student to our staff. Our Web sight had more hits than ever. And more students (gay and straight) offered to do volunteer work in our office than any previous year. That's the good news!

The bad news is that we had to remove second copies of books from our library shelves because we had no more room for new acquisitions. We actually had to say 'No thank you' to several donors who had books and records to give to us, because we have no more room to expand. We had to limit our counseling opportunities because the only private space we have is in other offices in our building. And, most disturbing we had to turn away several volunteers and one student interested in doing a practicum in our office, because we simply don't have enough room anymore. Clearly, we are not serving students as well as we might if we had more office space.

Having said that, we will continue to do the best we can to meet the needs of as many students as we are able.

Several weeks following my return visit to Princeton after an absence of 25 years; I received a wonderful letter from one of the professors in pastoral care and psychology who had attended my lunchtime presentation back in April. He apologized for not being able to speak to me after the program and went on to say how grateful he was for what I had said that day and for the spirit in which my words were offered. "You gave me and the gathered audience a rare gift that day, a gift no less than your honest self." And, then, he ended by wishing me all the best "in your important ministry in Indiana."

If the dictionary's definition of the verb "to minister" is, indeed, 'to give aid or service,' I believe those who serve on the staff of the GLBT Office do that as well as anyone on this campus. And we try to do it, on a daily basis, by giving no less than our honest selves. The people named below are those with whom I share this fulfilling work. I am grateful to each one of them for their own unique gifts and for their ministry to me.

#### **STAFF:**

Carol Fischer, Office Services Assistant Senior

John Pittman and John Bogeman, Library Coordinators

Sharlene Toney, Program Coordinator

Miya Tamura, Office Assistant

Stephanie Burnett, Intern from Center for Human Growth

Joanna Adler, Practicum Student, Higher Education & Student Affairs

Doug Bauder, Coordinator