

## Session #12:

### How LGBTQ friendly is our campus community?

#### What we heard:

#### Progress UofL has made over the years in terms of supporting the queer community.

- We have an LGBT center on both Belknap and HSC, this is huge because that wasn't always the case.
- The LGBTQ community over the years has been given a lot of support, there's been a positive change during that time but, I think that there's always room to grow, and more work to do.
  1. There has been a lot of support for LGBTQ students, although the degree to which that is felt versus talk, seems to be murky.
  2. Are the resources that the LGBT center gets fully funded from the university? Or does the LGBTQ fund raising support provide more money than the university? That's something that I'm a little concerned about that.
- There are more gender-neutral bathrooms on campus compared to years past. In the student activity Center (SAC), Ekstrom library, in the new dormitories on Belknap, as well as on the HSC campus. But gender-inclusive and gender-neutral are two different things. On HSC, the only gender-neutral restroom is also a locker room, which is kind of terrifying.
  1. To go to a gender-neutral restroom from the B Building (HSC) you must go down a flight of steps and in a completely different building it's seriously a hike.
- The new dormitories have floors that are gender inclusive, that is totally new for our campus.
- The LGBT center has done a great job at educating the campus community by offering presentations, education, opportunities, and even the healthcare series.
- One thing that comes to mind is the Business School had a banner promoting LGBTQ, it was torn down, I'm glad to see that they put another one back up.

#### Are Pronouns respected or disrespected on campus?

- I know it's been an educational experience for me, using the appropriate pronouns.
  1. with the students that I serve, we now make it a point to share what our pronouns are.
  2. I think the actions of our students are always so much further ahead sometimes than the rest of us.
- I don't think pronouns are commonly used across our campus. I don't think we automatically use pronouns or even acknowledge pronouns, and I think we probably need to do better.

- A student worker came to me and suggested that we start putting their pronouns on the weekly schedule, so when people check the schedule if they don't know somebody by quickly looking at it, they can know what their pronouns are, just that simple.
  1. In all my classes the professor allows us to share our pronouns during first class Ice Breakers, which is beneficial.
  2. At the law school this school year it was suggested to have the pronouns listed on the roster at the beginning of the semester, the professors are equipped with a list of the pronouns listed on the roster. I think the more we can have upfront is beneficial.
- You can't change your name pronouns on MSTeams
  1. there's no option to put your pronouns in with your name. Not being able to present that up front can be challenging for folks.
- I go by she/her, someone said I didn't appear to be that to them. I said it's not about what I appear to be, it is what I told you.
  1. A deeper understanding of pronoun use may help by equating it to someone's name, if you're constantly mispronouncing someone's name, or calling someone by a different name, it is disrespectful.
  2. avoiding using any pronouns feels like another kind of "othering" in the sense that, I don't want to offend you, but and I'm not comfortable with who you are.
- Staff and faculty prioritize using correct pronouns amongst students, but don't prioritize it as much amongst their colleagues.
- There's little accountability, When I am misgendered, in many instances, professors or supervisors are the ones who avoid holding people accountable.
  1. It's exhausting to navigate. Confronting and addressing this issue, it's easier to advocate for others than for myself.
  2. Because I'm black and queer and disabled there doesn't really feel like there's a safe, welcoming open space for me.
  3. It's frustrating, when it is your supervisors who say they just can't learn or it is just too difficult, and you must remind them.
  4. as a nonbinary queer person who also advocates for students, faculty and staff, I've talked one-on-one with people when they make mistakes, I think people are learning, but they have a long way to go.
- I've only been at UofL since March. I'm very, very new to academia in general, but also UofL so it has been a challenge to have my pronouns respected.

**UofL regularly shares its top five out of five-star status in the campus pride index, but what are your experiences of how the university shares that rating? Is it a way to highlight and build a stronger community on campus? Or is it self-promotion or rainbow capitalism?**

(The term rainbow capitalism, is the action of companies and institutions that claim to support queer causes and communities but are making merchandise for profit and who capitalize off the trend.)

- I do feel that there is sincerity from a lot of people. But it could also be self-promotion, it does increase or potentially increase enrollment, which increases tuition money, which increases the budget. I don't think self-promotion is the main reason, but I could see where it could be a bit of both.
- I have to say that knowing the star status influenced me coming here, it did make me feel safer in some ways to open-up to colleagues and kind of make me feel like there's at least some sort of safe space in the queer community here on campus.
- 100,000,000% rainbow capitalism (in my possibly jaded opinion) especially because I don't see or hear work being done to normalize queerness. I don't hear queer voices and perspectives from leaders.
- Queer marketing worked for me as a student, and then when I got here, I did not feel welcome.
- I have been an undergrad student at UofL and now I am a staff member. As a student I would see a lot of buildings with pride flags on them, banners that boast about being inclusive, but as a queer person on campus and as a student, and even now as a staff member, I see the same banners, but I don't see resources being escalated to queer students or accessibility to those services.

### **How do people feel about intersectionality and how it plays into how queer friendly the University of Louisville is?**

- As a predominantly white institution (PWI) UofL must make efforts to elevate the importance of intersectionality, using an intersectional lens when discussing communal space.
  1. I think it's important to note that CODRE is all about diversity and racial equity, and this session is being led by two people that identify as white, and it's important to note that it is absolutely 100% white people's obligation to fight white supremacy.
  2. I appreciate that CODRE is an ally to talk about BIPOC queer intersectionality, because sometimes we don't have the spaces to talk about the intersectionality of ethnic groups. To find places like this and talk to people help a lot.
- There is a problem on UofL campus with the CIS White Dudes Boys Club. When you get to the top of units, it's a bunch of CIS White dudes. That doesn't make a lot of us feel included. If others get into leadership, those CIS white dudes find every which way to push us out. The CIS White Dudes Boys Club really likes to help each other out and protect each other.
- As faculty in the School of Engineering, I feel that the university does a good job in supporting GLBTQ issues, in fact, I make a point to share my same-sex marital status to reinforce this, to let students know that we have a welcoming faculty in engineering.

- A lot of people, especially queer people of color, don't see representations of themselves in leadership, and that's a big problem, it sends the wrong message to our student population.
- It can be very telling where queer leadership is within an organization, where BIPOC leadership is in an organization. Are they the face of that school is it performative?
- I feel like there's a rainbow ceiling.

**What would it look like or feel like if BIPOC, queer people were in leadership. Do you think the university would move differently?**

- I think there would be a lot more action and far less lip service.
- I think there might be a greater degree of accountability. How is your work aligning with your words? Which voices are you prioritizing? Whose perspectives are you seeking out? And for what purpose?
- More proactive introspection for BIPOC queer folks when it comes to why I'm doing the work and why it matters, as opposed to the appearance/reality of trendy lip service.
- As a university we certainly talk the talk but when it comes down to it, do we walk the walk, I think in a lot of cases we're failing queer staff, students, and faculty members.

**What challenges and barriers exist for the queer population at UofL?**

- Difference between gender neutral and gender inclusive?
  1. From the B building on HSC, the gender inclusive restroom is a building away. You must go up and down several floors to access.
  2. We have restrooms that still say, male and female, someone may put a piece of paper above that sign that could be torn down every few days that says gender inclusive. It's still a gendered space, that said, is it gender inclusive if it's still labeled with one binary idea of who that room is being told it's for?
- UofL doesn't allow nonbinary transgender options in paperwork. (WorkDay may be working to fix that, yet to be determined if it can)
- As a student and as a staff person, finding safe and inviting spaces does not feel attainable.

**Academic freedom/ Policies/ Accountability**

- I've been told, we can't require faculty to do XY&Z because of academic freedom, people have the right to question things. They are telling me my pronouns and my identity are a personal choice, so it's pushed back on me.

1. I want to know if there are policies that require the university to do something if someone's identity is discriminated against, and if not, how can those policies be changed to protect marginalized people.
  2. This speaks to accountability, with policies comes consequences for actions that go against those policies.
- At the medical school in the past year, I've heard an attending go on an anti-trans rant and wondering aloud about why LGBT status would be something you would consider as a diversity factor and questioning the validity of bisexual people.

### **Student spaces and more**

- SHADES was a student group when I was looking to register at UofL, but when I got here, I realized that it had been disbanded for a while, it was primarily geared toward undergrads.
  1. A little history on SHADES, it first started as an organization called Blackout, because it did start as student programming, when we graduated in 2013, that initial iteration of SHADES for LGBTQ students of color disbanded.
    - I would love to get ideas of how we could create a group not only for undergrad students but also grad students, staff and faculty of color.
    - Unfortunately, when students come together for these types of organizations then the students graduate the infrastructure usually falls through, it's hard to keep it up at an institutional level.
- UofL has an LGBTQ plus faculty and staff association for employees that does social engagements, meetings. It's a great way to be involved in the queer community for faculty and staff. We are planning a social mixer in late November or early December, lookout for details about that.

### **For those that have experienced anti queer bias at UofL, how would you have liked that handled/held accountable.**

- We had something called the "Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) reporting tool at UofL. Now it is not found anywhere.
  1. The Dean of Students Office had a small committee looking at revamping BIRT in 2020/2021. Michigan was looked at as a model, they have staff of around three people employed to do this job.
  2. a proposal was drafted, and sent forward to the President's office Nov. 2021, then the President left so nothing has been done.
- Where does the line fall between hate speech and protecting employees and students' rights against discrimination? What is the role of the university?

**How can the university better support the queer community? Specific actionable items that CODRE should do because of this conversation.**

1. A question came up about admissions and if it has an option to list pronouns for students
2. A question for faculty and staff, is does Workday has a provision for pronouns
3. More accessible restrooms and locker rooms.
  1. We have got to fix gender-neutral bathrooms, we can't have people uncomfortable for something as simple as being able to go to the bathroom.
4. More education around pronouns, but more advocacy on leaders to take the lead on that.
5. Break the rainbow ceiling, remove barriers to upper administration that LGBTQ folks experience.
6. Yes, we have free speech, but in a workplace, or classroom, we create guidelines so that people don't have the right to be terrible.
  1. The university should better define freedom of speech to not include hate speech and hate speech should not fall under the protections of tenure.
7. The legislative session in Kentucky is coming, for LGBTQ people, especially trans and non-binary people, there are already pre filed bills.
  1. As a state university, with a 5-star LGBTQ campus rating when this took place last spring, UofL took the position of public silence related to the bill banning trans athletes. I know how important it is to see leaders speak out, and as a staff person, I feel like my hands are tied because I don't know if I can speak out, I would like to know what policy is on that kind of subject.
  2. I am a part time lecturer and as a staff person, I'm not sure what I can and can't say in public about legislative bills and other social justice incidents.
8. One thing CODRE could recommend is reviving BIRT with staff who are trained and employed. Not relying on volunteers taking on that role. Michigan renamed their group the "campus climate support team".
9. During our new employee orientation for employees, have the LGBT center included as a resource.
10. Have the VP for Diversity and Inclusion look at policies. Quite often policies are not what they say, it's what they don't say.
  1. They need to be thinking about how you make policies that truly are inclusive and don't leave out information that allows spaces for people to be mistreated.
- Lee Gill's commitment is he will listen to what is recommended in the listening sessions, and you will hear from him through our newsletter.

- In CODRE we need to start using our pronouns, that is the space where we need to start.
- One recommendation might be to offer virtual/online social spaces where people can connect.