GENDER AND SEXUALITY CLIMATE ASSESSMENT

Forward to Survey Results

Submitted by
The Gender and Sexuality Climate Task Force

April 30, 2012
Gender and Sexuality Climate Assessment

FOREWARD

Temple University’s Historic Commitment to Diversity

Temple University deeply values diversity as a central element of its institutional culture. This commitment stems from the university’s founding as a place where those denied access to existing institutions of higher learning were welcomed and encouraged.

Throughout Temple’s history, its diversity has been manifest in the early and sustained practice of admitting women, religious minorities, African Americans, students from middle- and working-class backgrounds, and first-generation college students. It has been more recently reflected in the increased numbers of other ethnic and cultural minorities among Temple’s students, faculty and staff, as well as in investments in resources to ensure the success of all students, faculty and employees.

A successfully diverse community is judged not only by the percentages of its members that constitute particular segments of its population, but also by the actual and perceived manner in which the community recognizes and honors the inherent dignity of each person, provides a safe and respectful environment in which to live and work, and values the contributions and promotes the achievement of each of its members. Periodic measurement of such perceptions is a valuable tool in developing interventions and programming that will continually improve the community and support its diversity goals.

The Gender and Sexuality Climate Assessment

In Spring 2011, Temple President Ann Weaver Hart formed a task force of representatives from throughout the university to study the degree to which Temple University is perceived as a welcoming, safe and supportive environment for sexual minorities, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered students, faculty and staff, and those who identify as queer (LGBTQ). President Hart also engaged Rankin & Associates Consulting to conduct a survey, guided by the task force, to collect and interpret data from across the university.

The Rankin & Associates report follows. It provides raw data from the 2,693 survey respondents (Figure 1) and the consultants’ presentation of the data to identify areas of success and areas in which Temple can improve its campus climate for its LGBTQ members. Rankin & Associates’ assessment of the data and recommendations arise from the firm’s experience within
the broad context of university communities across the nation. Temple University will further evaluate the survey outcomes within its own context to apply the data findings to strategies that ensure continued progress.

Figure 1: Survey respondents by primary campus status.

Key Findings and Suggested Action Steps

The survey revealed overall satisfaction with the campus climate: 81% of the total number of survey respondents responded that they were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate on campus with respect to LGBTQ issues (Figure 2). Among heterosexual respondents, 84% indicated they were “comfortable” or “very comfortable,” while 74% of LGBTQ respondents shared this assessment of the campus climate. Similarly high percentages of satisfaction are reflected in responses related to the classroom environment, on-campus housing, curricular content, departments, schools and colleges, and administrative units.

Figure 2: Comfort with overall campus environment with respect to LGBTQ issues by primary campus status.
A smaller, but still significant, percentage of respondents (13%) reported experiencing incidents of discriminatory action, harassment or offensive behavior on campus due to their gender, age, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity or other factors (Figure 3), and 28% responded that they had witnessed or been made aware of such incidents (Figure 4). Additionally, respondents indicated that reporting and intervention in such circumstances is low compared with the rate of occurrence. These results speak to a need for Student Affairs, the Provost and Human Resources to notify the university community of the unacceptability of such behavior and to encourage those who experience discriminatory action, harassment or offensive behavior, and those who are aware of such occurrences, to report incidents to the proper personnel and seek support if necessary.

Figure 3: Respondents reporting personal experience of discriminatory action, harassment or offensive behavior on campus due to their gender, age, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity or other factors.

Figure 4: Respondents reporting that they had witnessed or been made aware of incidents of discriminatory action, harassment or offensive behavior on campus due to gender, age, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity or other factors.
LGBTQ respondents highlighted many Temple resources that contributed to their comfort with the campus climate and were important in providing support. These included H.E.A.R.T., Housing and Residential Life, the Tuttleman Counseling Center, Student Affairs, Student Activities, the Queer Student Union and Purple Circle. LGBTQ respondents also indicated that they access other resources in the city, including, including the William Way Community Center, the LGBT Coalition Community Center, PFLAG, Dignity Philadelphia, the LGBT Center at the University of Pennsylvania, and others.

The task force noted the lack of a central source of information on what support was available on campus and throughout Philadelphia to LGBTQ students, staff and faculty, as well as a lack of awareness of university policies in place to protect their interests and rights. The task force has advised President Hart of this need and suggested that University Communications, Human Resources, Student Affairs and other units work to create a central repository of such information and advertise its availability on a consistent basis.

**Conclusion**

Temple University will continue to use data from the Rankin & Associates Consulting report to enhance its efforts to ensure LGBTQ issues are addressed and that the campus environment continues to improve for all segments of the Temple community. The report serves as an important benchmark, demonstrating achievements and challenges that lie ahead.

Temple’s commitment to diversity is deeply rooted in its convictions that everyone deserves unfettered opportunity to succeed by their ability and that the diversity of its community is an essential element of the “free marketplace of ideas” that informs constructive debate, dialogue and innovation in a university setting. The task force is pleased to see this commitment so ably demonstrated in the positive findings from the LGBTQ climate survey, which will form the basis for continued progress.

Respectfully submitted,

The Gender and Sexuality Climate Task Force

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