The University at Albany

LGBTQI Concerns Advisory Committee

2011-2012 Report

To

Susan D. Phillips, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

and

Christine Bouchard, Vice-President for Student Success

The University at Albany, SUNY

August, 2012
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Jay Oddi, Committee Staff

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Dana Peterson (Criminal Justice), Co-Chair
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Vivien Ng (Women’s Studies)
Jay Oddi (Residential Life)
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Web Presence and FAQs Subcommittee
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Lani Jones (Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Social Welfare)
Errol Millington (Facilities Management)
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History of the LGBTQI Concerns Advisory Committee

The LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex) Concerns Advisory Committee was established by Provost Sue Phillips and Vice President for Student Success Christine Bouchard at the beginning of the 2009-2010 academic year in order to review, report on, and make recommendations for improvement in the current UAlbany campus climate for LGBTQI students, faculty, and staff. The Advisory Committee was continued by the Provost and Vice President for Student Success for the 2010-2011 academic year to work toward implementing some of the Committee recommendations documented in the extensive May 6, 2010 report (available at http://www.albany.edu/lgbt/committee.shtml). Through a series of meetings between Provost Phillips, Vice President Bouchard, 2009-10 Committee chair Eric Keenaghan, and 2010-11 Committee co-chairs Carol Stenger and Dana Peterson, the 2009-10 Committee recommendations were prioritized and a list of potential tasks for 2010-11 developed for consideration by the ongoing Committee. The 2010-11 Advisory Committee reviewed the prioritized tasks and developed three subcommittees to carry out the work of the Committee: Language and Policy Subcommittee, Training and Academic Affairs Subcommittee, and the Web Presence & FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) Subcommittee (descriptions and tasks of these subcommittees detailed in the next section). The 2010-11 Advisory Committee Annual Report (available at www.albany.edu/lgbt/committee.shtml) provided an update on the status of these ongoing tasks and recommended actions for the following academic year. These recommendations formed the work plan for the 2011-2012 Advisory Committee, co-chaired again by Dana Peterson and Carol Stenger. To continue the work of the prior year’s Committee, the three subcommittees were maintained in 2011-12.

Overview of 2011-2012 Committee Structure and Work

As a review, the following general tasks were proposed for each of the subcommittees, with decisions about prioritization of specific tasks for the year left to each subcommittee:

1) Language & Policy Subcommittee Description

Identify locations of needed changes and recommend language of change (in consultation with Counsel’s office and ODI) to appropriate approval body

Clarify UAlbany’s policies and guidelines (see p. 44-45 of May 2010 Report)

- Develop and recommend language to ensure that all University at Albany diversity statements and policies are inclusive of all members of our University community (with ODI)
- Recommend language for reinstated “Principles for a Just Community” document to be inclusive of all members of our University community (with Provost’s, President’s offices)
- Review of all the University’s websites so that when a search for LGBTQI information is initiated, any services or contacts that a department provides for the LGBTQI community are evident (with Office of Media Relations, ITS)
• Develop and recommend language for guidelines for University websites to ensure that all content on the websites is consistent with the University’s diversity policy and its guiding principles (with President’s & Provost’s offices, VP for Student Success, ODI, Media Relations, ITS)

Improve forms to better represent gender identity and gender expression (p. 45 of May 2010 Report)
• Develop and recommend language for inclusion on various forms used throughout the University
• Work with VPSS, other units (Health Center, Counseling Center) to identify and recommend places for change

2) Training and Academic Affairs Subcommittee Description

Advise and/or design various levels of awareness-sensitivity-ally development training; Coordinate with existing bodies (LGBTQ Resource Center, Career Services Center, Safe Space Training, Project SHAPE: Sexual Health & Peer Education, University Counseling Center, ITLAL, Academic Affairs); engage unions, HR, VPs in consideration of training for other segments; consider developing “train the trainer” model.

Form an LGBTQI Faculty and Staff Speakers Bureau (see p. 32 of May 2010 Report)
• Bureau will consist of trained volunteers from the faculty and staff to speak to various academic and administrative units about LGBTQI issues and encourage the teaching of and sensitivity to LGBTQI issues in all UAlbany classrooms
• Conduct outreach workshops in academic and staff units throughout the University to address social issues pertaining to professional life and training issues

Establish Project Outreach (pp. 33-34 of May 2010 Report)
• Identify strategies for encouraging those faculty and staff and students who are not yet identified as allies to receive LGBTQI ally education and training
• Explore and implement new efforts to grow the number of UAlbany LGBTQI allies
• Help organize and coordinate such outreach events

Include LGBTQI sensitivity training in all instructor (tenure-line, part-line, adjunct) orientations (p. 38 of May 2010 Report)
• Make available to college deans and department chairs materials related to LGBTQI concerns, issues, and resources to be presented at orientation sessions for new faculty
• Provide training to schools and departments at deans’ and chairs’ request
• (see overlap with FAQs and Speakers Bureau)

Train classified employees and additional University staff (pp. 43-44 of May 2010 Report)
3) Web Presence and FAQs Subcommittee Description

Develop a relocated and expanded LGBTQI webpage (see p. 31 of May 2010 Report)
- Advise VPSS on content and links to make page more useful
- Consider moving from Division of Student Success page and providing link from main UAlbany page
- Expand to include many of the resources and policies and guidelines listed in parts 1 and 3 (pages 8-11, 14-19) of the May 2010 Report
- Include student, faculty and staff resources
- Publicize the LGBTQI Concerns Advisory Group, its Annual Reports, and the newly formed LGBTQI Faculty and Staff Association and Speakers Bureau
- Provide information about the LGBT minor and associated faculty
- Relocate (or link) the Office of Media Relations’ “Faculty Expert” page and expand the number and names of faculty to reflect the large number who are teaching LGBTQI-related issues
- 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

Develop and distribute FAQ sheets about LGBTQI-sensitive issues (pp. 31-32 of May 2010 Report)
- Develop list of relevant FAQs and determine who should receive and when (separate FAQ sheets to address specific concerns and needs of 3 groups: faculty, staff, and students)
- Provide at new faculty orientation and possibly to all faculty at the beginning of each year; engage ITLAL
- Include resources and ‘best practices” to help avoid placing students in potentially uncomfortable situations
- Provide at student orientations, Post on website

Because the tasks were already laid out (from the 2010-11 Annual Report recommendations) and the three Subcommittee Co-Chairs from the 2010-11 year had agreed to continue for 2011-12, the Committee Co-Chairs decided to forego a full Advisory Committee at the beginning of the academic year, in lieu of allowing the Subcommittees to convene their first meetings and start right in on continuing the work of the prior year. The full Advisory Committee met twice (on 12/9/11 and 5/9/12) for updates from the subcommittees, for provision of any requested or required feedback to the subcommittees, and for other Committee work and decision-making.

The next sections of this Report provide summaries from each of the three subcommittees, including work accomplished, work yet to be completed, and any recommendations. The Report closes with a brief summary, campus-wide updates and “victories,” and recommendations for future work of the LGBTQI Concerns Advisory Committee.
Our Subcommittee’s charge is to first examine and then recommend changes to the language in University statements, policies, and forms. In addition, we check for consistency across different parts of the University website once we have some updates. We also review and respond to additional relevant issues that may arise.

We met five times this past year (11/02/11, 11/28/11, 2/2/12, 2/23/12, and 4/12/12) and highlight major areas of work and progress below. Most of this year’s work was focused on exploring ways to make our campus a safer, more comfortable, and more productive environment for our students (and, to a lesser extent, faculty and staff) who are transgender, but the needs of others in LGBQ communities were also addressed.

1. **Marriage Equality Act:** At the request of Provost Phillips, we evaluated need for changes to language for documents and policies based on the recently passed Marriage Equality Act. Kate Thies looked into this in more detail and found that the campus has the appropriate forms (applies primarily to human resources information). University personnel are also able to provide the appropriate tax forms (not tax advice) to employees newly-married under the act. The subcommittee has also learned that other universities have been more pro-active in addressing the added federal tax burden faced by GLBTQ married couples in states that have marriage equality or its equivalent. That is, some other universities provide assistance, through tax trusts, in covering financial costs associated with federal domestic partner health benefits being considered and taxed as compensatory income for the employed partner. With the passage of the Marriage Equality Act, NYS no longer considers health benefits taxable income, but the federal government does.

2. **Recommendations to ODI regarding gender identity and expression:**
   We followed up on the recommendations that we had made to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion for changes to the website and brochures related to the diversity mission statement, ensuring that gender identity and expression are noted in the University’s anti-discrimination policy, adding more specific listings of relevant NYS Executive Orders and local ordinances (City of Albany), and adding domestic partner status to the anti-discrimination policy.
   - The new website is up and our recommendations were adopted by ODI (with a few wording changes for the mission statement).
   - The brochures have not been updated yet, since new brochures were printed relatively recently, but it is expected the changes will be made with the next printing.

We sent a thank you letter to Dr. Tamra Minor in ODI for her assistance in making changes to the ODI website to include gender identity/expression and several other key updates, and we recently followed up with ODI on other issues pertaining to gender identity/expression not being included in the President’s Statement on Diversity and in the complaint procedures document on the ODI website.
   - ODI will be suggesting an amendment to the President’s Statement on Diversity.
   - ODI informed us that the complaint procedures document is modeled under SUNY Guidelines (which do not include gender identity/expression). However, gender
identity/expression is considered covered under sex discrimination and all inquiring parties are informed of this coverage.

3. **Addressing discrimination on campus:**

Our examination of University policies and procedures to address discrimination against sexual and gender minorities came about in response to questions raised during a visit by former UAlbany student Denise Norris, who is transgender, and her colleague Timothy Garippa. They visited UAlbany as representatives of the global management company Accenture, in order to raise awareness of gender identity and expression as part of companies’ opportunities to leverage diversity and to create connections with UAlbany students, particularly those in Business. During the visit, questions were asked about whether gender identity and expression were covered in diversity statements and non-discrimination policies and about procedures for dealing with harassment.

- Livia da Silva contacted several people on campus and learned that ODI is the main office to contact for any incidents of discrimination that involve an employee and a student (or a student employee and other students). ODI should be contacted first, and that office will refer the person if another office (e.g., Conflict Resolution & Civic Responsibility) should be involved. We wanted to make sure that students are aware of where to go, so we also forwarded some materials to the Web/FAQ sub-committee for inclusion in FAQ sheets.

- As part of this discussion, we also conferred about the “Faculty& Staff 911 Guide” (Assisting Students of Concern) of which most on the subcommittee were not aware, but those who were found very useful. Upon looking into the guide, we learned that John Murphy sends an e-mail to the “teaching faculty” at the beginning of each fall semester, informing them of this Guide in the context of dealing with behavioral issues in the classroom. Our subcommittee agreed that this Guide is more widely useful than just addressing classroom behavior and should be more widely distributed, i.e., not just to teaching faculty, not just at the beginning of fall semester, and not just in the context of addressing behavior in the classroom. It would be a useful guide for faculty, staff, and other instructors to deal with a wide variety of student issues. **We therefore would like to recommend to VP Chris Bouchard and VP John Murphy that the “Faculty& Staff 911 Guide” be sent to all faculty, staff, and graduate and adjunct instructors twice a year. It is important that this information is shared with all individuals who work with students.**

4. **Focus Group with Transgender Students:**

Carol Stenger facilitated a focus group with four transgender students, and Jay Oddi took notes. The purpose of the focus group was to gather more information directly from transgender students to be sure that our Subcommittee (and the Committee overall) was addressing the needs and important concerns of these students. We confirmed that we are on the right track (see details below), but it would be useful to conduct future focus groups with more students.

- The students confirmed their strong desire for use of “preferred name” on class lists and additional awareness training for faculty and other instructors (FAQs could help with that too).

- They were pleased about several areas: experiences with housing (working with Holly Barker-Flynn made them feel welcome and as though their needs were being met; gender-neutral housing); experiences with UPD; indicated most Professors were accommodating,
though a few still questioned why they wanted to be called by a different name than was on the class list or why they did not just get their name legally changed.

- Though most relayed few problems with using their gender-identified bathrooms, some still had uncomfortable experiences (including not going to the bathroom all day) and questioned why there were not more gender-neutral bathrooms available.
- Raised concerns about birth name requirements on UAlbany ID Cards: e.g., it is hard to pick up packages when names do not match up and mail room workers suspect the students of fraud.
- Raised issues about the Health Center where students are “outed every single time” they go. Jay and Holly met with Peter Vellis, the Medical Director at the University Health Center to devise a new approach. Health Center staff will now be calling students by last name rather than first name.
- Highlighted the financial difficulties related to physical transition (including lack of health coverage) and lack of related health care resources on campus.

5. Update on University resources for transgender students to legally change their names: The University will change students’ names on UA ID cards only if the student provides a legal document that shows their legal name (e.g., NYS drivers’ license, passport). NYS will change a name and gender on drivers’ license only with provision of supporting medical and psychological records. Our subcommittee looked into the extent of resources provided by the University to support students seeking to make these legal changes. Unfortunately, few resources could be identified:
   - Livia da Silva spoke with Courtney D’Allaird who had a meeting with the Student Association Lawyer. The lawyer is unable to help students with the name change. Courtney volunteered to write up an information sheet and advertise this at the GSRC.
   - The Counseling Center is not able to write a letter for a student in support of changing gender. They have to refer to an outside therapist.
   - The Health Center is not able to provide services for biological transition that would support legal name change in NYS.

6. Gender representation and legal names on campus: The bigger issues that we have been addressing during this academic year focus on recommendations to ITS for using “preferred name” on course and grade rosters, use of “sex” and “gender” on university forms, and names on University ID cards.

Background:

- CIO Chris Haile spoke to our Committee in Spring 2011 and suggested that we prepare specific short-term recommendations with justification/rationale regarding use of students’ “preferred name” (in MyUAlbany) on Blackboard and MyUAlbany course and grade rosters.
- This issue became even more salient as three transgender students approached several offices at the beginning of the Fall 2011 semester, requesting to have their preferred names on rosters and on their ID cards. Several of the sub-committee members (Dana, Joanne, Jay) had an informative meeting with Karen Chico Hurst and exchanged e-
mails with other key players that informed us of some of the key related issues from the University perspective.

- Courtney D’Allaird forwarded materials related to these issues from The Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals. All of these informed us as we prepared our recommendations.

A. Recommendations to ITS for use of preferred name on course rosters in Blackboard & MyUAlbany:
We worked intensely on this during the Fall 2011 semester and developed a completed draft of recommendations that ITS create a customization that allows Blackboard and MyUAlbany to draw first from “Preferred (First) Name” to populate course rosters and grade rosters available to instructors in Blackboard and in MyUAlbany. This would help to ensure that students who are transgender are not unwantedly “outed” to instructors and students and create a more hospitable university and classroom environment that promotes personal and academic productivity. Dana forwarded the draft recommendations to Karen Chico Hurst, who in turn shared it with several people/offices, as well as contacted several other universities. Valuable feedback was provided by all, and Karen also informed the subcommittee that a number of different universities and people at UAlbany are on board with changing the Common application and the SUNY Application (see “Gender on forms” below) to better accommodate applicants who are transgender. Based on these useful comments, the recommendations were revised (see Appendix A), and these are being forwarded to Provost Phillips and VP Bouchard for review and next steps.

B. UAlbany ID Card:
Having birth names on University ID cards poses a number of challenges for transgender students who use a chosen name that matches their gender identity and/or presentation. A number of students have therefore sought to have their names changed on their cards. While the materials provided by the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals seem to suggest that ID cards could easily accommodate name changes, this does not appear to be the case here at UAlbany. The subcommittee has learned that the UAlbany ID card is considered an official and legal form of identification; changing one’s name on the ID card therefore requires a legal name change. As described in a previous section, legally changing one’s name in NYS is prohibitive for most students. Further work on this issue is required.

C. “Gender” on Forms:
From the research conducted by our subcommittee, it appears that “gender” does not appear on many forms (though questions about “sex” do). Although the Consortium recommends specific changes for acquiring information about gender/gender identity, those require customizations to PeopleSoft and the Common Application. While we can make long-term recommendations to those agencies, this is largely outside of UAlbany. On a related note, we can make recommendations for in-house surveys using recommendations from the Consortium, so it seems like that is something we should pursue.

D. University surveys and coverage of gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation:
Because of recommendations coming from the larger Consortium of Higher Ed LGBT Resource Professionals, Jay Oddi looked into how to address those issues at UAlbany by
contacting Joel Bloom and others in the Institutional Research office. We learned that, in general, changes can be mandated only by the President’s office, and Jay was investigating whether and how our subcommittee can recommend certain types of questions for use on surveys within the University. We will follow up on this in Fall 2012.

E. Long-term recommendations for changes in PeopleSoft, Common App, SUNY App etc:
To better serve the needs of all students, longer-term solutions are required, such as permanent changes in PeopleSoft, the Common Application used by universities around the country, and the SUNY Application. Our subcommittee will therefore be drafting long-term recommendations for dealing with gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Vivien Ng did some research and outlined core ideas. We will continue to revise this and move this forward over the next academic year.

7. Publicizing work of the Advisory Committee and its subcommittees to the University population:
This has come up at several of our Committee and subcommittee meetings, particularly since on our subcommittee, we have members from all 3 campuses who experience varying degrees of information dissemination and receipt. Our subcommittee was wondering about the possibility of notices about the Committee’s work being sent to the all faculty/staff list serve and student list serve and suggests that the Committee look into it.

Training and Academic Affairs Subcommittee Annual Summary

Based on the 2010 LGBTQI Advisory Committee Annual Report, the subcommittee’s charge was to work toward the following:

1. Form an LGBTQI Faculty and Staff Speaker’s Bureau.
2. Establish Project Outreach which would implement new efforts to grow the number of UAlbany LGBTQI allies.
3. Include LGBTQI sensitivity training in all instructor orientations.
4. Train classified employees and other University staff.

Overview of Committee Initiatives

During the 2011-2012 academic year, the Training Sub-Committee met 10 times. In the fall we finalized plans to develop the training for faculty across the University at Albany campus. As part of this initiative, this committee developed a three part plan to implement this training. In the spring semester, we invited the UAlbany Institute for Teaching, Learning and Academic Leadership’s (ITLAL) instructional consultant Billie Bennett Franchini to one of our meetings to discuss collaborating on a training program to be offered to faculty. We discussed utilizing the improvisational performance troupe to conduct this training which will involve short scenarios played out by the ITLAL performance troupe. These scenarios will illustrate common issues of interest to faculty, such as dealing with homophobic comments in the classroom, how to offer
assistance to a transgender student in transition during the course of a semester, and how to manage other students’ reactions or questions. Once developed, this training will become part of the general training inventory offered through ITLAL and thus can be an available training that can move forward without much upkeep.

The Committee discussed at length the content of this training and will work with ITLAL in the upcoming year to work on specifics.

**Three Part Plan**

The committee developed a three part plan for implementation of this training program in order to notify the Academic Affairs Department of this opportunity. In Part 1, we will attempt to gain an audience with the Provost’s Executive Advisory Council (PEAC) made up of the Deans of each School within UAlbany as well as the Dean of Undergraduate Students, the Dean of Graduate Students, and the Provost of International Education. To accomplish this, we will ask for the support of Sue Phillips, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. At this meeting with PEAC we will explain the purpose of the faculty training and request support from each Dean in our initiative to reach out to faculty on these issues by inviting us to speak to their respective Departmental Chair meeting. (Some schools have many departments and, thus, department chairs, while others may have only one chair). At that meeting we will ask the Chairs of each Department to support our initiative by inviting us to speak at their Department faculty meeting. This will allow us to engage face to face with faculty to encourage their participation in attending our training initiatives, as well as to address any concerns they might have.

Part two will serve as a preliminary training through which we hope to engage the majority of faculty across the university. This will cover general information on LGBT identities, specific issues in the classroom, and provide valuable resources. It is essential that in addition to Safe Space training, which is designed for allies and should never be mandated or required by supervisors, we offer another training that covers similar topics as the Safe Space training, but with a different end result. This training could be requested by a Department Chair or supervisor who requires faculty or staff to attend. This general LGBTQ training will also help to uncover potential faculty allies who might then wish to attend Safe Space training and further that network.

Part three takes classroom training a step further and will provide hands-on curriculum evaluation to help faculty members discern how LGBT issues may be missing from their current curriculum. This may mean helping faculty incorporate and infuse LGBTQ issues in their curriculum. We would offer assistance in uncovering literature inclusive of LGBT themes and issues that could be used to accent their courses, such as books and periodicals that could be ordered through the University Library. The committee recognizes that this area may be more salient for some departments than others. Curriculum infusion training will be done through partnership with professionals in each department already proficient on LGBT issues in their field, the absence of which may require bringing in outside experts.
Hopes and Challenges Moving Forward

Moving forward in the fall 2012 semester, the Training Sub-Committee will begin to develop the necessary elements to ensure successful execution at each level. We will work with ITLAL to develop the specific scenarios for the training and finalize the training handout. By housing the training with ITLAL and continuing an open dialogue with their Director, the committee believes that LGBT inclusion education for faculty will be sustainable.

That said it is important to recognize that this is no small undertaking. It may take many years to train each individual department, depending on their willingness to participate. Currently there is no monetary support for outside experts, which may prove to be an issue in empowering certain departments. Lastly, the nature of college settings in hiring, retiring and infusing new curriculum with the gains of evolving information will make it necessary that trainings in LGBTQ issues be instituted, revisited, and similarly revitalized over time to incorporate the changing landscape of education.

Web Presence and FAQs Subcommittee Summary

The Web Presence & FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) Subcommittee was created by the 2010-11 Advisory Committee to pursue the following two main initiatives and related tasks:

1. Develop a relocated and expanded LGBTQI webpage
2. Develop and distribute FAQ sheets about LGBTQI-sensitive issues

This sub-committee faced a number of challenges that greatly affected their progress. After a meeting in the fall that was combined with the Training Sub-committee to utilize their help in developing topics for the “frequently asked questions” documents, the committee did not meet despite much prodding and offer of assistance from the larger Advisory Committees co-chairs. The Subcommittee Chair eventually stepped down in the spring semester, without replacement, for this year. Another Subcommittee member volunteered to chair in 2012-13, but no one volunteered for the remainder of the year. As a result, one of the Advisory Committee Co-Chairs took on the duties for the remainder of the year. Work proceeded smoothly from that point forward, but there were only a few months left to the semester.

Sub-committee members drafted answers to some of the questions that had been developed in the fall semester. This is where the work will commence in the fall, with all committee members having an opportunity to review and comment on all questions and answers, so these documents can be completed and placed on the UAlbany website as well as distributed as handouts during various orientations and trainings.
Summary of Accomplishments and Successes

The 2011-2012 UAlbany LGBTQI Concerns Advisory Committee and its Subcommittees completed or moved forward a number of important tasks, as well as set forth a tentative agenda for next year’s Committee. The Committee’s 2011-12 accomplishments include the following:

- Made additional recommendations to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion for language changes to information on the website and the President’s Diversity Statement
- Clarified procedures related to on-campus discrimination and took steps to ensure that students are aware of to whom and how to report such incidents
- Conducted a focus group with students who are transgender to ensure that their important concerns and needs are among those the Committee is working to address
- Received feedback on, revised, and completed a Recommendation to ITS regarding use of students’ Preferred First Name on Blackboard and MyUAlbany course and grade rosters
- Further explored issues related to name changes on UAlbany ID cards, on-campus resources for students wishing to legally change their names, and inclusion of questions about sex, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation on University forms and surveys
- Began drafting long-term recommendations for changes in PeopleSoft and on the Common Application and SUNY Application
- Revised FAQ (Frequently Asked Question) sheets for students and for faculty/staff
- The Advisory Committee presented a webinar with a follow-up discussion entitled “LGBT on Campus: Three Critical Issues to Consider in 2012”, February 15, 2012, 2:00 to 5:00 pm, Education Building. The funding for this was generously provided by the Vice President for Student Success. This was opened up for attendance to all members within the Student Success Division for training purposes and over 30 persons attended.

Another task that the Advisory Committee has given itself is to catalog other happenings on campus that further our “cause.” In addition to our Committee and Subcommittee activities, there were also a number of other activities, events, and successes across campus this past year that help move us toward a more inclusive campus environment for LGBTQI students, staff, and faculty. We briefly recap these exciting and important events below:

- After the passage of the Marriage Equality Act by New York State, two members of the Advisory Committee married their long-term life partners, and there was much rejoicing
- Gender-Neutral Housing was implemented, setting aside 12 suites/apartments, and has received overwhelming positive feedback from students
- The 4th Annual Lavender Graduation was held, with Nora Yates, a UAlbany alumnus and now Executive Director of the Capital Region Pride Center, as keynote speaker.
- Last year’s Undergraduate Graduation Keynote Speaker, Gregory Maguire, “outed” himself during his talk
• An LGBT student prom was held and attended by 120 undergraduate and graduate students.
• Project SHAPE: Sexual Health & Peer Education offered 12 workshops on LGBTQ issues for the campus community, including a featured keynote presentation on transgender issues as part of their 5th annual “Mixing Up the Sex Week: Contemporary Issues in Sexuality” in April, 2012.
• Two former UAlbany students, Tim Garippa and Denise Norris, one of whom is transgender, visited campus on January 24, 2012 as representatives of the global management company Accenture. They delivered a presentation entitled “Being Transgender/Accenture: A Workplace of Equality”, met with various campus representatives to raise awareness about transgender issues in the workplace, and offered consultation for services the campus offers to transgender students and employees.
• Sexual assault trainings offered by the University Counseling Center as part of Summer Planning Conference to all incoming students attending SPC will for the first time offer a mixed-sex/gender group to students; so students do not have to choose male or female groups.
• The Gender and Sexuality Resource Center (GRSC) is making a video about students’ experiences in the Center; this year’s graduating class is the last year of incoming students that did not have the Center’s services.
• The GSRC reports that there has been record involvement this past year, including fraternities and sororities, and students report feeling more that they can go to faculty and staff with issues and problems.
• The SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) Project in the School of Social Welfare continues to offer numerous trainings to social work students and community members on clinical issues impacting the LGBTQ community, as well as hosted a series of films and talks on LGBTQ issues, including a full day training entitled “LGBTQ Youth and Young Adults. Part 1: Coming Out, Coming Home: Helping Families Adjust to a Gay or Lesbian Child” and Part 2: “Identity and Intimacy within the Academy: LGBTQ College Students Today”, March 30, 2012. The SOGI project received a $2,000 grant to support its efforts.
• LGBTQI issues were included in the diversity training offered through the Tenure Trek program, through the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and in trainings for Resident Assistants and peer educators in the Project SHAPE: Sexual Health & Peer Education program and Middle Earth Peer Assistance program, both run out of the University Counseling Center.
• The Safe Space program trained more University personnel to become allies.
• The University Counseling Center continues to offer an LGBTQ support group.
• The University Counseling Center psychologists received training entitled “The T in LGBT: Exploring New Research”, which explored the planned revisions in the DSM criteria for diagnosing difference and implications on this community, presented by Carol Stenger, February 29, 2012.
• The UAlbany Department of Counseling Psychology’s Diversity Conference included a presentation entitled “Gender and Heterosexual Privilege”, delivered by Ada Sinacore, November 5, 2011.
• The LGBTQ Resource Center offered a program entitled “Beyond the Binary: A Closer Look at Bisexuality”, author and speaker Robyn Ochs, April 4, 2012. This speaker also trained peer educators in the Project SHAPE: Sexual Health & Peer Education program.
• The Student Association Office of Gender and Sexuality Concerns, along with the LGBT Resource Center and a number of other groups, sponsored a number of events for Coming Out Week and for Transgender Day of Remembrance.

Specific Recommendations from Committee

Specific recommendations from the 2011-12 Committee to Provost Phillips and VP Bouchard include the following:

• Recommendation to VPs Bouchard and Murphy to more frequently and widely distribute the “Faculty & Staff 911 Guide” to better assist students in crisis, and also consider creating one for faculty and staff who are in crisis
• Recommendation to ITS for use of Preferred First Name on Blackboard and MyUAlbany course and grade rosters (see Appendix A)
• Implement more gender-neutral bathrooms on all three campuses (perhaps starting with those that are single bathrooms, such as those in University Hall)

Going Forward

Finally, the Advisory Committee, through its subcommittees, also developed a series of recommendations that can guide the initial work for 2012-13, including the following:

• Follow up with Provost Phillips and VP Bouchard regarding recommendations made
• Conduct a follow-up Campus Climate Survey
• Look further into University tax trusts to assist married and domestic partners with federal tax burdens associated with health benefits considered compensatory income
• Look further into how UAlbany IDs can accommodate transgender students, faculty, and staff and further explore provision of campus legal resources regarding name changes
• Finalize long-term recommendations for permanent changes to PeopleSoft and the Common and SUNY Applications that will allow more options for gender expression
• Explore health insurance options that include coverage for medical needs of transgender students, faculty, and staff
• Develop an orientation resource packet for LGBTQI students, and consider hosting a Lavender Orientation to empower LGBTQI students with information and support
• Work with appropriate University offices on developing rules regarding access to specific information such as gender and racial identity
• Recruit faculty and staff for the Speaker’s Bureau
• Work with ITLAL to implement training for classroom instructors
• Finalize FAQ sheets and meet with department heads to offer training to faculty and staff and to distribute FAQs
• Review and recommend any additional necessary changes to the LGBTQIAP Life web page and also changes to the Student Success and Student Association web pages
• Develop means to better publicize the work of the Committee and relevant campus and community LGBTQ events, activities, and successes to the University community
• Encourage the resuscitation of the LGBTQI Faculty/Staff Association
• Continue to catalogue social, professional, and academic endeavors across our campus, including but not limited to events, trainings, and courses, that further our collective efforts to improve the UAlbany climate for LGBTQI students, faculty, and staff

The Advisory Committee is made up of enthusiastic and dedicated members who are committed to seeing our work to fruition. We continue to make progress on our goals and welcome the opportunity to continue our work in the 2012 - 2013 academic year.
Appendix A: Recommendations to ITS re: Use of Preferred Name

Memo: Recommendations to Information Technology Services (5/30/12 Draft)
RE: Use of “Preferred First Name” in PeopleSoft for Course and Grade Rosters
From: UAlbany LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex) Concerns Advisory Committee

The Issue:

Currently, the UAlbany management information system populates Course Rosters and Grade Rosters in both MyUAlbany and the Blackboard Learning System (BLS) with the students’ “Legal Name” from PeopleSoft. While students have the option of entering a “Preferred Name” through MyUAlbany, this preferred name is not used by PeopleSoft outside of the student’s MyUAlbany portal. While “Legal Name” is fine for many students, it is not inclusive of the needs of all students at the University at Albany. We are particularly concerned about UAlbany students who are transgender and will describe this issue in greater detail in the Background and Rationale, as well as FAQs, below. In addition to transgender students, there are other groups of students who use a first name that is different from their legal name, including international students who adopt an Americanized first name and students who, for various personal reasons, primarily use their middle name or nickname as a first name. For the issue at hand, transgender students (as well as transgender faculty and staff) may have a chosen first name that is different than their legal name (example: Dave instead of Carrie) and whose chosen name more appropriately matches their gender identity and expression. We propose the following recommendation, which is consistent with that put forth by The Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals (2011).

Recommendation:

Program PeopleSoft to pull “Preferred Name” (if present) OR “Legal Name” (if no “Preferred Name” is present) and use this to populate the official course roster and the grade roster in MyUAlbany and in BLS. This recommendation applies only to a preferred FIRST name. This procedure would work with the existing set-up of PeopleSoft and, after the first customization, should not require continuous re-customizations. The student’s ID number connects all of their information, so the registrar (and instructors) should still be able to link the updated course and grade rosters with the official student record, which is still required to and will bear the student’s “Legal Name.”

Definitions:

1. Transgender: An umbrella term used to describe all persons who do not fit neatly into the binary (male-female), socially constructed categories of sex and gender
2. Gender identity: our sense of self as being male or female or neither or both
3. Gender expression: our communication of gender through, for example, our appearance, dress, behavior, mannerisms, pronouns and names
Background and Rationale:

The transgender community includes a variety of individuals whose histories and identities may not include solely one gender (male or female), and many individuals may currently identify and express themselves as one gender that is different from their birth gender (Beemyn and Rankin 2011). It is important to note that not all transgender individuals choose to undergo surgical or hormonal changes, for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, the high cost of such procedures; however, they may alter their gender expression in other ways to be consistent with their gender identity. Transgender individuals consequently often find themselves in a challenging position when it comes to their “legal identity” (often, their “birth identity”). Legally changing one’s name often requires going through the court system and providing documentation from medical professionals. The courts are unlikely to grant a name change until the individual has undergone counseling and medical/surgical changes to the new gender. In New York State, one must provide medical and psychological records to change “sex”/gender and name on one’s drivers’ license; and, a NYS drivers’ license or U.S. passport are required to change one’s name and gender at the University at Albany. For students, this is a heavy financial burden and typically not feasible. Because transgender students may have already altered their gender expression (appearance as “male” or “female”) to be consistent with their gender identity, they want to be recognized with their chosen name (not by birth or legal name) by instructors and other students. If this does not happen (example: Dave is still listed as Carrie on course rosters), the students must “out” themselves with each instructor (and often the entire class) to correct the name. This is a heavy burden to place on transgender students and unfairly disadvantages them in the classroom. This may also place transgender students at greater risk for harassment, discrimination, and physical harm either within the classroom context or outside of the classroom (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, and Frazer 2010). Thus, making the change to “preferred name” is likely to reduce the stress and anxiety that students may face on campus and improve both their personal safety and their educational success.

Because transgender individuals often face a greater risk for discrimination, harassment, and exclusion in various life contexts (work, housing, school, personal life, medical care) (Beemyn and Rankin 2011), it is particularly important for institutions of higher education to make changes that create a safer and more welcoming campus climate. The University at Albany has already made strides to do so, among them the recent implementation of the Gender Inclusive Housing Proposal, which sets aside specific housing arrangements so that students may have roommates and suitemates from across the gender spectrum. These new arrangements allow transgender students to avoid having to “out” themselves and provide a more comfortable and safe living environment. Expanding this same environment to the classroom would result in a more positive and productive educational experience for transgender students. For many students, the early years at university are an important and often challenging time in development of their identity. For transgender students, who may be exploring their gender identity and expression for the first time, this period may be even more challenging. Allowing students the freedom, comfort, and safety to explore and express their identity not only promotes their achievement of personal, educational, and professional goals, but also furthers the University’s diversity mission of an inclusive, welcoming environment that meets the needs of all of our students.
In addition to transgender students, a number of students on campus have a preferred first name that is different from their legal name. For example, many international students choose an Americanized first name (e.g., “Angela” instead of “Yue”), while other students use a preferred middle name or nickname as a first name. Thus, allowing the use of preferred first name would have broad appeal for many students. Many instructors ask students about this directly on the first day of class, but doing so may “out” transgender students when they may not be comfortable doing so.

Finally, more than 20 other colleges and universities have already implemented these changes and are willing to serve as resources for universities who wish to make similar changes (Consortium 2011, Questions and Answers). For example, the University of Michigan (http://www.itcs.umich.edu/itcsdocs/r1461/) uses PeopleSoft and allows students to use Preferred Name on course rosters, while retaining Legal Name as students’ primary name.

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Preferred Name Use

1) **Question:** Why is this change being requested?

**Answer:** Students who are transgender often have a gender presentation that is at odds with their legal/birth name and they often select a first name that is consistent with their gender identity and presentation. Having to “out” themselves in the classroom to instructors and students ranges from uncomfortable to traumatizing and creates the potential for a hostile classroom environment and discrimination, harassment and violence outside of the classroom. Transgender individuals face a greater risk for discrimination, harassment, and exclusion in multiple life contexts (work, housing, school, personal life, medical care), so it is particularly important for institutions of higher education to make changes that create a safer and more welcoming campus climate. Allowing use of “preferred first name” on MyUAlbany and BLS course and grade rosters would result in a more positive and productive educational experience for transgender students.

2) **Question:** What does this recommendation NOT affect?

**Answer:** This proposed change would affect ONLY course rosters and grade rosters generated through MyUAlbany and BLS and used by instructors. It would NOT affect the student’s academic record, their financial aid records, or their Human Resources records. Additionally, this proposal is for changes to preferred FIRST name only, not last name.
3) **Question:** Why don’t students just legally change their names and avoid the whole issue/situation?

**Answer:** Legally changing one’s name often requires going through the court system and providing documentation from medical professionals. The courts are unlikely to grant a name change until the individual has undergone counseling and medical/surgical changes to the new gender. In New York State, one must provide medical and psychological records to change “sex”/gender and name on one’s drivers’ license, and a NYS drivers’ license or U.S. passport are required to change one’s name and gender at the University. For students, this is a heavy financial burden and typically not feasible.

4) **Question:** Doesn’t this change benefit just a small proportion of UAlbany students?

**Answer:** No. In addition to transgender students, a number of students on campus have a preferred first name that is different from their legal name. For example, many international students choose an Americanized first name (e.g., “Angela” instead of “Yue”), while other students use a preferred middle name or nickname as a first name. Thus, allowing the use of preferred first name would have broad appeal for many students.

5) **Question:** What about students who treat this as a joke and input fictitious “preferred first names”?

**Answer:** We recognize that this may be an issue and note that while other Universities have experienced this problem, they report that the number of students who fail to take this seriously is very small. Nonetheless, because some small number of students will use this opportunity in ways not intended, we recommend that University develop specific policies to address this kind of student misuse.

**References**

