LGBTQI Concerns Advisory Committee

Report on Current Campus Climate for LGBTQI Faculty, Staff, and Students and Recommendations for Improvement and Future Action

To the Provost and the Vice-President for Student Success

The University at Albany, SUNY

May 6, 2010
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* N.B.: Rather than hardcopy documentation of appendices of reports by external agencies and other supporting materials, this report includes, wherever possible, live URLs embedded in footnotes. Reading this document electronically will allow for easy access to those supporting materials. In other instances, pertinent information has been cut and paste from external documents in footnotes.*
OVERVIEW OF COMMITTEE’S CHARGE AND STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

Historically, the needs and interests of queer persons and populations—that is, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, questioning, and intersexed (LGBTQI) persons and populations—have been underrepresented or even unrecognized in American institutions of higher learning. These interests and needs are both ideological and material in nature. Individuals who self-identify as, or who are recognized or perceived as, gender and sexual minorities must feel individually free and secure to build and participate in communities at both the identity group and general University community levels. The University at Albany, SUNY’s commitment to developing and nurturing a multicultural community rhetorically and, in many cases, materially extends to gender and sexual minorities. However, individuals identifying as belonging to these communities feel that the University must grow and develop even further in these areas. Much work has been done by LGBTQI student organizations on campus to promote such development, but the entire LGBTQI population—including faculty and staff—can aid in efforts to meet both students’ and their own specific needs. Through such a concerted effort, UAlbany is better positioned to meet the objectives it has established for itself through its Mission Statement.

In early Spring 2009 the Offices of the Provost and the Vice President for Student Success formed the LGBTQI Concerns Advisory Committee. This permanent body consists of faculty, staff, and students appointed for a two-year term. Together, this Committee’s members work cooperatively to define, investigate, and propose solutions to issues and problems affecting LGBTQI persons who belong to the UAlbany community. This report is the product of approximately twelve months of research and meetings. The committee’s initial charge has been to identify issues affecting gender and sexual minorities on campus, researching similar conditions and resolutions at peer and ideal peer institutions, and to make recommendations for change. We are submitting to the Offices under whose joint purview this Committee resides in the hopes that our findings and recommendations will be sent forward to the Office of the President, in order to effect material and cultural changes that will benefit this minority population and the University community, as a whole. Upon the Provost’s and the Vice-President for Student Success’ acceptance of this report, the charge of the LGBTQI Concerns Advisory Committee, as a permanent advisory organ, is expected to change from a research and reportage body to that of a body acting in a more advisory capacity with regard to the UAlbany administration’s implementation of this report’s final recommendations.

To fulfill its initial charge, in Spring 2009 the LGBTQI Concerns Advisory Committee identified and discussed pertinent issues that its members felt demanded immediate attention. Subcommittees were formed, each devoted to researching and beginning the process of drafting proposals to address each of the identified issues. The subcommittees conducted research through internet searches of policies and practices affecting LGBTQI faculty, staff, and students at the campuses of peer and ideal peer institutions, as well as through phone and email interviews and solicitations of information with representatives of those institutions. Internal data was collected in a similar mode, by exploring the University at Albany website and via direct contact with representatives and officials from various departments and programs here at UAlbany. As word of this Committee’s work spread through informal channels, other interested parties from the wider University community not officially appointed to this body have come forward to
contribute, in an ad hoc fashion, to various subcommittee and general committee efforts. The following report consists largely of the language and recommendations made by the subcommittees, as well as the larger Committee’s and contributing UAlbany community’s corrections, emendations, and suggestions to those reports. The first section gives a brief overview of some of the challenges facing LGBTQI individuals in the United States, in and out of higher education settings. The structure of the next section of this report reflects the subcommittees’ work. Four subcommittees researched six separate sets of issues, two subcommittees designated as researching two separate issues. For the purposes of avoiding redundancies, one of the sections in the following report combines the findings of two subcommittees. The five sections of research detailed below are: (1) Identifying Available UAlbany Resources for LGBTQI Persons (chaired by Nancy Belowich-Negron) and Campus Training and Education about LGBTQI-Related Issues (chaired by Carol Stenger); (2) Support and Resources for LGBTQI Students and Employees of Color (chaired by D. Ekow King); (3) UAlbany Diversity Policies (chaired by Carol Stenger); (4) Gender Identification and Official SUNY-wide and UAlbany Forms (co-chaired by Errol Millington and Holly Barker Flynn); (5) Creating Gender-Neutral Facilities (co-chaired by Errol Millington and Holly Barker Flynn). The report concludes with the Committee’s specific recommendations for addressing the issues and concerns raised in each subsection, as well as with the Committee’s recommendations for continuing to nurture LGBTQI persons in the UAlbany community. By extension, we feel that the University’s entire population will be nurtured and that UAlbany will be better positioned to grow its mission to achieve and learn through diversity.

The present chair of the Committee, Prof. Eric Keenaghan, requests an audience by the end of July with his successor as chair, the Provost, and the Vice-President for Student Success. At that meeting, this report will be reviewed and initial plans will be generated for “next steps,” including rearticulating the charge of this LGBTQI Concerns Advisory Committee as a permanent and standing committee.

This report is respectfully submitted by the members of the Committee:

Eric Keenaghan, Chair (English)
Jay Oddi, Committee Staff (Residential Life)
Scott Barclay (Political Science)
Holly Barker-Flynn (Residential Life)
Nancy Belowich-Negron (Disability Resources Center)
Michael Boots (University Development)
Elizabeth Conrad (Student Involvement)
Randall Craig (English)
Courtney D’Allaird (Multicultural Student Affairs)
Sue Faerman (Undergraduate Studies)
Lauren Ford (Undergraduate Student)
Lee Friedlander (Undergraduate Student)
D. Ekow King (Multicultural Student Affairs)
Arlene Lev (School of Social Welfare)
Jim Mancuso (Human Resources)
Errol Millington (Facilities Management)
Tamra Minor (Diversity and Affirmative Action)
Richard Mitchell (Undergraduate Student)
Leslie Mortland (Undergraduate Student)
Dana Peterson (Criminal Justice)
Jonny Puglia (Undergraduate Student)
Brenda Seckerson (Employee Assistance Program)
Carey Jean Sojka (Graduate Student)
Carol Stenger (Counseling Center)
Eric Williams (Graduate Student)
Vivien Zazzau (University Libraries)
BACKGROUND: CHALLENGES FACED BY LGBTQI PERSONS

According to the LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index, a self-reporting national assessment tool used by higher education institutions in the United States and targeting student and prospective student consumers, the University at Albany has an overall ranking of four out of five stars. In matters of “sexual orientation,” this institution has received five out of five stars; but in matters of gender expression, it has received only three out of five stars.\(^1\) Relative to the overall rankings of the University at Buffalo (2.5 out of 5 stars, overall) and Binghamton University (4 out of 5 stars, overall) and Stony Brook University (3.5 out of 5 stars, overall), UAlbany’s overall rankings match or exceed those of our immediate peer institutions, the other SUNY research centers.\(^2\) Evidently, the UAlbany community has been doing important work. However, there is much more work to do. Because they are self-reported, these statistics reflect our own positive outlook and assessment of what has been achieved. Moreover, the determining assessment categories used to calculate the overall values are based primarily on the University’s ability to meet the needs of LGBTQI students. Consequently, these results are, admittedly, a little skewed. Indeed, this Committee has discovered that much work still needs to be done to meet the needs of all LGBTQI persons at UAlbany. Much of that work to better the experience and campus climate for LGBTQI persons and the University community, generally, are particularly related to concerns affecting LGBTQI faculty and staff. Student organizations and individuals have done an excellent job in laying the groundwork and in proving just how willing University administration has been to help them address their needs and concerns. Still, it is the purpose of this Committee to establish more of an apparatus for solidarity between students and faculty and staff, so that the entire LGBTQI and even the general UAlbany populations can benefit from progressive work. Moreover, we have found that the University should make a special effort to address concerns affecting two often overlooked segments of the campus’s queer population: (1) LGBTQI persons of color; and (2) all transgender, transsexual, intersexed persons.

The imperative that we continue to do more as a University community is underscored when we take into consideration the general national climate affecting LGBTQI persons’ lives. That climate shapes these persons’ experience both prior to and during their tenure at our University. The following narrative and statistics do not pretend to be totalizing. We are providing this information merely to impress upon UAlbany’s upper administration the incredible and, at times, dire challenges facing LGBTQI persons in the United States, both in and out of higher education settings. Supporting this population on a multiple of levels—institutional, educational, cultural, infrastructural, climatic—is of the utmost importance if our institution is to: better serve the University committee; make our institution more attractive to prospective LGBTQI students and family, staff, and faculty; and fulfill the University’s 2009 Going Forward Plan and its larger Mission to serve a diverse community.

\(^1\) The details of the criteria determining the UAlbany ranking for both “sexual orientation” and “gender expression” can be found at: [http://www.campusclimateindex.org/details/premium.aspx?ID=270](http://www.campusclimateindex.org/details/premium.aspx?ID=270)

\(^2\) The overall values for all self-reporting institutions, including the SUNY research centers, can be seen at: [http://www.campusclimateindex.org/search/default.aspx?Status=Edit](http://www.campusclimateindex.org/search/default.aspx?Status=Edit) From that webpage, details about the determining criteria can be easily accessed through accompanying links.
We know from current research that the LGBTQI population is estimated to constitute between 12-18% of the national population. Despite these formidable statistics, the federal government’s Defense of Marriage Act has foreclosed the possibility of nationally recognized same-sex marriages. Many state governments, including New York State, continue to wrestle with expanding benefits to domestic partnerships by legalizing same-sex marriages. Formidable political and religious opposition confronts advocates of gay marriage, participation in the military, adoption, health care and other vital social issues.

Not only are sexual and gender minorities one of the last groups in the United States to be offered full civil rights protections, but they also suffer one of the highest incidents of violence. The suicide rate among LGBTQI teenagers is the highest among any other groups. This holds especially true in university and college populations. “Because of their sexual orientation, 86.2% of LGBT [sic] students have been verbally harassed, 44.1% have been physically harassed and 22.1% have been assaulted” (GLSEN [Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network], 2007 National survey).³ These numbers have more than tripled since the same survey in 2003. Though striking, these statistics are not entirely reliable in and of themselves: they reflect the fact that increasingly LGBTQI youth are coming out at early age. Consequently, these youth are more likely to be victims of such violence; and they are more inclined, culturally, to talk openly about and to report incidences of violence, homophobia, and transphobia.

Two recent studies regarding the experiences of young people who identify as LGBTQI and ALANA (i.e., of Asian, Latin, African, and Native American or multi-racial heritage) have been released. In 2006, Gender Public Advocacy Coalition (GenderPAC) released its first human rights report on gender-based violence. That document, 50 Under 30: Masculinity & the War on America’s Youth, records an underreported tide of violence against predominantly Black and Latina/o transgender and gay youth. This report has quickly became the standard for documenting such attacks, and has been used by the U.S. House of Representatives Hate Crimes Subcommittee, the federal Hate Crimes Coalition, and the International Association of Police Chiefs. In 2008, this report was reissued and updated under the title of 70 Under 30, to account for the addition of 20 additional unsolved murders that had occurred in the interim since the report’s first issuance.⁴

Our own University is not immune to such violence directed against non-heteronormative gender or sexual expression or identification. For instance, in the summer of 2009 specific offices in the Social Sciences Building were the targets of a sexuality-related hate crime, vandalized with homophobic and misogynistic slurs. Such events and conditions offend the very spirit of the University’s Mission, which is intent on not just recognizing but also nurturing the full diversity of its population. The “Going Forward Plan” (January 12, 2009), a collaborative work of 250+

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³ The GLSEN report is the benchmark study to which most educational institutions tend to refer. The Executive Summary of the GLSEN 2007 National School Climate Survey can be accessed at: http://www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/file/000/001/13061.pdf

⁴ An electronic version of the updated 2008 report is no longer easily accessible online. For a pdf of GenderPac’s classic report 50 Under 30: Masculinity & the War on America’s Youth, follow the following link: http://iambecauseweare.files.wordpress.com/2007/05/50u30.pdf
faculty, staff, students and alumni to rearticulate and update that Mission, makes a number of recommendations that seem particularly relevant to this committee’s goal:

1. To prepare our students for the challenges of the 21st century.
2. To promote a climate that supports the success of faculty and staff.
3. To advance the various missions of the University.

These primary goals were followed by relevant action steps:

1. **Increasing excellence in education and student experience**
   - A1. Learning and applying diverse perspectives in an increasingly globalized world.
   - A2. Enhance awareness of multicultural, international, and other diversity in co-curricular activities.

2. **Supporting our faculty and staff**
   - B1. Invest in, and work to retain, our high quality faculty and staff. Develop support systems and mentoring opportunities to assist faculty career planning and development, recognizing the different life stages, roles and career paths of various individuals.

3. **Enhancing our resources. Improving communication**
   - C1. Enhance new funding through partnerships and grants.
   - C2. Enhance University development efforts to enhance philanthropic resources and university endowment.
   - C3. Articulate clear ideas for fundraising priorities.
   - C4. Reach out to alumni more effectively as a donor base.

4. **Articulating and promoting our mission**
   - D1. Incorporating our commitment to diversity
   - D2. Allocate resources that build on strengths

As a community, we can better work toward these objectives if we include the *entire* University population. In the interest of promoting a healthier working and living environment for all LGBTQI individuals at UAlbany, and encouraging a sense of security and well-being among all our faculty, staff, and students, this Committee has identified and researched five related fields of interest and concern relating to LGBTQI persons. The findings of that research immediately follow. This Committee’s final recommendations, constituting the last major section of this report, are based on, and have emerged out of discussions of, those subcommittee findings.
REVIEW OF UALBANY LGBTQI-RELATED CAMPUS CLIMATE

1. Identifying Available UAlbany Resources for LGBTQI Persons and Campus Training and Education about LGBTQI-Related Issues

Before any recommendations for first steps and longer range plans could be proposed, the members of the LGBTQI Concerns Advisory Committee perceived a need to excavate already existing resources for LGBTQI persons and groups at UAlbany. Indeed, the need for developing better publicity for, and higher visibility of, LGBTQI resources is attested to by the simple fact that many necessary resources exist at UAlbany yet are not networked in a way easily accessible to members of the University community, prospective students, and the general public.

Part 1: Identifying existing resources and successes
At this time, the University at Albany has taken some progressive first steps to fulfill its ability to address the needs of its LGBTQI population. These achievements, excepting those specifically related to training and education (which follow immediately below, in Part 2), include:

• University-wide Organization: The Offices of the Provost and of Student Success created the LGBTQI Concerns Advisory Committee in Spring 2009. The Commission of Affirmative Action functions as an “umbrella” organization to address all issues and concerns facing minority populations on the UAlbany campuses, including LGBTQI minorities.

• Student Organizations and Events: The Student Association has a paid position in Gender & Sexuality Concerns, and Multicultural Student Success has a paid graduate assistantship in GLBTQ Concerns [sic]. In addition, the Pride Alliance is a longstanding SA supported organization. Increased student participation in these organizations has promoted the University’s annual hosting of a series of events during National Coming Out Week, as well as the Annual Northeast LGBTQ Conference [sic]. The first Lavender Graduation was held in Spring 2009 for LGBTQI students, friends, faculty, allies and family members. At the time of this writing, another is currently planned for Spring 2010. The University also hosts an annual Alternative Prom for high school students from throughout the region. Lastly, Campus Center 322 has been designated as an LGBTQ Resource Center [sic], currently staffed through Work Study by a graduate assistant who reports to the Office of Multicultural Student Success. At this time, this Resource Center does not have an operating or programming budget. It is staffed by interns and two student volunteers. However, the LGBTQ Resource Center has been guaranteed a space within the planned new Campus Center building.

• Faculty and Staff: On April 6, 2010, the LGBTQI Faculty and Staff Association held its inaugural luncheon. The LGBTQI Faculty and Staff Association is a voluntary organization open to membership by any employee of UAlbany who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersexed, or otherwise queer. Much like Alianza Latina and the Black Faculty and Staff Association, the LGBTQI Faculty and Staff Association does not serve the University in an administrative capacity. Rather, its current mission is threefold: (1) To build a network among all LGBTQI employees to supply both professional support and a sense of community both to those who have worked at UAlbany for years and for new faculty and staff members; (2) To make
LGBTQI faculty and staff visible so as to reinforce and strengthen a queer-friendly campus climate, and to supply representative voices when needed by administration, departments and programs, and students for bettering that climate; (3) To supply a point of contact and outreach between the UAlbany campus and other Capital District queer communities, through educative and cultural programs (reading series, film screenings, community work).

- **Unions and Benefits**: UUP, the faculty and staff union, now has both a local and a statewide GLBTQ Concerns Committee. Carol Jewell chairs the local GLBTQ Concerns Committee [sic]. The University also offers domestic partnership benefits.
- **Publicity about LGBTQI Issues**: The Office of Student Affairs hosts a webpage identifying LGBTQI Resources for students. This collection includes a page defining “lesbian,” “gay,” “transgender,” “queer,” and other terms for the general population, as well as pages of LGBTQI Friendly Contacts in various offices and departments and external sources for support in the Albany and wider national communities. In the interest of educating students and serving the LGBTQI population, Residential Life has appointed a point person for students with gender identity concerns and is also investigating the possibility of gender-neutral housing (see Section 5 of this report, below).
- **Community Outreach and Media Relations**: The Office of Media Relations sponsors a webpage identifying Faculty Experts on Gay and Lesbian Issues [sic]. Only four are listed: Carl Bon Tompo (History), George Broadwell (Anthropology), Arlene Istar Lev (School of Social Welfare), and Andi Lyons (Theater).
- **Infrastructure and Other Development**: Our University Police Department is developing an Anti-Bias training video for police officers, as there are no others available. Facilities Management is planning for gender-neutral bathrooms on the campus with future renovation projects.

**Part 2: Training and education about LGBTQI-related issues**

An important part of the implementation and execution of diversity policies and guidelines, as well as of strengthening and growing the resources available for LGBTQI faculty, staff, and students, includes a thorough account and assessment of the training and education programs currently available at the University at Albany. This section of the report outlines the LGBTQI-related training and education programs currently operating at our University.

**Ongoing Training Programs:**
- **Safe Space Training (Belowich-Negron, Fall 2009)**: In order to create a safe space for the LGBTQI community at UAlbany, the Vice President for Student Success initiated the Safe Space Project in Spring 2009. This program consists of a 4-hour training program to help participants better understand the needs and concerns of the LGBTQI community. These trained allies are visible supporters and advocates of LGBTQI members of the UAlbany community. Safe Space training sessions are open to faculty, staff and students

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5 For the Office of Student Affairs’ resource page for LGBTQI students, see: [http://www.albany.edu/studentaffairs/lgbt/index.shtml](http://www.albany.edu/studentaffairs/lgbt/index.shtml)

and are held monthly throughout the year. In addition, a training session can be requested for groups of 15 or more in a class, department, or organization. Persons who complete this training are given a “Safe Space” sticker to display on their office doors. The training sessions are facilitated by University administrators along with a representative of the Gender and Sexuality Concerns Department of Student Association.

**University Counseling Center:** The University Counseling Center has a credentialed sexuality specialist on staff, quite unusual for any university or college, who provides sexuality education and other health promotion programs for the UAlbany community. Recent staff trainings include:
- Division of Student Success – Two colloquiums on working with LGBTQ students (Stenger, Fall 2008)
- University Health Center staff- Training on Healthcare Issues in the LGBTQ Community (Stenger, Spring 2009)
- University Police Department- two trainings on working with the LGBTQ Community (Stenger, fall 2009 & Marnin, spring 2009)

In addition, this staff member directs a peer program entitled Project SHAPE (Sexual Health And Peer Education). This group of 35 student volunteers takes an accredited training course and, along with the Director, provides over 125 educational programs each year for the University community on topics including HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections, communication with partners, healthy relationships, and LGBTQI topics. Ongoing health promotion theme weeks that address LGBTQI topics include:
- Annual “Sexuality Week” programs (Middle Earth/Project SHAPE)
- Annual “Mixin’ Up the Sex Week: Contemporary Issues In Sexuality” programs (Project SHAPE), which has run for three year
- Annual “World AIDS Week” programs (Project SHAPE), which has run for approximately 13 years
- Annual “Sex Sense Week” programs (Project SHAPE and Sexual Assault Resource Center), a rather new program that is geared and advertised toward students new to UAlbany

The Counseling Center also provides LGBTQ training for peer educators:
- RA Courses- one 2-hour class session: LGBTQ 101 (Stenger, ongoing)
- Project SHAPE: Sexual Health & Peer Education program training course: two weeks on LGBTQI Issues (Stenger, ongoing)
- Middle Earth Peer Assistance Program training course: one 3-hour class session on LGBTQI issues (various presenters)

The Counseling Center offers an LGBTQI support group facilitated by a staff psychologist (Wright, ongoing). Lastly, the Middle Earth Peer Assistance program operates out of the Counseling Center and offers a hotline for students to call in anonymously to talk to a peer counselor about concerns that often include sexuality related issues, in terms of the broad definition of the term “sexuality” including all matters of sexual health.

**Office of Diversity and Affirmative Action:** In collaboration with the Office of Human Resources, a sexual harassment prevention program will be launched in Fall 2010. This program will train persons across campus as sexual harassment advisors.

**Student Groups:** The University’s Student Association has a Gender and Sexuality Concerns Department and an LGBTQ student group, the Pride Alliance. Both groups
offer educational programs on campus such as Coming Out Week events, Transgender Remembrance Day, the Lavender Graduation (offered in coordination with the Office of Multicultural Student Success), and various Pride events.

**Academic Coursework:**

- **LGBTQ Minor** [sic]: There are a variety of academic courses offered at the University that cover issues pertaining to sexual and gender identity and expression as well as the opportunity for students to fulfill a minor in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Studies. This minor is offered through the Women’s Studies Department, and was launched in Fall 2008. Professors Chris Bose, Vivien Ng, Eric Keenaghan, and others who research LGBTQI issues are providing instruction for its courses. The LGBTQ minor requires a minimum of 18 graduation credits, and requires such courses as Introduction to Lesbian and Gay Studies, Introduction to Feminisms and Sociology of Race, Gender, and Class. Topics include the history of lesbian and gay culture(s) in the United States, lesbian and gay civil rights movements, questions of sexual identity formation in historical and cultural contexts, lesbian and gay literature, and how sexual and gender minority communities have responded to societal issues such as racism, classism, sexism, healthcare crises, and anti-gay violence.

- **Human Sexuality Courses:** In addition to the LGBTQ minor, there are two general human sexuality courses offered: one in the Psychology Department and one in the Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology. Also, a course is offered through the School of Public Health on AIDS/HIV, and an advanced practice graduate course specifically addressing LGBTQI issues, is offered through the School of Social Welfare under the course rubric of “Sexual Identity and Social Work Practice.”

- **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Clinical Emphasis (in development):** The School of Social Welfare is in the process of developing a clinical emphasis in Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. This is a graduate-level professional degree program, based in and expanding on a generalist social work curriculum. It will focus on enhancing the skills of Social Work students in working with LGBTQI minorities.

**Part 4: Problems that need to be addressed**

Despite the above achievements, the University can do more to improve the experience of its LGBTQI population. Much of what needs to be done can begin with one simple step: consolidating information about available resources, support, and initiatives. Accessing information about any of the above often means interested parties need to hunt for and research available resources and programs already in operation. The LGBTQI Resources webpage by the Division of Student Success supplies a model for consolidating in a visible and user-friendly way existing publicity mechanisms and resources. Implementing this model to include the interests, needs, successes, and programming for LGBTQI faculty and staff, in addition to LGBTQI student, would help coordinate the flow of information and resources among all portions of the queer community at every UAlbany campus. Moreover, it would help build bridges between that minority population, the rest of the University, and eventually the surrounding Capital District.

Specific suggestions about how to develop training and education, generally, and some of the above-listed programs, specifically, follow in the *Final Recommendations* at the end of this report.
2. Support and Resources for Students and Employees of Color

LGBTQI students at the University at Albany are anything but a homogeneous group. Gender and sexual minority communities benefit from the same level of diversity we find in both the university community and the larger community beyond our campus. Information regarding best practices for creating safe and supportive environs for LGBTQI students has increased immensely over the past twenty years. However, the majority of research on LGBTQI students has focused on the overall experiences of what is perceived as a singular group, rather than the experiential differences among variegated queer minorities. Very often, those differences are based on queer individuals’ class, gender, racial, ethnic, or national backgrounds or some combination thereof. This section of the report details resources and support specifically available to UAlbany LGBTQI students of color, including students of Asian, Latino, African, Native American and multi-racial heritage. In 2008 GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, published its Shared Differences report on the experiences of LGBTQI students of color. This report included significant data regarding the impact of a non-supportive environment on LGBTQI middle school and high students, generally, and LGBTQI students of color, specifically. It also includes recommendations to improve the situation. Considering the details of that report and the details noted above about the particular violence and estrangement faced by LGBTQI youth of color (see page 6), it is imperative that we especially assess how we are currently meeting, or failing to meet, these individuals’ needs. The resources listed below do not duplicate those listed in the preceding section; rather, they specify resources pertaining specifically to LGBTQI students of color. It should also be noted that, as far as this Committee has been able to discern, UAlbany’s faculty and staff who identify or are perceived as both LGBTQI and ALANA do not have access to any special resources, apart from those already available to LGBTQI individuals (detailed above, in the preceding section).

Part 1: Resources and support currently available specifically to LGBTQI students of color:

The limited resources available to LGBTQI and ALANA students are also available to students who identify as members of each of these groups, separately. Based on the extensive research done by one of our subcommittees, it is a very short list that specifically serves the intersectional needs of students who identify as both ALANA and LGBTQI.

Presently, there is just one student group affiliated with the Student Association that meets this intersectional population’s plural needs: the Albany State Hues Alliance (ASHA), which is approximately one and a half years old. Students who identify as LGBTQI and ALANA might also participate in the Student Association-funded Pride Alliance, a general LGBTQI organization, or any one of the 20 undergraduate groups funded by SA that focus on culture and politics specific to ALANA students. However, it has not been uncommon for LGBTQI students of color to experience homophobia, heterosexism, and transphobia exhibited by other members of those organizations. (Note that this exclusionary problem among LGBTQI groups is not

7 For the GLSEN report, follow the link below:
exclusive to UAlbany, but is typical of queer communities, as well as of activist groups, on and off college campuses. It is a historically documented blindspot that we hope to begin to redress among all our LGBTQI students, faculty, and staff here at UAlbany.

In addition, the Division of Student Success website makes available the brochure from the SA’s Office of Gender and Sexuality Concerns. Included in that brochure is a statement regarding diversity within the LGBTQI community. While the presence of this statement is admirable, more needs to be done to bring representation of LGBTQI persons of color to the forefront. The Office of Multicultural Student Success has recently increased its staff to include two graduate assistants (GAs). One GA serves as the coordinator of the newly established Gender and Sexuality Resource Center (GSRC) (mentioned in the previous section), while the other serves as the coordinator of the newly established Multicultural Resource Center (MRC). Both centers are located on the 3rd floor of the campus center. The OMSS website includes information regarding support for LGBTQI students and students of color, but its mission statement does not include a support statement for LGBTQI persons. However, the Director of OMSS has noted that the site is supposed to be updated and reworded to include a support statement for LGBTQI students of color.

**Part 2: Off-campus resources and support for LGBTQI students, faculty, and staff:**
Similarly, there are very limited resources in the immediate Capital District area for persons from the UAlbany community who identify as both LGBTQI and ALANA:

- In Our Own Voices, Inc.
- Programs and Services for LGBT Communities of Color
- 245 Lark Street
- Albany, NY 12210

- Whitney M Young Jr. Health Center
- GMOCA (Gay Men of Color Alliance)
- Y-GMOCA (Young Gay Men of Color Alliance)
- CATS (Colored American Transgendered Society)
- 920 Lark Drive
- Albany, NY

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8 The website for In Our Own Voices: [http://www.inourownvoices.org/](http://www.inourownvoices.org/)

9 The website for the Whitney M Young Health Center:
3. UAlbany Diversity Policies

When examining the policies and statements of the University at Albany related to diversity and issues of LGBTQI equity, one of our first tasks was to review both federal and New York State law. Then, we examined our own institution’s policies to see where they meet and even go beyond the letter of the law.

Part 1: Review of federal, state, and local laws and ordinances

Summary: There is no Federal law specifically outlawing workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. New York State law offers protection from discrimination to all groups identified by the Federal Government, and it extends equal protection to prohibit discrimination based on actual or perceived sexual orientation. In addition, NYS will recognize same sex marriages performed in other states on equal terms with heterosexual marriages.

Federal Law:

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC): A workforce void of discrimination based on Age, Disability, Wage Compensation, National Origin, Pregnancy, Race, Color, Sex, Religion, Retaliation, Protected Veteran Status, Sexual Harassment and Disability. (Does not include Sexual Orientation.)

The United States Department of Labor (USDOL) and the Office of Federal Contracts Compliance Program (OFCCP) both endorse the EEOC and are based on the following:

- **Executive Order 11246**: Prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.
- **Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act (Later, Section 504)**: Federal contractors to take affirmative action to employ and advance in employment individuals with disabilities.
- **Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967**: Protects certain applicants and employees 40 years of age and older from discrimination on the basis of age in hiring, promotion, discharge, compensation, and terms, conditions or privileges of employment.
- **Vietnam Era Veterans’ Readjustment Assistance Act (VEVRAA) (Later, the Jobs for Veterans Act)**: Federal contractors to take affirmative action to employ and advance in employment qualified special disabled veterans, veterans of Vietnam era, and any other veterans who served on active duty during war.
- **Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002 (JVA and an Amendment to VEVRAA)**: Revised and improved employment, training, and placement services furnished to veterans as well as formed new categories of protected Veterans for purposes of self-identification and reporting.
- **Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)**: Prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities.
- **ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) September 25, 2008**: The definition of a disability should be construed in favor of broad coverage of individuals to the maximum extent permitted by terms of the ADA.
- **Regulations at 41 CFR 60**: Outlines requirements for Affirmative Action Programs.
• **Title VII of the Human Rights Act of 1964 and later Title IX (enacted 1972):** Prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin. Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex.

• **The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009:** The bill amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by stating that the 180-day statute of limitations for filing an equal-pay lawsuit regarding pay discrimination resets with each new discriminatory paycheck.

**New York State Law:**

• **The Sexual Orientation Non-Discrimination Act (SONDA):** Effective as of January 2003. Prohibits discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, education, credit, and civil rights on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation.

• **Executive Order:** In May 2008, Governor Patterson issued an executive order directing New York State agencies to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states on equal terms with heterosexual marriages.

• **Executive Order:** In June 2009, Governor Patterson issued an executive order that protects New York State workers from discrimination and wrongful termination based on gender identity and gender expression.

• **The Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA):** A bill that would outlaw discrimination in New York State based on gender identification and/or expression. This bill has passed the State Assembly but is stalled in the State Senate.

**City of Albany Ordinance:**

• **City of Albany’s Human Rights Ordinance:** Amendment to the Human Rights Ordinance was passed by Common council in June 2003 to include the protection of civil rights inclusive of “gender identity and sexual expression.”

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**Part 2: Review of UAlbany diversity policies and statements**

The University at Albany’s diversity policies and statements – some of which go beyond state and federal laws – can be found in the following:

• **Office of Diversity and Affirmative Action Mission Statement** – “In keeping with the representative workforce goal set by UAlbany, the Office of Diversity and Affirmative Action will continue to assist in the recruitment, hiring, training, and promotion into all job levels the most qualified persons without regard to race, color, religion, gender, national origin, marital status, ancestry, sexual orientation, disability, status as a Vietnam-era veteran, age, or citizenship. To ensure a discrimination-free work environment, the ODAA will neither condone nor tolerate practices that discriminate against any person employed or seeking employment at UAlbany on the basis of race, color, gender, religion, marital status, national origin, ancestry, age, or disability.”

  Note that sexuality (actual or perceived) is not included in the last sentence.

• **Undergraduate Bulletin** - Includes “Principles of a Just Community Statement” - “Equality is a necessary part of any university that claims to be a democratic institution. Distinctions based on irrelevant differences are ruled out. Ascriptive characteristics including but not

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10 [http://www.albany.edu/affirmative_action/](http://www.albany.edu/affirmative_action/)
limited to race, religion, gender, class, disability, ethnic background, sexual orientation, age, or disability determine neither the value of individuals nor the legitimacy of their views.”

- **Graduate Bulletin** – includes “Principles of a Just Community Statement”
- **Student Handbook** – Includes “Principles of a Just Community Statement”
- **Conflict Resolution and Civic Responsibility Mission Statement** – “We are fully committed to promoting justice and to insuring that all students are extended a full and equal place in our community regardless of their abilities, race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, or religion.”
- **Faculty/Staff University Handbook** – “The University at Albany does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, creed, disability, marital status, national origin, race, sex, or sexual orientation.” Also includes “Principles of a Just Community Statement.”
- **Undergraduate applications** (SUNY application and Common Application) Neither application is produced by UAlbany; they are SUNY-wide documents. Neither addresses sexuality or gender identity or expression in its statements. This issue is taken up at greater length in the next section reviewing this Committee’s research findings.
- **Graduate applications**: Similar to the undergraduate applications, no explicit mention of non-discriminatory practices related to sexuality or gender identity or expression is included. Below is the language found on the three graduate applications:
  - **Degree** - “University at Albany, State University of New York does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, creed, disability, marital status, national origin, race, or sex. Inquiries concerning the policy should be directed to the Office of Diversity and Affirmative Action.”
  - **Non-Degree** - “University at Albany, State University of New York does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, creed, disability, marital status, national origin, race, or sex. Inquiries concerning the policy should be directed to the Office of Diversity and Affirmative Action.”
  - **Graduate Applications for International Students** – “University at Albany does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, creed, disability, marital status, Vietnam era or special disabled veteran status, national origin, race, sex, or sexual orientation. Inquiries concerning the policy should be directed to the Office of Diversity and Affirmative Action.”

- **Office of Human Resources Management**:


12 [http://www.albany.edu/graduatebulletin/general_information.htm#just](http://www.albany.edu/graduatebulletin/general_information.htm#just)


15 [http://www.albany.edu/senate/handbook/section1.html#AFFIRMATIVE_ACTION_AND_EQUAL.OPPORTUNITY](http://www.albany.edu/senate/handbook/section1.html#AFFIRMATIVE_ACTION_AND_EQUAL.OPPORTUNITY)

16 Note that issues pertaining to applications are reprised below in Section 4 (“Official SUNY-wide and UAlbany Forms”).
**Employment Application** - Classified Service must file an employment application which states on the bottom of the first page: “The University at Albany is an EO/AA/IRCA/ADA Employer”. Professional staff and faculty submit resumes/vitas for consideration of employment.

**Advertising** – All University job vacancy announcements include the following phrase: “The University at Albany is an EO/AA/IRCA/ADA employer.”

- **Employee Benefits** – Provided by New York State and administered by the University.
  - **Retirement**: Open to employees of the University. Anyone full time must be enrolled in a retirement plan within 90 days. Retirement benefits do recognize domestic partners and “same sex marriages performed in other states.”
  - **Health Care**: The health insurance benefits provided by the State of New York and administered by the University recognize domestic partners and same-sex marriages performed in other states or countries.
  - **Insurance**: The life insurance benefits will accept any named beneficiary, subject to laws of New York State.

- **Website Pages**:
  1. One reference to protected groups is a link to “legal/illegal” questions. The following protected groups are mentioned: age, birthplace or national origin, race/color, gender, religion/creed, citizenship, marital/parental status, handicap, physical data. No mention is made of sexuality (whether perceived or self-identified) or gender expression.\(^{17}\)
  2. Job vacancy notices are posted on the HR website and include the phrase: “The University at Albany is an EO/AA/IRCA/ADA employer.”
  3. “New York State Employees Faculty and Professional Staff Vacancies Recruitment and Selection Procedures” – “The University does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, creed, veteran status, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, physical and mental disability, or any other group or class against which discrimination is prohibited by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, New York State Human Rights Law Article 15, and other applicable state or federal laws.”

**Part 3: Problems that need to be addressed**

Among the problems that need to be addressed in relationship to diversity policies and administrative forms is the need to fill in the gaps identified above where sexuality (actual or perceived) and gender expression are not explicitly addressed. This includes: the SUNY-wide undergraduate and graduate applications, the UAlbany website on “legal/illegal” questions and sensitivity to diversity, the ODAA mission statement.

\(^{17}\) [hr.albany.edu/content/legalqtn.asp](http://hr.albany.edu/content/legalqtn.asp)
But more is needed than attending to those few spots where sexuality and gender expression are omitted because of oversights. In 2008-2009, the campus was engaged in a process of developing a shared vision and definition for diversity that would guide efforts moving forward. Data collected reveal an overwhelming desire to broaden the university’s definition of diversity and to become a more inclusive campus that promotes and values individual group differences. The key to a successful diversity initiative is the valuing and managing of differences in such a way that the results lead to inclusion. Currently, there is no explicit, inclusive statement of the University’s commitment to diversity made annually. While the “Principles for a Just Community” can still be found posted in many public places (office walls, websites, the student handbook, the undergraduate bulletin, etc.), it has been somewhat dormant for many years. In addition, it does not include gender identity/expression in the delineation of ascriptive characteristics.\textsuperscript{18}

In terms of diversity related policies, the faculty handbook does contain policies on Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity, Equal Access, and Sexual Harassment.\textsuperscript{19} However, none of these policies includes gender identity/expression. In addition, as already indicated, these policies are published only in the Faculty/Staff Handbook, which could imply that they are applicable only to these staff and not to the entire campus community.

As a campus we have begun to behave in a more inclusive manner ahead of actually documenting such behavior and practices. As a result, we now need to review and update many of our websites and forms to insure inclusive language is being used consistently. As an example, as mentioned in the previous section on LGBTQI and ALANA students, the mission of the Office of Multicultural Student Services as stated on their website is not inclusive.\textsuperscript{20} It explicitly mentions ALANA [African, Latino, Asian, Native American] but not LGBTQI students, despite the recent hiring of a graduate student whose responsibilities are in this area. Similarly, the EOP website refers only to “students of all races” (emphasis added).\textsuperscript{21} Without more inclusive language, readers may have the mistaken impression that EOP focuses only on race and ethnicity. The mission statement of the Office of Conflict Resolution and Civic Responsibility includes sexual orientation, but does not mention gender identity or gender expression.\textsuperscript{22} One final example, in Question 16-17 of the Diversity/Disabilities section of the

\textsuperscript{18} The copy for The Principles for a Just Community is on the following webpage: http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/principles_of_just_community.html

\textsuperscript{19} These three policies are detailed in one section of the Faculty and Staff Handbook, online at: http://www.albany.edu/senate/handbook/section1.html#AFFIRMATIVE_ACTION_AND_EQUAL_OPPORTUNITY

\textsuperscript{20} The URL for the homepage for the Office of Multicultural Student Success is: http://www.albany.edu/involvement/multicultural/

\textsuperscript{21} The homepage of the Educational Opportunities Program’s (EOP) is: http://www.albany.edu/eop/

\textsuperscript{22} The Office of Conflict Resolution and Civic Responsibility’s Mission Statement is posted at: http://www.albany.edu/judicial/mission.shtml
State New York Application 2010 (the SUNY wide application for admission) states, “The State University seeks to enroll students of diverse racial and ethnic heritage and students with disabilities.” This statement is clearly not inclusive.

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23 The copy below is excerpted from the SUNY-wide 2010 application:

Q. 16 - 17 Diversity/Disabilities

Your responses to questions 16 and 17 are voluntary. The State University of New York will keep your responses confidential and will not use the information provided in a discriminatory manner. The failure to respond to these questions will not subject you to any adverse treatment. The State University seeks to enroll students of diverse racial and ethnic heritage and students with disabilities.
4. Gender Identification, Gender Expression, and Official SUNY-wide and UAlbany Forms
As has been casually and implicitly established throughout this document thus far, the relationship between sexuality and gender expression and gender identification are close, but the terms are not coterminous. Similarly, they do not necessarily result in common minority experiences or socio-cultural challenges. However, simply accepting the distinctions between sexuality and gender expression and gender identification are not enough to fully appreciate the particular challenges and issues facing transgender, transsexual, and intersexed individuals. For this and the following sections, then, it is imperative that we establish a clear definition of the distinction between the terms “gender” and “sex.” Although colloquially the terms “gender” and “sex” are used interchangeably, they are not synonymous. Interchanging one for the other, then, can cause untoward confusion and misunderstanding.

For our purposes, and as is commonly established in LGBTQI activism as well as in the academic fields of feminist and queer studies, the “sex” of a person is determined biologically, and often is construed through primary reproductive characteristics (i.e., genitalia). A binary categorization is used: “male” and “female.” Intersexed persons are individuals whose very anatomical and genetic physiology, by birth, expose the false binary premise of the sex system. Genetically, intersexed persons may have less common sex chromosome combinations (i.e., some combination other than the “norm” of either XX/“female” or XY/“male”). At times, but not always, this may result in a hermaphroditic condition, in which both male and female sex organs are present at birth. (In such cases, often parents and/or medical professionals make sex assignments, effectually choosing and surgically engineering whether the individual will be “male” or “female.”) Alternately, intersexed persons may physiologically present as one sex rather than another at birth, and are thus assigned a sex by their parents and/or medical professionals. However, later in life, often during puberty, their chromosomal sex may cause them to present as the “other” sex.

Unlike the genetic and physiological definition of “sex,” “gender” is a matter of social and cultural construction. Gender can be thought of as a matter of the outward expression of one’s identity, as either “masculine” or “feminine,” whether that expression is based on self-identification or on others’ perceptions. As a perceptual and cultural apparatus, gender—not sex—is actually the lens through which discriminatory, as well as diversity, practices and policies are articulated. The heteronormative and ideologically laden misconception that there are only two sexes is actually responsible, in part, for the problematic belief that there are only two genders, “masculine” and “feminine.” That is to say, the conflation of sex and gender reinforces the very foundations of discrimination and prejudice. As noted above, gender constructs and biases do affect intersexed persons’ lives, often adversely, because of the lack of agency they may have in determining their anatomical sex and thus their perceived gender.

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24 “Gender identification” can be regarded as the manner in which a subject self-identifies or “chooses” (or even refuses) a gender category. In contrast, “gender expression” also encompasses what is known as “perceived gender.” That is, one may not identify in a transgendered fashion but one may be perceived by others—based on the subject’s appearances and/or behavior, or simply based on others’ prejudicial misconstruing of said appearances and/or behavior—as identifying in a transgendered way.
though pre- and post-operative transsexuals themselves elect to use hormonal and/or surgical therapies and sex reassignment procedures to affect their anatomical sex, others’ gender bias and false precepts about gender difference contributes to transphobic attitudes.

For transgendered, transsexual, and intersexed persons, then, the identification of one’s gender status can be problematic. In the settings of higher education institutions, the request to make such identifications are very often made through the apparatus of forms and instructional mechanisms such as Blackboard, and the options conform to a simply binary: a choice between “male” and “female.” Students who do not wish to identify through one of the two terms of the binary risk alienation from the UAlbany community. For a student transitioning from one gender to another, our institution’s reliance upon a binary system of gender identification can create an environment where the student feels “outed,” or forced to disclose their gender identities, to other students in their classes and/or to faculty members. The third “option” is actually to opt out of choosing altogether, and simply not disclose one’s identity. That option, however, is not necessarily a viable one for transgender, transsexual, or intersexed students who may feel forced to choose one of the two specified categories, even though those categories are inadequate identifiers.

**Part 1: Concerns related to official forms and the solicitation or identification of gender identity**

According to the Office of Institutional Research, gender information is collected among other data values and campus statistics shared with many internal and external agencies. For example, demographics are listed on the UAlbany website to give prospective students and their parents a better understanding of the campus environment. Comparative demographics are also disclosed on the website to provide a framework for viewing survey results. Gender is asked during the acquisition of such data through admissions and campus survey processes to ensure that a representative sample has been found. Institutional Research stated that women are more inclined to respond to surveys; thus, it is essential to determine if the responses may include a gender bias.

A common reason why gender is asked is for the purpose of assigning a student to housing. UAlbany has only two options (“male” and “female”). In contrast, some ideal peer institutions, such as University of California at Riverside, have three gender options on their housing application: “male,” “female,” and “gender self-identity.” If a student selects the last option, a dialogue box is opened and the student is asked to “further explain your gender identity.” Ithaca College, another ideal peer institution, has a separate Transgender Housing Request form. This form can be submitted to the Assistant Director for Housing Services and Communication, as well as to the Coordinator for the Center of LGBT Education. Both parties review the form “with a commitment to providing housing that best meets the needs of the student.”

UAlbany has a process in place for addressing the needs of transgender students interested in living in the Residence Halls. For new students, there is a section on the Housing Application that allows students to write in any special housing considerations. If a student writes that she is transgender, Holly Barker-Flynn, Assistant Director of Residential Life and LGBTQ student resources, contacts the student to assess individual needs. For returning students, contact information for the Residential Life LGBTQ resource (Holly Barker-Flynn) is listed on the Student Success LGBTQ resources website.
Part 2: Problems that need to be addressed

Initial data pools to determine the University’s demographic base for faculty and staff is acquired through paperwork provided by Human Resources. Initial data pools to determine the University’s demographic base for its student population are supplied through college applications. Some students choose to complete the Common Application for Undergraduate College Admission, which allows them to apply to 391 member colleges and universities with a single application. Other students applying to SUNY Albany complete the SUNY-wide application. Both of these applications ask prospective students to choose “male” or “female.” This information, whether acquired through Human Resources or the student application process, is fed into our campus database PeopleSoft. According to Mary Beth Salmon, Director of University Application Development (UAD), if a student or employee does not choose a gender, a third option of “unknown” is noted on that record. However, because UAlbany does not generate these applications, they cannot be changed directly by our institution.

But applications are only the point of entry by which student information enters the UAlbany system. Other problems arise when we consider PeopleSoft itself, the system into which that student data is entered. Since PeopleSoft is the primary database feeding each program, department, school, and college within the University, we are bound by its limitations. According to UAD, PeopleSoft is a software package that comes to the University with preset fields. As such, UAlbany is severely limited in its ability to make any changes. While it is possible for our campus to write new codes into the software, the product would need to be manually updated every time the vendor makes a general system update, which occurs six or more times per year. (That is to say, the vendor’s general system updates would erase whatever manual updates the University had made to the preceding version of PeopleSoft.) Therefore, UAD is extremely reluctant to make any customizations.

PeopleSoft also shares this information with many outside agencies, including the federal government and financial lending institutions. Therefore, any changes to widely accepted data fields—such as gender or legal name—could cause delays in processing important information, such as student loans. Understandably, then, various offices at the University—including the Registrar and Financial Aid—are reluctant to endorse any changes to the data management system.

At times, the issue of gender identification can be skirted through students’ or employees’ resort to enter a “preferred name” into the PeopleSoft system. In PeopleSoft, it seems that one can edit the preferred name. However, the preferred name is not linked to other systems. So, in the case of Blackboard and similar applications, the preferred name is not a possible field that individuals can change. Blackboard only allows their primary name—that is the students’ legal, birth name. UAD mentioned that the University is capable of linking the preferred name to Blackboard, but further action toward that end must be coordinated through ITS, and then those preferred names would be pulled from PeopleSoft. Robert Gibson, UAlbany Registrar, raised the concern that this would create two separate lists for faculty members, and such multiple lists could potentially cause problems when entering or changing student grades.
5. Creating Gender-Neutral Facilities

Meeting the needs of transgender, transsexual, and intersexed persons extends beyond matters of official recognition of individuals’ gender expression and identification on official forms. There are also infrastructural issues that have a profound material impact on these individuals’ lives and experience while at UAlbany. Of particular significance is the need for gender-neutral facilities. Those facilities specifically addressed below are toilet rooms, student housing, and locker/changing rooms. In relationship to the following discussion, the term “gender-neutral” signifies the designation of a space as defined by its use rather than by the perceived, expressed, or identified gender of its users. Gender-neutral spaces are inclusive rather than exclusive; there are no parameters set upon the use of the space as related to either gender or sex. Most of the environments on campuses are both sex and gender neutral. The differentiation or calling out of sex and/or gender occurs in a limited set of facilities—those enumerated above—where nudity or the removal of clothing is likely to occur. For some, simply entering a toilet or changing room can be daunting if not perilous. Anticipation of discomfort can be just as stressful as the experience itself. It is in the best interest of the general University population and its transgender, transsexual, and intersexed constituents that we expand the number of gender-neutral spaces, all while doing our very best to safeguard the welfare of gender minorities.

Part 1: Best practices at other institutions

Colleges and universities across the United States and throughout the world are striving to meet the needs of those who require or prefer access to gender-neutral facilities. The narrative below supplies a sketch of current practices at a few peer and ideal peer institutions.

25 Below are online sources pertaining to the necessity of gender-neutral facilities in public settings, including institutions of higher learning:
(1) The National Student Genderblind Campaign: http://www.genderblind.org
(3) “Wrong Bathroom”: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFDaY1sQWQk

26 Online resources researched but not cited below pertaining to gender-neutral statements and proposals include:
(1) Clark University: http://www.genderblind.org/clark.pdf
(2) New York University: http://www.nyu.edu/residential.education/pdfs/article.mixed.sex.pdf
(3) Wheaton College: http://sga.wheatonma.edu/www/?s=gender-neutral+housing+proposal&submit=Go
(4) University of Massachusetts at Amherst: http://www.umass.edu/stonewall/uploads/listWidget/8749/bathroom%20FAQ.pdf
• **Toilet rooms**

  **McGill University:** The Queer Equity website offers an informative explanation of the importance of what a gender-neutral restroom is, why they are an equity issue, and why such access is needed. The website also states McGill’s policy on gender-neutral restrooms and supplies their locations.  

  **University of Arizona:** A “Statement on Restroom Access” is posted on the Office of Institutional Equity’s website that clearly acknowledges the reasons substantiating the need for such facilities and aligns its commitment to supplying such facilities with its gender nondiscrimination policy.

• **Changing Rooms:** Substantially less information is available on gender-neutral changing rooms than for toilet rooms and housing. The following two institutions have re-purposed existing underutilized spaces into gender-neutral changing rooms in order to fill the need for private areas in which a student or employee can comfortably change before and after using athletic or recreational facilities. However, neither has initiated an action plan to

27 In addition, the subcommittee researching this issue supplied a PowerPoint presentation that visually details its findings. Below is a slide from that presentation, wherein a non-exhaustive list of institutions’ with current gender-neutral facilities and practices are clearly and succinctly outlined:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CURRENT PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutions with Gender Neutral Housing and/or LGBTQ Theme Halls:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCLA</td>
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<tr>
<td>UC Riverside</td>
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<tr>
<td>UC Davis</td>
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<tr>
<td>UC Irvine</td>
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<tr>
<td>UC Santa Barbara</td>
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<tr>
<td>USC</td>
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<tr>
<td>UC San Diego</td>
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<tr>
<td>McGill</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Arizona</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Chicago</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUNY Geneseo</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUNY Purchase</td>
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<tr>
<td>Syracuse University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ithaca College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lewis and Clark College</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Pennsylvania</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Southern Maine</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Connecticut</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions with Gender Neutral Toilet Rooms in Non-Residential Areas:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UCLA*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGill*</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Chicago*</td>
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<tr>
<td>UC San Diego*</td>
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<tr>
<td>New College of California</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beloit College</td>
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<tr>
<td>UMass Amherst*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Denotes Schools with Restrooms listed on their Website


29 University of Arizona “Statement on Restroom Access”: [http://equity.arizona.edu/restroom_access](http://equity.arizona.edu/restroom_access)
renovate or construct a new space to meet this need.

**George Washington University:** When the Lerner Health and Wellness Center was in development, the design included a small private locker room with an adjacent restroom to be used by community members and families. The University community used this facility as a locker room and it doubled as a massage therapy room, but it was under-utilized. Therefore, two years ago it was established as the Gender Neutral changing room, but only at times when there were no massage appointments. The space is available for use as a changing room only 15 hours per week. The room remains locked at all times, and is unlocked by a staff member on a per-use basis. Additionally, the LGBT Resource Center is conducting a campus-wide restroom audit and a gender-neutral housing proposal is in the works.  

**University of Nebraska at Lincoln:** Two years ago a small space that had previously been a men’s locker room was designated a gender-neutral locker room. Students initiated the conversion but momentum wasn’t gained until staff backed the idea. The room is unlocked at all times unless it is in use. It serves only as a gender-neutral locker room. The pool, however, can only be accessed through the large gendered locker rooms. There have been no plans to improve access to the pool for individuals who do not wish to enter a gendered space in order to access the pool. *(N.B.: Due to the current conservative climate in the state of Nebraska, no attempts have been made to develop gender-neutral housing, despite student demand and Residential Life’s recognition of the need. UNL, however, has been converting all existing single-stall gendered toilet rooms into gender-neutral toilet rooms, and even built one new one in a non-residential building.)*

• **Residence Halls:** Note that gender-neutral housing is more preferable than what is called “gender blind” options. In gender-neutral housing programs, students have the ability to “opt into” the system. In gender blind housing programs, all students—without any steps taken to secure interest or consent—are put into one housing lottery. None of the institutions below have instituted a gender blind system. Some institutions have been able to address the need for non-traditional housing through the implementation of both LGBTQI theme and special interest housing and gender-neutral housing. Other examples offer only one or the other. Some students desire or require housing in a gender-neutral space but may not be interested in living in an LGBTQI theme hall. A gender-neutral suite or apartment can appeal to a much larger number of student residents than an

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31 University of Nebraska at Lincoln’s Gender-Neutral Locker Room: [http://involved.unl.edu/lgbtqa/trans/facilities.php](http://involved.unl.edu/lgbtqa/trans/facilities.php)
LGBTQI theme hall can. One standout issue regarding gender-neutral housing is the question of whether all suites and apartments should be grouped together or should be dispersed in different residence halls, across the campus. One school of thought suggests that offering gender-neutral options at various locations across student housing is the better alternative, for it does not segregate those who opt for gender-neutral housing from the rest of the residential population. Thus, an integration of gender-neutral housing options into various residential locations can work to change the general student population’s perceptions about gender difference and thus the campus climate.

**SUNY Geneseo:** The 2009-2010 academic year is the first year of Geneseo’s gender-neutral housing pilot program. They have dedicated one entire building, Genessee Hall, to house students in mixed-gender suites and rooms. This is an example of an institution offering all the gender-neutral housing in one collocated area. Currently, freshmen are not invited to participate in this pilot program unless a special request is made and need established. Students choose their own roommate when possible, and no one is required to live in Genessee Hall (it is a housing assignment made by request only). The program has been successful thus far, based on interviews and focus groups conducted by Residential Life. At this time, the results of those interviews and focus groups are not yet available. Prior to the pilot program, Geneseo offered gender-neutral housing at the apartment level in their Saratoga Townhouses. These units offer single rooms only and two private bathrooms. They have been mixed-gender since they opened, but are restricted to juniors and seniors. The pilot program was developed in order to offer traditional suite-style housing at an affordable price to all returning students.32

**SUNY Purchase:** Similar to Geneseo, Purchase began its gender-neutral housing program as a pilot. The 2009-2010 academic year is the program’s third year. As with Geneseo, this housing is offered only to returning students; freshmen are eligible only on special request. Both Geneseo and Purchase have been able to meet the full demand for gender-neutral housing, and so have not had to turn anybody away. Purchase offers apartment options in two different housing complexes on campus. Only one or two apartments are filled per year as part of the gender-neutral program, so the adjacent units are utilized as traditional gender housing. All of the apartments have their own exterior entrance, and there are no signs designating the residents’ sex.33

**University of California at Riverside:** UC Riverside differs from many other institutions because it offers both gender-neutral housing and LGBTQI theme housing. Many colleges and universities only offer one or the other. Both programs were implemented simultaneously four years ago. One or

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32 SUNY Geneseo’s Gender-Neutral Housing descriptions: [http://www.geneseo.edu/residence_life/go_geneseo_edu_hstyles](http://www.geneseo.edu/residence_life/go_geneseo_edu_hstyles)

33 SUNY Purchase’s Special Interest Housing page: [https://www.purchase.edu/Departments/ResLife/specialinteresthousing.aspx](https://www.purchase.edu/Departments/ResLife/specialinteresthousing.aspx)
two entire floors of a building are available each year, to be filled with students who request either the gender-neutral assignment or Stonewall Hall Special Interest Housing. Students who participate in Stonewall Hall live in suites adjacent to gender-neutral suites. Occasionally, there will be one or more beds in gender-neutral housing that need to be filled from the general housing pool. In this instance, one suite will be designated all-male or all-female, and outreach to students will take place in an effort to fill the beds. No one is required to live in gender-neutral housing.  

Part 2: Current conditions, future projects, and problems to be addressed at UAlbany

Renovations requiring new construction would be costly and time-consuming. However, some action has been taken to ameliorate current conditions and to meet the UAlbany community’s need for various gender-neutral facilities. During the Fall 2009 semester, actions were taken by UAlbany to convert all single stall public restrooms on each of the quads from gendered to gender-neutral facilities. Conversions are a non-costly and short-term solution: a simple re-designation of gendered single-stall restrooms (such as the two on the third floor of the PE building) can make a difference A signage change from “men” or “women” to “restroom” and a lock installation are simple measures, easily taken. Currently 22 of the 37 have been successfully converted, complete with newly installed locks and signage. Note that no bathrooms with shower-stalls were converted, only rooms with single-stall toilets.

There are only four gender-neutral washrooms in non-residential buildings on the Uptown Campus. However, there is the possibility of converting approximately 20 more. Even with any future conversions, though, there still will be no gender-neutral toilet room on any of the podium buildings for student use, with the exception of one facility in Green Mountain Coffee shop in the Campus Center.

UAlbany provides a private lockable shower room to anyone who needs it in the basement of University Hall. There is no such facility adjacent either to the PE building or the SEFCU Arena.

Through the Student Success webpage, information is available as to the location of gender-neutral bathrooms in the residential quads.

34 University of California at Riverside’s Gender-Neutral Housing Option: http://out.ucr.edu/campus/gnhousing.htm

35 The matter of appropriate signage is not to be underestimated. Visual images on facilities signs can undesirably reinforce false gender binaries. For that reason, this Committee advocates using entirely gender-neutral signage that makes neither visual nor verbal reference to a gender binary. Such signs lack visual images and simply bear the word “Restroom” or “Locker Room” or “Changing Room,” whichever designation is appropriate to the facility in question.

36 At the time of the meeting on this issue (February 26, 2010), some restrooms in Colonial and State Quads had been converted to gender-neutral facilities. Indian and Dutch Quad are stalled because it requires asbestos abatement.

37 For that listing, see: http://www.albany.edu/studentaffairs/lgbt/restrooms.shtml
More needs to be done to coordinate with Residential Life in order to research current facilities and to explore various housing options that will best meet everyone’s needs.
FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Peer and ideal peer institutions supply strong models for better coordinating resources and improving communication and transparency about issues, events, and resources affecting their LGBTQI populations. Consider some of the common services provided to LGBTQI constituents at other large public universities:

- A physical LGBTQI Center where people could get resources and gather and which coordinates academic programming, initiatives, and scholarship/fellowship awards;
- Websites for LGBTQI Center or Office, complete with said Center or Office’s mission, easy to reach from each institution’s main webpage;
- At least two professional level positions for said LGBTQI Center or Office;
- An ally training program (Safe Zone) that provides its logo online, furnishes a list of trained allies online, and provides the training schedule online;
- Webpage providing campus, local, and national resources;
- Funding for travel opportunities for students to attend conferences;
- A wide variety of educational programming about LGBTQ needs, issues, and concerns.

As outlined above, our University supplies some similar services, including a newly instituted Safe Zone program and various initiatives and educational programs. As we also have seen in several of the preceding sections, immediate peer and ideal peer institutions also supply a means of measuring the strengths and shortcomings of the University’s address of the material and cultural needs of its LGBTQI faculty, staff, and students. When using those comparative measures, often our University has achieved impressive successes. However, in some respects, we fall significantly short. The following recommendations are outlined in two parts. The first consists of major recommendations that encompass filling in major gaps in LGBTQI-related resources, training programs, and initiatives. The second part consists of recommendations that entail fine-tuning and improving existing programs and initiatives. We are confident that the majority of the proposed measures demand an immediate response, and many will be low-cost, or even no-cost, to implement. The LGBTQI Concerns Advisory Committee looks forward to working in conjunction with the University’s upper administration to pursue the implementation of those recommendations accepted by the administration.

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38 Some of the peer and ideal peer institutions reviewed for the following list include: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of Minnesota, University of Maryland, University of Michigan, University of Wisconsin at Madison, and University of South Florida.
1. Recommendations To Create New Bodies and Initiatives to Remedy Major Gaps in UAlbany’s Address of LGBTQI Concerns

(1) Establish a Commission on LGBTQI Equity
We recommend that a Commission on LGBTQI Equity be established. This Commission would have as its express purpose the improvement of the campus climate for diversity within the University at Albany by specifically addressing issues affecting the welfare of LGBTQI members of the University community. It is imperative that such a permanent body exist to address the gaps enumerated in the preceding sections and to monitor the University’s redress of those gaps. Quite possibly, these initiatives could be lost if such address and monitoring is left solely to the current Commission of Diversity and Affirmative Action. A model example of such a commission can be found at our ideal peer institution Pennsylvania State University at State College. The members of this committee would consist of faculty, staff, and student representatives who are appointed in a joint fashion by the Offices of the Provost/Academic Affairs and the Vice President for Student Success (much as this present Committee’s appointments were made in a joint fashion). This Commission should be constituted in such a way that it includes members from a variety of administrative silos and programs, as well as a cross-section of LGBTQI-identified faculty, staff, and students and their allies. This Commission’s charge would be accomplished through the examination of current policies and practices, as well as through the initiation and promotion of programs that would result in a more equitable and supportive environment. This Commission would serve as an advisory group to the President, and would operate on an on-going basis as a standing committee to: 1) monitor, evaluate, and create programs that improve the climate and visibility of the LGBTQI community; 2) examine curricular integration to enhance the teaching and learning environment pertaining to issues affecting the LGBTQI community; 3) serve as a policy review group and develop guidelines for policy development inclusive of guiding principles that would further educate the University community; 4) examine student concerns as they arise with the goal of improving the campus climate and the recruitment, retention and success of LGBTQI students; and 5) examine all employees’ concerns as they arise on matters with regard to sexual and gender expression and identity related to climate, policies and benefits and the recruitment and retention of faculty and staff. From this Commission, ad hoc committees would be drawn to address particular issues, as they arise. This proposed Commission on LGBTQI Equity might become the new manifestation of the present LGBTQI Concerns Advisory Committee, now that we have completed our first charge of researching and assessing the current campus climate and supplying recommendations for improvement.

(2) Initiatives that could fall under the purview of the proposed Commission on LGBTQI Equity, addressed through subcommittees of that body
The recommendations enumerated immediately below might fall under the purview of the above-proposed Commission on LGBTQI Equity. Each of these initiatives would be pursued through the administration and oversight of subcommittees consisting of members appointed to the

39 The website for PennState’s Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Equity can be found at: http://www.equity.psu.edu/clgbte/
Commission, who could work in conjunction with the upper administration. Additionally, interested parties from the rest of the UAlbany community and the LGBTQI Faculty and Staff Association might participate in an ad hoc basis in executing these initiatives.

• **Develop a relocated and expanded LGBTQI webpage:** The main webpage warehousing and publicizing issues and resources related to the UAlbany LGBTQI community is accessible through the Division of Student Success, and, as such, principally addresses student and prospective student audiences. This page should be expanded to include many of the resources and policies and guidelines listed above in parts 1 and 3 (pages 8-11, 14-19) of this report’s review and assessment of the current campus climate. It should be sure to include, in addition to student resources, faculty and staff resources, as well. This would include publicizing the proposed Commission on LGBTQI Equity (if formed by the administration), the newly formed LGBTQI Faculty and Staff Association, information about the LGBT minor and the faculty teaching for it, relocating (or linking) the Office of Media Relations’ “Faculty Expert” page and expanding the number and names of faculty to truly reflect the large number who are teaching LGBTQI-related issues, in diverse fields and academic units. We request that this report also be made public through a link on that expanded webpage. Such an expanded and concentrated LGBTQI page would represent the interests and resources available for the entire UAlbany LGBTQI population and would pull together information and contacts from various divisions and units. Consequently, such an online collection of resources and information appealing to a larger audience—and ostensibly working in the interests of the UAlbany community, as a whole—should be moved from the sole purview of the Division of Student Success to a page that is easily navigable off the University at Albany’s homepage. A subcommittee of the proposed Commission would work in conjunction with ITS and other appropriate departments to ensure that the appropriate resources are made available and that the appropriate links are established.

• **Distribute FAQ sheets about LGBTQI sensitive issues regularly to all instructors:** In addition to the orientation of new instructors, all teaching staff should receive "fact sheets" or “FAQ” handouts—both electronic and print—at the start of each semester. For example, Ithaca College makes such a FAQ sheet available online through its website. These sheets can list resources and include “best practices” that will help to avoid placing students in potentially uncomfortable situations. The use of FAQ handouts can promote sensitivity to LGBTQI issues among faculty but also among students, who with their teachers’ guidance, will become more aware of and responsive to LGBTQI issues. Unlike what happens at other institutions, though, we wish to ensure that different FAQs are disseminated to address the specific concerns and needs of three distinct LGBTQI populations—faculty, staff, and student. A Commission subcommittee should be

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40 The Ithaca College FAQ about sexuality and gender expression is publicly available through their Center for LGBT Education, Outreach, and Services at: [http://www.ithaca.edu/sacl/lgbt/faq/](http://www.ithaca.edu/sacl/lgbt/faq/) Below, as the next major form of initiative (page 35), we discuss the shape and form of such LGBTQI Centers which serve quality of life concerns, academic programming and research initiatives, and fundraising/development objectives.
mandated with developing these three FAQ sheets and with periodically reviewing and updating them (on an annual basis). Each group (faculty, staff, student) should have at least one (more desirably, two or three) designated “point persons” on this subcommittee; that “point person(s)” would be the peer(s) from whom this FAQ (tweaked to respond specifically to the needs of each group-audience) would originate when it is distributed to the faculty, staff, or student target audience.

- Found an LGBTQI Leadership Support Program: This initiative would aim to provide support to current student, faculty and staff leaders to identify, develop, and train future leaders. Elements of the program would include one-on-one support to current LGBTQI leaders (student, as well as faculty and staff leaders) as they navigate the role of developing a diverse community, on-going problem solving support and networking opportunities to connect with local and national leaders. Some peer institutions do this in the form of mentoring programs, but they are geared only toward LGBTQI students. Our objective would be to expand such efforts to also include faculty and staff.

- Form an LGBTQI Faculty and Staff Speakers Bureau: This body, consisting of faculty and staff, would consist of trained volunteers from the faculty and staff to speak to various academic and administrative units about LGBTQI issues. Their programs would have two primary missions. The first objective would be to encourage the teaching of and sensitivity to LGBTQI issues in all UAlbany classrooms. This pertains not only to sensitivity to LGBTQI persons, but also to including frank disclosures of the relevance any academic subject matter in the classroom may have to an awareness of sexuality and gender expression and gender identity. Too often, academic disciplines still denigrate the “validity” or “value” of LGBTQI issues in relationship to research and study, even if individuals or units demonstrate a tolerance of, or even a receptivity to, LGBTQI persons in other social settings. Such an academic mission is imperative, especially in light of the current fiscal and budgetary crisis that disallows growing the number of faculty experts who could teach classes specifically focused on LGBTQI concerns. Bringing faculty experts to academic units might encourage the inclusion and mention of LGBTQI issues in the appropriate classrooms, including General Education classes reaching the entire UAlbany student population, even if those classes are not designated or designed as focused on queer studies subject matter. The second objective of this LGBTQI Faculty and Staff Speakers Bureau would be to conduct outreach workshops in academic and staff units throughout the University to address social issues pertaining to professional life and training issues. This dual-function professional Speakers Bureau could be overseen by a subcommittee of the Commission; however, to realistically reach out to the large UAlbany population, the size of the Bureau should be augmented by additional appointments made by the Office of the Provost. That office could begin this process by soliciting interest from members of the LGBTQI Faculty and Staff Association. Information about this Speakers Bureau should be made available on the expanded and consolidated LGBTQI webpage, described above.

- Form an LGBTQI Student Speakers Bureau: This body would function much like the above-described LGBTQI Faculty and Staff Speakers Bureau, but its outreach emphasis would be concentrated on social life and improving the campus climate (rather than also
addressing ways of intellectually and academically addressing sexuality and gender expression in University classes). A cadre of LGBTQI students should be trained to educate the campus about sexual orientation and gender identity by sharing their personal stories in a panel discussion and answering questions of students, faculty and staff about the lives of LGBTQI persons. Participant interest should be solicited from the already self-selecting LGBTQI-identified members of the various LGBTQI SA organizations. Note that every effort should be made to secure representation from all or those LGBTQI-related student organizations. These peer educators will be available to hold panel presentations in classes, residence halls, for student groups, as well as department meetings. Members of the LGBTQI Student Speakers Bureau will be officially advised by an appointed LGBTQI or allied faculty or staff member, and will attend a two-day training provided by individuals who have expertise with the topic. The faculty/staff advisors should be appointed as part of her university-level service, and that appointment should be made in a joint fashion by the Offices of the Provost/Academic Affairs and of the Vice President for Student Success (much as this Committee’s appointments were made in a joint fashion). This faculty/staff advisor’s responsibilities would include attending the speaking engagements as well as meeting with the students before and after their speaking engagements, in order to “brief” them on their audiences and topic beforehand and to “debrief” them on the event afterward. Finding interested parties for such an appointment should be made in conjunction with the LGBTQI Faculty and Staff Association. LGBTQI Student Speakers Bureau members will receive ongoing support through participation in the LGBTQI Leadership Support Program (see above) and through invitations to sit in on workshops conducted by members of the LGBTQI Faculty and Staff Speakers Bureau (see above). Information about this student Speakers Bureau would be made available on the expanded and consolidated LGBTQI webpage.

• **Establish Project Outreach:** The purpose of such a program would be to identify strategies for encouraging those faculty and staff and students who are not yet identified as allies to receive LGBTQI ally education and training. In addition, this Project Outreach initiative should be involved in helping organize and coordinate such outreach events. Similar bodies are found at several of our peer and ideal peer institutions. It is of the utmost importance that allies be self-identified; no faculty member, staff member, or student should be or feel compelled to receive training as, or even identify as, an ally of the University’s LGBTQI community. To this end, it is imperative that UAlbany implement initiatives to cultivate the awareness of otherwise “disinterested” parties about LGBTQI communities and concerns on campus and beyond. Project Outreach would be

41 The institutions that were researched in relationship to training through Project Outreach, LGBTQI Student Speakers Bureaus (described above), and LGBTQI Student Support Services initiatives (described below) included: award-winning LGBTQI training and education programs at Ithaca College and Princeton University; programs at our immediate peer institutions and fellow SUNY Research Centers of Stony Brook, Buffalo, and Binghamton; and our ideal peer institutions of the University of Connecticut (Storrs) and the University of California at Riverside.
such an initiative. Appointed faculty and staff should administer this initiative; they would draw on the University’s already strong pool of programs and members of its LGBTQI Faculty and Staff Association; however, both graduate students (from QUAGS) and undergraduate students (from the LGBTQI SA organizations) should be included on the panel, too. The panel would be charged with exploring and implementing new efforts to grow the number of UAlbany LGBTQI allies. For example, this Project Outreach might work with the Office of Multicultural Student Success and the Office of Diversity and Affirmative Action to contact department chairs every year and volunteer to establish efforts by which members of these units, accompanied by members of the LGBTQI Student and Faculty/Staff Speakers Bureaus (described below) run in-house workshops for instructors and students within academic units. Another means for establishing outreach to prospective allies entails utilizing large public events. For speaking occasions, for example, notable people from other institutions who have specific expertise and renown with a range of audiences might be invited to participate in discussions relevant to the LGBTQI community. For example, recently at Princeton University, Professor Cornell West was invited to speak on a panel about LGBTQI issues. Although Professor West’s research does not specifically address such concerns, his interest in the subject, combined with his strong reputation as a formidable philosopher speaking to issues of democracy and race, made him an ideal candidate for attracting other audiences who might not ordinarily attend an LGBTQI panel.

- **Develop an LGBGQI Student Support Services Project:** Like the above-described Project Outreach, the LGBTQI Student Support Services Project would be an initiative undertaken by LGBTQI and allied faculty and staff, in conjunction with leaders from QUAGS and the undergraduate SA organizations. This effort would specifically determine how students segregate themselves here at UAlbany. As should be clear from the preceding portions of this report, LGBTQI students are found in all walks of life and have varied class, racial, ethnic, religious culture, and national backgrounds. In addition, they identify through, and partake in, any number of activities and voluntary organizations. Reaching out to both “out” and “closeted” LGBTQI students entails taking into consideration the fact that LGBTQI persons are, quite literally, everywhere. This body would strategize means of supplying support for LGBTQI students. For example, it may be appropriate to provide support groups for students of color, athletes, international students, women of color separate from men, etc.

- **Develop a faculty advisement program for student groups:** In keeping with the previous recommendation about the need to develop more LGBTQI faculty and staff leaders, SA-sponsored LGBTQI organizations would benefit from a more fully developed faculty advisement program. Better organization is required for the cultivation of faculty advisors of student organizations, generally, but it is especially lacking for all LGBTQI student groups. We encourage the President’s Office to see to the design and implementation of such a faculty advisement program through the appropriate division and offices. In the case of attracting interest specifically for potential advisors of LGBTQI student groups, we feel that, once the appropriate program is in place, the President should make a direct appeal to the members of the newly formed LGBTQI Faculty and Staff Association, many of whom are eager to participate in this and similar
capacities. We make this recommendation with the understanding that faculty advisors’ primary role is not to commandeering student organizations or to deliver ultimatums and demands; rather, their role is to give advice and suggestions for the group members’ own participating in and sponsoring of activities that foster a productive and open University community.

(3) Develop and build an LGBTQI Life and Research Center

The recommended initiatives enumerated above comprise a very good and no- to low-cost start in redressing serious gaps in the University at Albany’s address of LGBTQI issues, at the levels of academic and professional concerns as well as of student life. However, much more other work needs to be done. In comparison with our peer and ideal peer institutions, we lack anything resembling a fully developed LGBTQI Center that would serve academic, student life, and cultural needs and interests—including programming, fundraising for and allotment of fellowships for undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral research opportunities. Moreover, a fully developed LGBTQI Center could be used to consolidate the information and resources presently dispersed and scattered among various agencies, programs, and administrative “silos” and institutional divisions. The above-proposed Commission on LGBTQI Equity might work toward helping develop and structure such a center, and the upper administration should solicit input from the newly formed LGBTQI Faculty and Staff Association, as well as existing student groups (including Pride and ASHA). However, as is detailed below, the actual scope of such a center’s mission and day-to-day operations falls beyond the parameters of the proposed Commission. Should such a center be established, we recommend that a directive board be formed to work with the center’s executive director for programming, fundraising, and other functions. That board might consist, in part, of members drawn from the LGBTQI Faculty and Staff Association and the proposed Commission of LGBTQI Equity, however would not be limited to or an official ad hoc arm of either or those bodies.

Dozens of such LGBTQI centers exist in universities and colleges across the United States. Our ideal peer institutions—most notably Princeton University42, the University at Connecticut (Storrs)43, the University of Wisconsin-Madison44—provide strong models for what successful LGBTQI centers look like. As these models illustrate, such centers are quite different from the current LGBT Resource Center now functioning under the auspices of the Office of Multicultural Student Success. That is to say, they are not service organizations primarily oriented toward addressing student life concerns for a minority segment of the population. Rather, they serve multiple functions and audiences within, and beyond, their respective immediate university communities. As such, they add to the viability of LGBTQI communities

42 For the homepage of the Princeton University LGBT Center, see http://www.princeton.edu/lgbt/events/index.htm

43 For the homepage of the University of Connecticut at Storrs’s Rainbow Center, see: http://www.rainbowcenter.uconn.edu/

44 For the homepage and mission statement of University of Wisconsin-Madison LGBT Campus Center, see: http://lgbt.wisc.edu/about/
on campus, and contribute to their off-campus visibility in a manner easily recognized by other scholars, activists, and potential donors. The building of the physical space to house such centers also involves repurposing existing spaces. We suggest that room be set aside for an LGBTQI Life and Research Center as part of the planned Campus Center expansion. Such a space would supply the proposed Center a visibility that would ensure the achievement and continual growth of its mission. As can be seen in the details below, such a mission entails cutting across the divisions and administrative “silos” currently used to govern our University community:

**Student Life:** Such centers consolidate, house, and distribute resources and information for LGBTQI students and prospective students, resources that are currently scattered throughout many divisions and offices. Occupying existing and repurposed spaces in universities’ campus centers, rather than in newly built spaces, these centers serve as focal sites where various LGBTQI student organizations gather, share resources, and more readily engage in open dialogue. This has the benefit of overcoming some of the alienation and estrangement felt by students who identify as both LGBTQI and ALANA from the rest of the LGBTQI student community. It also contributes to the visibility of LGBTQI students for others who have not yet come out as well as for the whole of the University population, thus making the University as a whole function more as a safe space that nurtures its LGBTQI constituents. These centers can also be used to coordinate educational and training efforts; such co-ordination at UAlbany could greatly strengthen what is already an impressive commitment to LGBTQI concerns by various units, departments, and programs.

**Academic Life:** Through cultural and academic programming—such as film series, lecture series by campus researchers and invited lecturers, conferences and symposia hosted by graduate and undergraduate organizations—these centers reinforce their home institutions’ already existing academic strengths. For UAlbany, it would help foster an intellectual community among faculty, staff, graduate students, and undergraduate students interested and engaging in research of LGBTQI issues. It would strengthen the life of already existing academic offerings, whether through the LGBT minor or other queer studies and LGBTQI health and social welfare course offerings in other programs and departments that are made independently of that minor. The academic and research component of fully developed LGBTQI Centers are truly what set apart these institutions from other agencies affiliated solely with student life. Moreover, increasing the visibility and thus the prestige of research about concerns and subjects related to sexuality and gender expression dramatically increases the campus climate in relation to LGBTQI issues at institutions of higher learning.

**Development and Funding:** Centers that bridge the divide between research and student life help raise money for LGBTQI-related initiatives, including but not limited to fellowship opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students; the development of postdoctoral and visiting scholar fellowships; development and improvement of cultural and educational programs.

**Community Outreach:** These centers very often facilitate interaction between their respective universities’ LGBTQI communities and other local and national organizations and initiatives. The Capital District has a particularly rich LGBTQI history, concentration of resources, and a vibrant LGBTQI community. Just in the
immediate vicinity, then, there is a great possibility for further fulfilling one of the University’s missions of fostering new connections between itself and the greater Albany/Capital District metropolitan area.

Usually staffed by at least two full-time staff members, one acting as Executive Director and the other as Assistant, LGBTQI research centers at other institutions do demand resources. Our high recommendation of building such a site, then, is made with a dual sense of realism: (1) we are functioning in a time of ever-decreasing fiscal resources; (2) potential donors have come forward interested in working with the Offices of the President and of University Development to help build a proposed Harvey Milk Center. Outside interest in and funding for developing such a center are present. If the University treats this possibility in all seriousness, it should look at the above-mentioned multiple-audience and multipurpose models, as well as others, and to draw heavily on the input of interested faculty and staff from the aforementioned commission and association. We do realize that the development of such a project can take several years, a significant portion of which entails developing funding sources from outside donors.

(4) Recommendations related to increasing visibility and coordination of existing resources and training about LGBTQI-related concerns and issues necessitating the involvement of other agencies and units at UAlbany:

- **Issue a clear statement from the President’s Office regarding the University’s nondiscriminatory policies, with particular regard to the LGBTQI community.** We recommend that the President’s Office distribute a general diversity statement annually or biannually to make clear to the University community the intentions of the institution and its mission, including that the institution will neither tolerate nor condone discriminatory practices that discriminate against any member of the University community or anyone seeking membership to the University community. We ask that existing language already present in the President’s general nondiscriminatory policy statement be examined with specific attention to how it addresses queer minorities, or even individuals perceived to be queer (no matter how they may self-identify). We wish to ensure that language is not just reliant on pre-established categories but also acknowledges a no tolerance policy in relationship to discrimination or harassment on the basis of: sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, and perceived gender and sexuality. Implicitly, the LGBTQI community is already acknowledged in existing statements; but we wish it to be more explicitly communicated. (N.B.: We are not requesting a separate statement against discrimination of LGBTQI persons; rather, just a slight, but important, modification of the language of the existing general nondiscriminatory statement.) Moreover, the regular distribution of this statement needs to include guiding principles as well as policy. It should address and review the specific accomplishments of the past year toward the realization of these goals. This statement should be prominently and easily accessible from the University’s homepage. Because not all University employees (such as, but not limited to, grounds workers and maintenance staff) have regular access to computers and email, we also ask that all supervisors be charged with bringing this nondiscriminatory statement to all of the employees under their direct supervision.

- **Initiate “underground” LGBTQI support groups for students who are not out:** The various training units on campus that have been active and successful in their ventures,
such as the University Counseling Center (see above, pages 9-10), should receive assistance from the upper administration in initiating “underground” LGBTQI support groups. These groups would provide much-needed meetings in inconspicuous location for students who are not comfortable “coming out.” The development and advertisement of these meetings should be coordinated in relationship to, but separate from, the LGBTQI Student Support Services Project. Whereas that project is exploratory in nature, this initiative is aimed at the actual implementation of support groups.

- **Develop an LGBTQI First-Year Cohort:** Working in conjunction, Admissions and Residential Life and SA LGBTQI organizations can solicit interest from self-identified LGBTQI first-year and transfer students for developing a “cohort” during and extending beyond orientation. This would be a way for first-year and transfer students to get to know the campus and the Albany community. As has been done most recently with transfer students, we recommend that an orientation program be initiated at the start of the fall semester for new LGBTQ students to welcome them, to discuss their particular needs and to orient them to the programs and services offered by the University as well as the larger Albany community. Student leaders from LGBTQI organizations, as well as student and faculty and staff volunteers from the above-described LGBTQI Student Speakers Bureaus—should be invited back early to participate in these orientation sessions. The interest is in acclimating students who were “out” in high school who might potentially retreat back into the closet as they encounter such a large, unfamiliar college environment. The focus initially would be on first-year transition issues, as well as providing social opportunities and identifying queer figures and resources on campus that might provide continuing support for these students throughout their college careers.

- **Including LGBTQI sensitivity training in all instructor (tenure-line, part-line, adjunct) orientations:** Materials related to LGBTQI concerns, issues, and resources should be made available to college deans and department chairs to be presented at orientation sessions for new faculty. These materials would alert faculty members of all the resources that are available, as well as how to address sensitive issues regarding sexual and transgender minority students. Reminders to deans and faculty should be sent at the beginning of each semester. Training should be available to teams of faculty and students, who could be available to present brief programs to departments at the request of deans or chairs. Administration involved with organizing these orientation sessions should draw on the resources of the above proposed LGBTQI Faculty and Staff Speakers Bureau (if that recommendation is accepted) to assist with these events.
2. Recommendations that Fine-Tune Existing Programs and Initiatives
To implement these suggestions, we encourage upper administration to get into contact with, and to review this Committee’s recommendations for, the appropriate representatives of the existing programs and initiatives listed below. Note that these recommendations require the allotment of no or very low additional funds to these programs’ and initiatives’ existing operational budgets.

(1) Improving and expanding existing programs related to training and education:

- **LGBTQ Resource Center:** The informational and educative capacities of the existing LGBTQ Resource Center (Campus Center 322, operated by a GA under the purview of the Office of Multicultural Student Success) should be increased. This growth should include a one-time budgeting of $3500 for the development and printing of new literature pertaining to existing LGBTQI programs and initiatives, as well as new literature about concerns and issues specific to LGBTQI students, staff, and faculty. At a future date, upper administration and the appropriate representative of the LGBTQ Resource Center would negotiate an annual budget for the republication of existing materials, and the development of new literature.

- **Career Services Center:** The Career Services Center appears to have sponsored a great program in 2008 titled “Out in the Work Place.”\[^{45}\] It does not appear that it was repeated in 2009 or 2010. This program should be revisited. Its organization could be coordinated with the newly formed LGBTQI Faculty and Staff Association, who might appear in the capacity of being “out” professionals and might also be able to perform some outreach to help Career Services coordinate LGBTQI guest speakers from the Capital District’s regional businesses and offices. A special emphasis should be paid to including the participation of ALANA professionals at these future events.

  Additionally, the Career Services website has a page titled “Career Resources for LBGT Students.”\[^{46}\] That office should update that page, paying specific attention to resources and contacts available for students who identify both as LGBTQI and ALANA. For instance, under “Community Resources,” this region’s LGBTQI organization for people of color, In Our Own Voices (IOOV) should be added.

- **Safe Space Training:** All faculty and instructional staff should be encouraged, but not mandated, to participate in Safe Space training. This would include the development of faculty-only training sessions, in addition to the general forums already held. Volunteers might also be sent to academic and administrative units, perhaps in tandem with the Speakers Bureaus (proposed above). The coordinators of this program should develop training materials geared explicitly for faculty and teaching assistants. An active Project

\[^{45}\] http://www.albany.edu/cdc/events/LGBT_event.html

\[^{46}\] http://www.albany.edu/cdc/audiences/LGBT.html
Outreach program (proposed above) should encourage faculty to participate in this valuable experience. Lastly, Safe Space should develop a component of its training program that addresses just not students’ needs for safe zones but also the specific professional needs of faculty and staff for such zones. This component can be coordinated in relationship with volunteer members of the LGBTQI Faculty and Staff Association.

- **The University Counseling Center’s Project SHAPE:** Sexual Health & Peer Education program should work to advertise more broadly offering educational programs on sexual orientation and gender identity to the University community as part of its repertoire of programs on sexuality and sexual health issues. We also ask that some component of that program specifically address, and be advertised as addressing, sexual practices and forms of gender expression in different ALANA communities. Varying with class, racial, ethnic, religious, and national cultures, same-sex contacts or gender expressions do not necessarily conform with “expectations” about LGBTQI persons. For instance, in many African American communities sexual contacts between queer-identified men and straight-identified men on “the down low” are not uncommon. These do affect broader definitions and understandings of sexual health and sexual practice.

- **Other programs by the University Counseling Center:** The University Counseling Center should continue to offer its LGBTQI support group each year, even if the staff member currently running it leaves the University. Additionally, it should advertise the existence and meeting places and times of this support group broadly on its webpage. We recommend that two additional separate support groups—one specifically for transgender and gender questioning persons, and the other for LGBTQI persons of color—be offered.

- **ITLAL:** The Institute for Teaching, Learning and Academic Leadership (ITLAL) should take an active role in helping faculty develop their capacity to handle “difficult dialogues” in class. This is an especially important component of the training of graduate and research assistants, who have much contact with queer student populations. While some courses offered at the University are specifically aimed at teaching subjects that will likely lead to discussions of diversity issues, and so faculty are likely to be more prepared to facilitate a controversial discussion, others may be surprised when particular issues are raised. ITLAL should be encouraged to offer regular workshops to help faculty become more aware of how to engage difficult dialogues in class. If the recommendation to establish a Commission on LGBTQI Equity is accepted, and a subcommittee on LGBTQI Student and Faculty/Staff Bureaus are formed, ITLAL should coordinate these proposed workshops with the appropriate speakers bureaus.

- **Training Staff in the Division of Academic Affairs:** Many employees within the Division of Academic Affairs come into regular contact with students. While we recommend that all staff who interact with students on a regular basis be encouraged to participate in the Safe Space training, we note here that some offices work with particular populations that may require additional attention. As with the University’s instructors, these units should recognize the importance of creating an atmosphere in which students are free to express and to be themselves without fear of discrimination or reprisal.
1. The Office Enrollment Management comprises a number of offices where students interact with staff members on a regular basis, including the Undergraduate and Graduate Admissions Offices, the Office of Academic Support Services/Educational Opportunities Program, the Advisement Services Center, and Student Financial Services (Student Accounts and Financial Aid). At the undergraduate level, students’ first contact with the University is likely to be with the Undergraduate Admissions Office; at the graduate level, this contact may come later, but is generally an important part of students’ first impressions of campus. All staff from these offices should be encouraged to participate in the Safe Space training. In particular, student tour guides in the Admissions Office should be given materials so that they can answer questions from prospective students and their parents during these individuals’ early visits to campus. In addition, staff from these offices should be made particularly aware of some of the issues faced by LGBTQI students of color, as discussed earlier in this report.

2. The Office of International Education works both with UAlbany students who are planning to study abroad and with international students who are coming to UAlbany to study. Again, staff from these offices should be encouraged to participate in Safe Space training, in general, and also be aware of the particular needs of UAlbany students planning to study abroad and international students who are coming to UAlbany to study. With respect to the first group, OIE staff members should be prepared to help LGBTQI students learn about customs or values related to sexuality and gender identity/expression in other countries that may be important when studying other countries. With respect to the second group, OIE staff members should be aware of campus groups and offices that provide special services for LGBTQI students and be open to helping international students connect to these groups/offices.

• Training staff in the Division of Student Success: As with staff in the Division of Academic Affairs, most staff members in the Division of Student Success have regular contact with students on a daily basis. Therefore, it is imperative that we strengthen efforts regarding LGBTQI-related training initiatives.

1. The Department of Residential Life is composed of staff at many different levels, from paraprofessional student staff to administrators. Some staff members reside in the residence halls and thus are on the front lines in creating a comfortable living environment for all. Their positions, by design, can have an extraordinary impact on the daily experiences of LGBTQI students. It is essential that Residential Life staff at all levels are adequately trained in sexual orientation and gender identity as well as experiences with coming out and related issues. In addition to offering staff the option to attend Safe Space training, there should be a required program offered at both student staff orientation and professional staff orientation annually on LGBT101 issues (training weekend). This is recommended to occur annually because by nature of these positions there is a lot of turnover and new staff in this Department every year.

The Residential Life accredited training course for Resident Assistants, ECPY 302, should continue to include a session on working with LGBTQ students but this should occur only after all of these student staff attend a
mandated basic session on sexual orientation and gender identity during their orientation as described above. In addition, these students should be encouraged but not mandated to attend the Safe Space training.

Staff members in Residential Life staff many social activities. It is essential that these programs be inclusive of the entire university community with no pressure or expectation of heterosexuality and should be actively welcoming of LGBTQI people as well as same-sex couples.

2. The Orientation Office staff is responsible for facilitating the Summer Planning Conference program attended by incoming students and their parents each summer. These incoming students currently attend one mandated presentation on alcohol and other drugs, with an emphasis on social norms, and another presentation on sexual assault. We recommend that these students also attend a presentation on sexuality including LGBTQI issues.

Orientation Assistants are hired each year from the pool of current undergraduates to work with the incoming students. These staff members should receive training to insure they possess a basic understanding and appreciation of LGBTQI issues. Orientation Assistants facilitate sessions for the new students using various skits demonstrating common situations/issues that may emerge in life on campus. In the past, a skit dealing with LGBT issues has been included. We recommend that an LGBTQI skit be a part of the program each year.

LGBTQI sensitivity is only part of the training mission tied to the Orientation Office. In a related manner, both campus tour guides and RAs supply the public face of the UAlbany community during Orientations, Open House, and other events. If those workers are or are perceived as LGBTQI, they risk encountering potentially hostile members of the general public or prospective students and their families. For this reason, it is imperative that all tour guides and RAs’ training entails modes of responding to such unfortunate yet often trying situations.

3. The Office of Student Involvement and Leadership staff work very closely with students on a daily basis, advising student groups and planning programs. These staff should receive training on a regular basis on sexual orientation and gender identity issues. In addition, the programs they offer and those offered by the student groups they advise need to be inclusive of the entire University community with no pressure or expectation of heterosexuality and should be actively welcoming of LGBTQ people as well as same-sex couples.

4. The University Counseling Center staff needs to be adequately trained in sexual orientation and gender identity issues and counseling and psychotherapy with these populations. These specific sexuality-related issues are not usually part of any doctoral programs, so it needs to be regularly covered in training of that group. In addition, members of the two peer education programs operating out of the Counseling Center; Project SHAPE: Sexual Health & Peer Education and the Middle Earth Peer Assistance Program need to continue to receive training on sexual orientation and gender identity.

5. The University Health Center has offered a staff training on health issues in the LGBTQI population that incorporated a basic LGBTQI component. This should be a training that occurs at regular intervals particularly for new staff hired in the
Health Center, and it should happen at every level. All University Health Center staff should be well versed in the special health care needs of the LGBTQI population, be aware and sensitive to the barriers in place for members of this community when it comes to health care and be familiar with resources and referral sources.

6. **University Police Department** has offered training sessions on the LGBTQI community. This should continue at regular intervals particularly with newly hired staff.

7. **The Student Success Division** offers the Safe Space training program. We recommend that this training be continued. We believe that this training should never be mandated however. Persons who complete this four-hour program are given stickers to display that identify them as allies to the community and we need to insure that they are indeed allies and not persons who felt forced to attend or display such an item. A similar program can be offered to Departments where a Chair or Director mandates attendance but the sticker should not be offered and the focus should be on the information rather than on the role of an ally. This Safe Space training should not be the only training program offered for all of our purposes. It is designed for a particular audience and with a particular outcome and does not adequately substitute for other more broadly defined training needs. As this program gains in usage, we recommend that more facilitators be trained to accommodate the requests.

- **Training classified employees and additional University staff:** Additional training is also recommended for classified employees and other University employees who have not been addressed in the above recommendations (i.e., members of CSEA, Council 82, NYSCOPBA, and PEF unions, UUP members not covered above, Management Confidential, Research Foundation, and University Auxiliary Services employees). Conducting outreach and developing educational programs for these additional employees will serve to increase awareness and promote inclusivity campus-wide. In alignment with the Principles of a Just Community, by providing training and educational opportunities for all University employees we will help to create a welcoming and supportive environment for LGBTQI individuals.
  1. Increase the visibility of the Safe Space training opportunities available to employees. We recommend that there be specific outreach to union representatives and supervisory staff to invite them to attend this training. They, in turn, can encourage their membership and staff members to enroll in the Safe Space training. As stated earlier, this training should never be mandated to insure that those who complete the program are truly committed LGBTQI allies.
  2. Continue the University at Albany’s Office Diversity and Affirmative Action initiatives to develop and offer diversity training that would include information on the LGBTQI community and be available to all staff members.
  3. Encourage departments to include the topic of diversity in staff meetings with the goal of raising awareness, increasing sensitivity, and promoting a feeling of inclusion within the campus community. The Office of Multicultural Student Success, Office Diversity and Affirmative Action, or another to be determined campus program such as the proposed Project Outreach (described above) can
conduct outreach to departments to offer a presentation and discussion on LGBTQI concerns which can be provided at a staff meeting or special departmental training session.

4. Increase the availability of resource materials regarding the LGBTQI community’s issues and concerns for use by the faculty/staff and supervisors through various University offices (e.g., Office Diversity and Affirmative Action, Employee Assistance Program, Office of Multicultural Student Success, University Counseling Center Project SHAPE).

5. As the LGBTQI community becomes more organized and visible on campus, we recommend the development of informational newsletters, an awareness campaign via posters (campus-wide and placed in employee-designated areas as well), support group(s) for University staff, a speakers bureau, and other such efforts which have been found to be effective in raising awareness and promoting inclusivity on other university campuses.

(2) Clarifying UAlbany’s policies and guidelines:

Based on the review of other institution’s websites and interviews of staff at those institutions, we make the following recommendations.47

• All University at Albany diversity statements and policies must be inclusive of all members of our University community. Given the special nature of queer minority life (persons may be targets of violence or discriminatory practices as “queer,” regardless of self-identification; not all queer persons are “out” in every aspect of their individual lives), it is imperative that all policy language does more to recognize gender and sexual minority in terms of perception, expression, and identification. Therefore these policies need to include specifically the terms “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” and “gender expression” in the documents’ language. Because “sexual preference” and “lifestyle” read as outdated and sometimes politically problematic terms (since being a sexual or gender minority, or event being perceived as such, is not always a matter of agency and choice), these two terms should not carry the full ideological and legal weight in these documents. However, these terms need not be eliminated from policies and guidelines because, as some members of this Committee have argued, they still serve as the primary categories through which some LGBTQI individuals self-identify. This is an initiative that should fall under the joint purview of the President’s Office and the Office of Diversity and Affirmative Action.

• The “Principles for a Just Community” document needs to be rewritten and must be inclusive of all members of our University community. The terms “gender identity” and “gender expression” need to be specifically included in these principles. This initiative should be enacted by the Provost’s Office, in conjunction with the President’s Office.

• An extensive review of all the University’s websites needs to be initiated so that when a search for LGBTQI information is initiated any services or contacts that a department

47 Peer institutions that were reviewed in relationship to policy matters included SUNY Plattsburgh and Empire State College. Ideal peer institutions included Ithaca College, Ohio State University, Princeton University, and Pennsylvania State University.
provides for the LGBTQI community are evident. This initiative should be executed by the Office of Media Relations, in conjunction with ITS.

- In keeping with the preceding recommendation, guidelines for University websites must be created to ensure that all content on the websites is consistent with the University’s diversity policy and its guiding principles. Specifically, all websites need to be inclusive of all members of the University community by including the terms “sexual orientation,” “gender identity,” and “gender expression” where applicable. The guidelines should be established by the Offices of the President, the Provost, the Vice-President for Student Success, and Diversity and Affirmative Action, all working in conjunction with the proposed Commission on LGBTQI Equity (if that recommendation is accepted). Implementation and review of all of the UAlbany website should be conducted by the Office of Media Relations and ITS.

(3) Improving forms to better represent gender identity and gender expression:
The Common Application and SUNY Application are not generated by UAlbany and cannot be changed directly, though the University could submit an official letter to request of SUNY System Administration and the Common Application organization suggesting a more inclusive, “third option” approaches to soliciting gender identifications. However, to maintain the security and welfare of our students, the University needs to first assess who will have access to this information. The University Health Center and the Counseling Center are bound by confidentiality laws; however, third option could prove problematic in other offices such as Housing and Student Involvement and anywhere else that student workers and employees not bound by confidentiality agreements yet have access to privy information, such as in various administrative and admissions and departmental offices. A consortium with other institutions interested in making this inclusive shift is recommended to discuss possible approaches for a viable option of developing and implementing secure “third options.” A campus-wide survey that seeks feedback from everyone, including our transgender and intersexed population, should be used to supply adequate information.

To minimize the disclosure of sensitive information in high traffic areas, it should be noted that gender does not need to be asked on all forms since PeopleSoft automatically collects and provides that information. On the immunization forms, for instance, no gender is asked for because that information comes from PeopleSoft anyway. The optional health history form includes “transgender,” but that might not be totally inclusive. The personal data form from International Student Services asks for sex. A consideration for modifications to that form would be how the category of “sex” would translate into other languages and cultures. Therefore, it is recommended that the University only ask gender when necessary (as in housing assignments) and for statistical data to be shared with outside agencies. Where it is deemed necessary, a more inclusive possibility should be pursued. This is especially possible for internal forms and data collection, wherein UAlbany might use a method similar to that used by Ithaca College: i.e., providing a blank space in which gender must always be self-described rather than a check box in which it is predetermined as conforming to two, or perhaps three, preset categories.
(4) Constructing gender-neutral facilities:
Much has been done already to begin the process of conversion of gender segregated single-stall facilities to gender-neutral facilities. The following recommendations point to specific ways the University may continue in this progressive route:

- **Toilet Rooms:** There are several long- and short-term actions that can be taken to improve the number of single-stall private gender-neutral toilet rooms accessible to students, faculty, staff, and guests. For the short term, a simple re-designation of gendered single-stall restrooms, such as the two on the third floor of the PE building can make a difference. This entails a simple change of signage and lock installation. Where substantial renovation or construction is already planned, it may be beneficial to expand the scope to include the construction of such a toilet room adjacent to the existing gendered ones. For all new construction still in the development stages—for example, the new building for the School of Business—it should become standard to include at least one gender-neutral toilet room per building. It should also be added, as had been discussed by the entire Committee, for reasons of individuals’ security and well-being, these facilities should not be located primarily on attic or basement-level floors. Not only is it potentially dangerous to ask individuals to go to spaces where there is less traffic, but it is also psychologically exacting. Gender-neutral restroom locations should be posted on multiple department pages on the University website (physical plant and Residential Life, for instance; also a consolidated LGBTQI Resources page yet to be constructed), not just the Student Success page where this information is currently listed and is targeted primarily to just students (rather than also inclusive of faculty, staff, and guests).

- **Housing:** Any type of housing, from suites to apartments to corridor rooms, could be gender-neutral. Researching the current facilities and determining which ones could serve as gender-neutral exactly as they are now would be an effective and extremely low-cost start to the process. No physical changes would need to take place for this to happen. In addition, the development of an LGBTQI theme house would also be a step in the right direction. Although the University might fear that the consolidation of LGBTQI persons in LGBTQI theme or gender-neutral halls or floors might lead to an increased incidence of homo- or transphobic violence, there is little evidence from our peer and ideal peer institutions where such programs are in effect that this is the case. Indeed, in its four year of gender-neutral and theme housing, there has been only one reported verbal slur directed at the residence building (not the residents themselves). The visible presence of LGBTQI themed halls, as well as designated gender-neutral housing options, would catalyze a positive shift in the campus climate and would encourage a healthier outlook and open discourse amongst the entire UAlbany community about gender and sexual difference. Such a campaign could help break down barriers between genders, and thus could aid in the abatement of misperceptions about and violence related to gender identification and gender expression. It should be noted that the typical timeline for the creation of such programs span between six months and four years. They do not happen overnight, so it is imperative that UAlbany begin to take first steps to initiate these
programs now. For upcoming student housing construction projects, such as the proposed Lakeview project, singles with private bathrooms would also be beneficial. Another long-term goal would be to designate an appropriate number of existing spaces as reserved for gender-neutral assignments. Residential Life and student representatives from campus LGBTQI groups should be involved in suggestion and decision-making processes with both upper administration and physical plant representatives.

48 The PowerPoint presentation by the subcommittee researching gender-neutral facilities included the slide below, which details the timeline for some of the model institutions with gender-neutral facilities and programs discussed earlier in this report:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Initiation &amp; Proposal Development</th>
<th>Proposal Review Period</th>
<th>Program Development Period</th>
<th>Total time from Initiation to Implementation</th>
<th>Duration of Program to Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUNY Geneseo</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>proposal review</td>
<td>3 Months</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>6 Months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUNY Purchase</td>
<td>7 Months</td>
<td>proposal review</td>
<td>3 Months</td>
<td>1.5 Years</td>
<td>3.5 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCR</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>proposal review</td>
<td>3 Months</td>
<td>2.25 Years</td>
<td>4.5 Years</td>
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