

July 1, 2003 – June 30, 2004

ANNUAL REPORT

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender
Student Support Services

Indiana
University

INTRODUCTION

When the GLBT Student Support Services Office was established in November 1994 its purpose was simply stated - to be “a resource center for the entire university community, supplying educational resources on gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender issues and offering information, support, and referral for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals.” Support and education - those were the guidelines under which we were to operate. As we begin to make plans for our Tenth Anniversary this fall, it is clear that those two simple goals have been defined and re-defined in a wide variety of ways over the past ten years, but they are still the foundation of the work that we do.

The very first Advisory Board meeting for the GLBT Office was held on February 20, 1995 and one of our faculty members was quite impressed with the statistics we had compiled during our first six weeks in operation. We noted phone calls, email messages, letters, and drop-in visitors and, when possible, distinguished between students, faculty, staff, and community members. The good professor stated that while the statistics were impressive, it was stories that would really begin to change people’s minds. He was correct and with that suggestion as a guide we decided that rather than record numbers, we would share stories. Each month a report noting the wide variety of circumstances which bring different individuals to our office is prepared and passed on to the board, to the Dean of Students and to other administrators who express interest in our work.

On a typical month at least 200 individuals walk through our doors seeking information or support. We also answer hundreds of phone calls and email messages and our web page, which is regularly updated, receives thousands of hits from month to month. In addition our staff attends a variety of meetings and receptions on campus and in the larger community. Last year we noted, with pride, that we had passed the 10,000 mark in relating to students, staff, and faculty members just through the panel presentations and various programs which we have sponsored over the past ten years.

This report will continue the tradition of focusing on scenarios in the belief that it is people’s stories that are the best form of education in dealing with issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. We trust that this very report will be a source of education and support.

SERVING STUDENTS, STAFF, FACULTY, AND ALUMNI

Every month the Advisory Board receives reports noting the kinds of individuals who utilize our services and the variety of situations those requests present. Following are some highlights from the past twelve months (July '03 - June '04).

Last summer during the month of **July** our office staff met daily with scores of students and their parents who stopped by our table at the Orientation Resource Center. Among the interesting comments we heard was a mother who visited with us and remarked: "I'm glad you're here. My son is gay, but he doesn't know it, yet!" Assistance was given to another student whose father discontinued his financial support upon learning that his son was gay. Our counseling intern provided a spiritual support group for some of her clients and our staff met with the manager of a local radio station to assist him in designing a weekly radio program on glbt issues. That program, one of the few in the nation, premiered in the fall to positive reviews.

In **August** the Dean of the Faculties consulted with our staff in seeking ways to be supportive of a transgender faculty member. Suggestions were made about possible ways to educate colleagues and support the individual. In consultation with a health educator at the Health Center, a program entitled "Straight Talk About Gay Issues" was developed and offered during RA training. Letters were mailed to over 30 former student staff inviting them to join the GLBT Alumni Association. Over 100 alumni attended this year's summer picnic and annual GLBTAA meeting. And, over 1,000 "fruit-flavored" smoothies were distributed during the campus's fourth annual CultureFest. In addition, during the event many students sported our 'Straight But Not Narrow' buttons, as well as those that stated "Out and Proud".

The anti-gay comments on the web blog of a professor in the School of Business absorbed a great deal of our time and energy during the month of **September**. Many local and several national newspapers reported the story. A Town Hall meeting was held to develop several responses to the event. The Coordinator met with the professor, fielded questions from scores of students and citizens, participated in a local radio call-in program, and provided support for students who organized a silent vigil at the Business School's induction ceremony. A meeting was also arranged with the Chancellor and at least three separate programs were scheduled on campus to discuss issues of free speech, academic freedom, campus climate, and homophobia. Many were frustrated with the lack of response to the issue from university administrators at the highest level.

In **October**, a former counseling intern, now working for a university in Ohio requested assistance in designing a campus climate survey. We referred him to a national survey which we helped design a few years earlier. We also helped to organize a panel program on glbt issues for a group of undergraduates from an IU business fraternity and we agreed to co-host a program with Bloomington Restorations, Inc. featuring Will Fellows, author of a new book entitled "A Passion To Preserve: Gay Men As Keepers of Culture". Staff also participated in a Diversity Fair in the School of Education and assisted a retired faculty member with limited abilities to hire a student to help him with chores around the house.

Our annual Spirit Award was presented to the President of the GLBT Alumni Association during a reception in **November**. During the month we also worked with the Office of Admissions in developing an outreach program to assist high school youth who are seeking glbt-friendly college campuses. (This program would be among the first in the country and the graduate student working with us in designing the program was featured in a cover story in USA Today later in the academic year.) The office was also pleased to receive a \$12,000 Grant from the Gill Foundation as we began planning for our second SMYHL (Sexual Minority Youth in the Heartland) Conference during the summer of 2004.

“Coming Out Over The Holidays” was a successful program hosted in early **December** to support those students who were anticipating that important conversation with parents over the winter break. Panelists included a counselor from Counseling & Psychological Services, a lesbian student, and a gay student and his mother. Many students utilized our library to complete final papers and projects. A faculty forum and lively discussion resulted from a program we sponsored entitled “The New Testament and Homoerotic Desire”. And conversations were held with an IU grad, now living in San Francisco, who was interested in organizing events for San Francisco glbt alumni to support the GLBT Office.

The Professional Staff hosted a brunch on Martin Luther King Day in **January** on ‘Being Gay at IU’. Our office contacted staff and two students, a biracial woman who identifies as lesbian and an African-American gay man, to serve on the panel. A great conversation took place on the intersection of race and sexuality. Students from Film Studies worked with our office to organize a two-day PRIDE Film Festival that attracted over 600 film buffs from the campus and the community. Staff also participated in a diversity panel for the Leadership Bloomington class - a program sponsored by the University Division. And an 8-week class entitled “Homosexuality, Religion, and GLBT Students” began this month. The course, offered through the School of Education, was taught by a HESA graduate student and the GLBT Office Coordinator.

In **February** the issue of gay marriage managed to capture the national news and the attention of many people on the campus. Staff provided press interviews assisted students in co-sponsoring a program with OUT. The office Coordinator, along with his partner, participated in an overnight retreat entitled ‘Kosher Sex’ at the request of students and staff at Hillel. We also responded with a note of congratulations to an IU grad who married his partner of several years in a ceremony in City Hall in San Francisco. In the midst of this, an IU staff member who has AIDS contacted the GLBT office, seeking help in planning his own memorial service and support was offered to a student who was assaulted while walking to class (he was wearing an OUT and Proud button). The case was, eventually, referred to the GLBT Anti-Harassment Team.

March found us working closely with professors in the Theater Department as The Laramie Project was presented on campus. The story of Matthew Shepard's death at the hands of two homophobic young men brought the threat of another bigot, named Fred Phelps, to the campus. Phelps's plan to picket the play never materialized and students standing outside the theater turned a potential counter-protest into a statement of solidarity in celebration of diversity. A candidate for a new faculty position in Communication and Culture sent a thank you note for meeting with her during her interview to discuss the climate for 'out' faculty members; a staff member contacted us about establishing a Queer Studies Program at IU; and a journalism student called seeking information about a 'Come Out and Play' segment on "Saturday Night Live" which mentioned Bloomington. We referred him to the Bloomington Visitors and Convention Bureau which has worked with our office to discuss marketing Bloomington to glbt visitors and tourists.

A wide variety of programs were held during **April**, the final full month of the spring semester. Our National Day of Silence events featured a transgender educator and an African-American gay author. A graduate student in Merchandizing Apparel used his final project, an amazing fashion show, to do some fundraising for our SMYHL Conference. A graduating senior who was an out gay man to his fraternity brothers used a class project to inform 300+ sorority and fraternity pledges what it's like to be gay and Greek. And the office hosted its first Rainbow Graduation Dinner, along with the GLBT Alumni Association for 25 graduates at a local restaurant. It was during this month that we, also assisted a counselor at CaPS who was seeking support for a gay student who had fallen in love with a straight friend; we provided counsel to a straight student who was feeling harassed by a gay classmate who kept flirting with him (we convinced him not to 'bust him in the chops'); and we consulted with a faculty member who was concerned for a former gay student who was in prison and trying to deal with a host of feelings and a system that was anything but understanding.

In **May** we were contacted by a former IU student, now teaching in a nearby school district, seeking ways to be supportive of a lesbian student and ideas for educating her colleagues. We also had a call from a married man with two children whose wife just came out to him as a lesbian. And we heard from a graduate student who is African-American and identifies as lesbian and was looking for friends who might be more understanding. In each instance, we were able to provide some support and information that was helpful.

The year ended with staff participating in a annual conference for teachers in the School Of Education, assisting the GLBT Alumni Association in soliciting members at three separate Pride events around the state and in Chicago, and providing ideas to a couple (husband and wife) who were on campus for Mini University and were looking for help in establishing a GLBT office on the campus at Western Kentucky. We also heard from a coach in the Department of Athletics who was seeking advice for providing support for a lesbian couple.

We spoke with a former graduate intern, now coordinating a GLBT Office in Colorado and looking for some insight into dealing with a conflict on his campus. Staff also assisted a lesbian couple in planning a Service of Blessing following the certification of their civil union in Vermont.

MINING THE MINUTES

Four times during the academic year the members of the GLBT Advisory Board meet to support office staff, to examine programs, to discuss policy changes and to exchange information. The Board consists of 16 members (8 students - 2 graduates and 6 undergraduate, including the OUT President and a representative from IUSA - 6 staff members and 2 faculty representatives. In reviewing the minutes from meetings of the past year, these additional items are worthy of mention:

- The GLBT Anti-Harassment Team actually reported a decrease in reported incidents this past year. We hope this might be a result of a more effective diversity emphasis during Orientation and RA training and, perhaps, the result of some of our efforts as an office.
- A 1955 IU graduate has graciously given the office its first endowment. Don Johnson, a retired dentist from Carmel, IN was very impressed with the work of the office and the GLBT Alumni Association and pledged \$20,000 to the IU Foundation (\$5000 will be an outright gift, earnings from the remaining \$15,000 will be available for needs as determined by the office coordinator).
- At the request of a number of fans of women's sports at IU, the office sent a letter to the Athletics Dept expressing anger at the behavior of "Athletes in Action" (a faith-based organization) who used the half-time at a women's basketball game to witness for their faith and to condemn same sex relationships. Several email messages from administrators in the Athletics office expressed regret over the incident and the promise that action would be taken.
- The question was raised as to whether a same sex couple with a marriage license from Canada would qualify for Domestic Partner Benefits at IU. Would such documentation be enough to verify the relationship? Issue has yet to be resolved with Human Resources.
- The Advocate featured an ad in their December issue highlighting the work of 8 Big Ten universities and their GLBT Alumni Associations. IU was represented.
- The GLBT Alumni Association held an all-day retreat to do some strategic planning for the next 5 years. Short-term and long-term goals were established.
- The NAMES Project Quilt will return to IU, sponsored by the Student Global AIDS Campaign for which the office Coordinator is an advisor.
- \$1000 was set aside from gifts to the office to purchase new videos and DVD's for the office library.
- Conversations about our Tenth Anniversary celebration begin with efforts to secure Ellen DeGeneres as a featured speaker. (This option seems unlikely at this point, but other special programs and events are currently being planned.)
- The Board endorsed the efforts of a group called Bloomingpride, which is seeking support for the legalization of gay marriage and is opposed to a proposed federal amendment banning gay marriage.
- The office Coordinator met briefly with President Herbert the week following his inauguration as the seventeenth President of Indiana University to provide him with an overview of the work of the GLBT Office. The attached report (Ten Years of GLBT Student Services) was presented to the president prior to the meeting.

TEN YEARS OF GLBT STUDENT SERVICES

- November '94. Office opens following weeks of controversy described by Chancellor Ken Gros Louis as “unparalleled” in IU history. (The office was among the earliest such services on a university campus in the country. Such services are now provided on dozens of college campuses.)
- December '94. Coordinator meets with Chancellor Emeritus Herman B Wells. Dr Wells offers words of encouragement and shares stories of the early days of the Kinsey Institute.
- January '95. President Brand and several Trustees brave nasty weather to attend, along with over 300 students, faculty, and staff, our Open House. First sizable gift (\$1000) given to the office to purchase books for our library.
- February '95. First Advisory Board meeting held with 8 students, 6 staff, and 2 faculty representatives present.
- Coordinator agrees to join the GLBT Anti-Harassment Team, as an outreach of the Office of Student Ethics. He also establishes a collaborative relationship with the Health Center to enhance GLBT panel presentations on campus.
- Summer '95. Graduate students and staff work with office to develop two courses in the School of Ed ('Gay & Lesbian Politics' and 'Diverse Student Populations').
- Spring '96. Graduate student in Communication & Culture approved for summer internship to assist in the organization of a GLBT Alumni Association. Approved by the Alumni Association 6/97. The group now numbers over 700 alumni.
- 1997. Record number of students utilize services and attend programs sponsored by the office.
- July '98. Coordinator joins Bloomington United, a grass-roots group of community leaders organized to respond to hate incidents in the city.
- March '99. Coordinator accepts invitation from President Clinton to attend a day-long conference at the White House on how communities respond to hate.
- May '01. Mother of IU student writes: “I want you to know how grateful I am that Mike found his way to your office. You may have saved his life!”
- April '02. Domestic Partner Benefits passed by Trustees after months of deliberation.
- Statistics indicate that office staff has spoken to over 10,000 students about glbt issues since the office opened.
- First-ever SMYHL (Sexual Minority Youth in the Heartland) Conference is held for over 250 youth-serving professionals from 20 states. Keynote speaker, former US Surgeon general lauds the university for hosting event. Evaluations overwhelmingly positive.
- July '03. Retired dentist ('52) provides office with first endowment of \$20,000.
- October '03 Controversial web blog of IU professor stirs passions on campus and brings issues of internet homophobia to Bloomington campus. Students and Coordinator meet with Chancellor Brehm to discuss concerns. Controversy draws national attention.
- Spring '04. Office hosts Debra Davis, transgender educator and Keith Boykin, author of “One More River To Cross: Black & Gay in America” for National Day of Silence.

CONCLUSION

The Tenth Anniversary of the GLBT Student Support Services Office provides us with a unique opportunity to consider our past accomplishments and to look ahead to the future. We will be hosting a variety of special programs during our anniversary year in response to requests from students and in response to our strategic planning session last spring. We also will be working with the largest student staff we have ever employed. That's the good news. The bad news is that our working space is woefully inadequate!

In July 1999, as we were anticipating our Fifth Anniversary, we submitted a proposal for increased office space, highlighting both short-term and long-term needs. Since our office opened in 1994, a brand new Asian Culture Center was dedicated, our good friends at La Casa had their building renovated, and the Neal Marshall Black Culture Center was opened. We are thrilled that the university supports students of color with such wonderful facilities. The directors of these centers are some of our best colleagues and carry out significant programs.

Students are struck, however, with the contrast between those facilities and the inadequate space out of which we operate. We have no private space to counsel students and, in fact, often turn to our next door neighbors at La Casa for rooms for meetings and/or to support students in crisis. Half of our wonderful library is in boxes because long ago we ran out of shelf space for our collection. And, worst of all, we have had to say no to students interested in doing internships or a practicum in our office because there simply is no room for them.

We are grateful for the support our office has received during the past decade. We have it on good authority that our services are respected on campuses around the country, but as we visit other universities, it becomes clear that students are valued, in large part, by the facilities provided to serve their needs. It is time for this campus to consider the variety of services our office provides students, parents, faculty, staff, and alumni and to provide the space for us to continue our tradition of excellence!

A WORD OF THANKS

Not long ago we received a letter from a gentleman who spoke to a large audience on campus about issues of diversity. Following his visit he wrote:

“Thank you so very much for your wonderful hospitality during my visit to Indiana University...It was so liberating to see young men and women being themselves without fear. It reminded me of my good friend, TJ, who had been thrown out of his house for being gay. Unfortunately he did not have any role models or support. He died five years ago at the age of 27... Having grown up in New York and experiencing discrimination and harassment against my gay and lesbian friends, I can’t tell you what I would give to be young again in the kind of supportive environment you help to create at IU. It’s the type of world I have long dreamed of. Thank you for all that you do!”

These are the people who have worked together this past year to create such an environment:

Advisory Board:

Nick Clarkson	Helen Harrell
Kim Davis	Lamisha Serf
Beth Ellis	Bill Shipton
Rebecca Jimenez	Edyta Sitko
Ben Kincannon	Owen Sutkowski
Brian Moak	Carolyn Wiethoff
Melanie Payne	Andrew Wilson
George Pinney	Dietrich Willke
	Andrew Shea

SMYHL 2004 Planning Committee:

Rob Connoley	Mary Morgan
John Clower	Donald Orr
Mike Crow	Frankie Preslaff
Rob DeCleene	

Office Staff:

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Kendra Clark, SMYHL Assistant
Michaela Martin-Almy, Library Coordinator
Jerome Philip, Office Assistant, Spectrum Coordinator
Khyla Barnes, Office Assistant
Bradley Blankenship, HESA Intern
Yu-Ting Su, Counseling Intern

Doug Bauder, Coordinator