

Making Colleges and Universities Safe for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) Students and Staff

by Warren J. Blumenfeld

The following is a summary from *Making Colleges and Universities Safe for Gay and Lesbian Students: Report and Recommendations of the Massachusetts Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth*, Warren J. Blumenfeld, Principal Author. (For a free copy of the report, write to The Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth, Room 111, State House, Boston MA 02133.)

I. Policies

1. Enact nondiscrimination policies on the basis of sexual and gender orientation in matters of hiring, tenure, promotion, admissions, and financial aid.
2. Have policies and procedures for dealing with homophobic violence and harassment.
3. Have a written, inclusive, and affirming definition of "couples" that is nondiscriminatory towards same-sex couples in a way that is appropriate for each institution.
4. Ensure equal access and equality of all benefits and privileges granted to all employees and students.
5. Have policies of active outreach in hiring openly GLBT and/or GLBT- sensitive faculty, staff, and administrators in all segments of the campus community.
6. Actively recruit openly GLBT prospective students.

All of the above policies should be written, clear, consistent, accessible, and well-publicized throughout the campus.

II. Training and Development

1. Homophobia and other "diversity" workshops should be implemented for the entire campus community to sensitize and educate staff, faculty, and administrators.

III. Services

1. Colleges and universities provide official recognition, support, and funding of campus GLBT student organizations.
2. Physically safe, secure, and appropriate space with a welcoming, emotionally safe atmosphere should be available to GLBT organizations for meetings, social events, coffee houses, lectures, workshops, and other events.
3. Legal and fundraising support services should be available to GLBT students.
4. Campus housing should include GLBT living options.
5. University leadership should make strong, clear, public statements on a regular basis that state the college's commitment to ending discrimination, conviction that violence and harassment are entirely unacceptable, and appreciation of the value of diversity on campus, including diversity of sexual and gender identity.

6. Colleges and universities hire openly GLBT or GLBT-sensitive therapists/counselors, faculty, staff, and administrators.
7. Peer counselors and/or campus crisis hotline volunteers be adequately trained in sensitivity to sexuality, sexual and gender orientation/identity, and "coming out" issues.
8. Effective AIDS education, imperative for all people of all sexual and gender orientations, must be available and widespread.
9. Social activities through residence halls, Offices of Student Activities, and other organizations must be not only inclusive of all sexual and gender orientations and identities, without pressures toward heterosexuality, but actively welcoming of GLBT people as well as same-sex couples.
10. College and university presidents have a standing advisory committee, panel, or board, appointed or elected in consultation with GLBT students, staff, and faculty members.
11. Student opinion should be assessed regularly, by the above mentioned panel or in some other manner, in order to gauge the effectiveness of implemented changes.
12. Campus publications should take care to provide adequate and fair coverage of GLBT events and issues, both on and off campus.
13. Colleges and universities should aid students in alumni outreach.
14. Internship opportunities may also be cultivated among local GLBT-owned businesses and GLBT activist and community service organizations.
15. The diversity within the GLBT community should be recognized and affirmed.
16. The location and availability of resources of value to GLBT people should be published in materials distributed to all students, faculty, staff, and alumni.
17. Personnel at the Career Planning/Placement Center, like personnel in every college area, should be sensitive to GLBT issues and be aware of employment opportunities in GLBT owned or GLBT friendly businesses and community service organizations.
18. While needs differ greatly at each of the hundreds of institutions of higher education, it seems clear that for many, if not most, the most critically important and invaluable resource is a GLBT campus resource center with a paid administrator, staff, and resources.
19. In institutions where financial resources do not allow for centers and/or administrative support for any "minorities," there should at least be an ombudsperson or other clearly recognized, identified, and publicized as an official liaison to the campus GLBT community.

IV. Curriculum / Educational Materials / Academic Affairs

1. Issues relating to GLBT people should be formally and permanently integrated into existing courses across the curriculum.
2. Speakers on GLBT topics, and particularly those who present scholarly research on GLBT topics, should be brought to campus regularly.
3. Courses dealing specifically with GLBT issues in the humanities, natural sciences, education, social sciences, and other disciplines should be established.
4. A visiting scholar position in GLBT studies should be created and supported on a continuing basis.
5. College and university libraries should increase their holdings of GLBT books, periodicals, and computer networking systems.

6. Campus facilities should be available for regional GLBT studies conferences, with administrative support provided.
7. Fellowship opportunities should be created and funded for teaching and research of GLBT topics.
8. Scholarship and research into GLBT history, culture, and theory should be encouraged and supported in faculty and students.
9. All multicultural education should be inclusive of the issues, history, culture, and experiences of GLBT people in the United States and worldwide. Multicultural awareness (social diversity) courses should be mandatory for all students at some point during the undergraduate years.
10. An archive and history of GLBT organizations on campus should be created.

V. Employee Concerns

1. Policies regarding equal benefits and nondiscrimination should be made clear in recruiting brochures, informational materials, campus publications, and orientation sessions.
2. The university should aid, support, and fund the creation of GLBT faculty and staff discussion, support, and networking groups.
3. Trade unions and professional organizations should have inclusive policies and supportive services available to their members.
4. There should be equality in all benefits, including, for example: bereavement leave, insurance coverage, library privileges, access to gym and other recreational facilities, listings in directories if spouses are customarily listed, housing for GLBT couples where the qualifications are analogous to the qualifying basis for heterosexuals, "couple" rates must be made available to GLBT couples, access to any and all other privileges and benefits by GLBT partners if access is available to heterosexual spouses.
5. There should be ongoing sensitivity training and staff development on GLBT issues for all employees.
6. Colleges and universities should cover the expenses of employees attending conferences on GLBT issues.

VI. Community / Off-Campus Concerns

1. Community GLBT groups should be invited to attend campus events as participants, guests, and event leaders and facilitators.
2. Information regarding social, religious, and other community resources should be made easily accessible to all students, staff, faculty, and administrators.
3. Counselors, administrators, and faculty should be available to parents or other community members to alleviate any concern that may arise out of the implementation of any of the above recommendations, as well as any concerns arising during their child's coming out process, if that is the case.
4. Representatives of GLBT student groups from different schools should meet regularly to keep each other apprised of upcoming events, plan events together, and strengthen the GLBT community.

5. Publications, fundraising materials, and all other publications distributed to parents and alumni should include relevant and appropriate stories, essays, and news regarding GLBT issues, organizations, and events.
6. Corporations, public agencies, and government, religious, and community agencies and institutions that do not have official written policies against discrimination based on sexual and gender orientation should be strongly discouraged or prohibited from on-campus employment or enlistment recruiting.

Warren J. Blumenfeld is founder and first director of the National Gay Student Center. (This organization exists today as the National Queer Student Coalition of the United States Student Association.) He is co-author of the book *Looking at Gay and Lesbian Life*, editor of the book *Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price*, author of *AIDS and Your Religious Community*, and editor of the *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies*. He is also co-producer of the documentary film "Pink Triangles" on the topic of homophobia. In addition, he facilitates diversity workshops for schools, businesses and community organizations.

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