

October 17, 2023

Dear UofL Community,

In response to the incident on Belknap campus last spring involving our transgender students, the Office of Institutional Equity, Division of Student Affairs, University Police Department, and Office of Communications and Marketing have provided this update on the steps taken to rectify the situation and ensure a more inclusive environment for all. Firstly, we want to again express our sincere apologies to the affected students. We deeply regret any distress or harm caused by this incident. Our commitment to fostering an inclusive community remains steadfast, and we are determined to make amends and continue to work to build a community that is welcoming to all. In response to this incident, we have taken the immediate action steps listed below.

University Housing and Residence Halls

In partnership with the LGBT Center, a gender inclusive university housing policy and website were created. Concerns were raised about the policy, and Student Affairs requested a meeting with University Housing, Dean of Students Office, ULTRA, LGBT Center, and Cultural Center employees, as well as students. On Friday, March 10, 2023, a meeting was organized to hear the concerns of those in attendance. As a result, Student Affairs is undertaking a comparison of gender-inclusive college housing regulations. This benchmark research looks at residence life regulations and guidelines, as well as the methods for assigning residence halls.

Currently, students can apply for gender-inclusive housing voluntarily. Gender-inclusive housing allows two or more students regardless of gender, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation to share a multiple-occupancy bedroom, suite, or apartment. The following residence halls: Belknap Village North, Bettie Johnson Hall, Billy Minardi Hall, Cardinal Towne, Community Park, Kurz Hall, Louisville, Belknap Village South, University Pointe, and University Tower Apartments are now offering gender inclusive housing.

For students who want to learn more about and support various underrepresented student groups, such as the LGBTQ+ community, the university also offers the Bayard Rustin Living Learning Themed Community. This community, named after LGBTQ civil rights activist Bayard Rustin, is intended for any student who is interested in building an intentional community of students who want to live in a secure, welcoming environment for all.

In addition to these housing policy changes, the LGBT Center provided training for University Housing. In the future, training will be supplemented with new modules based on feedback from our transgender student population.

Training and Awareness

Training

The Cultural and Equity Center (CEC) team prioritized trauma-informed care for students and staff who were directly impacted by the events, including staff from the LGBT Center. They promptly met with ULPD leadership following the incident at the CEC. As a result, impacted students and staff received apologies as well as a commitment to DEI training. Conversations, healing, and collaborative partnerships are ongoing.

Current training for trans members of our community will be audited and updated to remove bias and adverse impact for those members of our community, and further training for students, professors, and staff will be produced in collaboration with trans community members.

The LGBT staff met with Greek organizations, including Pi Kappa Alpha, to plan training opportunities, the formation of a Greek LGBT Task Force, and potential fundraising initiatives. In addition, we are meeting with various campus partners on a regular basis to advocate for adequate resources and support for our Trans students.

Awareness events

Chalking Event

In partnership with ULPD (non-uniformed), a chalking event was held on March 1 at the Cultural and Equity Center. This event was designed to foster a safe and empowering space for students to exercise their rights in accordance with student policy.

Inaugural UofL Trans Visibility Month

We continue in our commitment to raise awareness and foster empowerment during the inaugural UofL Trans Visibility Month. Our LGBT Center has secured and will implement a new training instrument centering the trans community. This effort was coupled with a viewing of the film, "Disclosure," a documentary which examines Hollywood's depiction of transgender people and the impact left on both the trans community and American culture.

While we acknowledge these efforts are not enough by themselves, we commit to continuing conversations and actions with the goal of contributing to UofL being a great place to learn, discover, connect, and work for ALL Cardinals.

University of Louisville Police Department (ULPD)

ULPD Training

Following the incident at the Center, staff from the Cultural and Equity Center met with ULPD leadership. As a result, impacted students and staff received apologies as well as a commitment to DEI training. Conversations, healing, and collaborative partnerships are ongoing.

Extensive sensitivity training workshops for ULPD were conducted in May, with a particular emphasis on educating them about *Implicit Bias*, *Engaging in Difficult Dialogue*, *Fostering Inclusive Spaces*, and *Microaggressions*. To prepare the team for deeper dialogues, the training sessions included level-setting, self-reflection, and advocacy. This training program promoted acceptance, understanding, and respect for all individuals, regardless of gender identification. We are preparing future training sessions for our Physical Plant personnel as well.

Further, all ULPD police officers complete training certified by the Kentucky Law Enforcement Council (KLEC) before working in a sworn capacity on campus. They employ both lateral officers who obtained their Peace Officer Professional Standards certification while working for another agency in the commonwealth, and new recruits who complete a twenty-week academy at the Department of Criminal Justice Training center. Among many other topics, recruit training includes cultural awareness, bias related crimes, community interactions, de-escalation, constitutional law, and responding to people in crisis. Laterals must complete the same or equivalent training in all topics. Every Kentucky police officer must receive an additional forty-hours of annual in-service training to maintain their credentials. Supervisors are also required to undergo KLEC approved leadership training commensurate with their positions upon being promoted.

The training standards are rigorous, pertinent, and responsive to current campus safety issues. Mandatory training subjects for law enforcement students includes bias-related crime. Kentucky Revised Statute 15.334 states "...Identification and investigation of, responding to, and reporting bias-related crime, victimization, or intimidation that is a result of or reasonably related to race, color, religion, sex, or national origin."

ULPD requires all recruits to complete an additional on the job training program after the basic law enforcement academy. During this time, the new officer works closely with a more experienced officer who coaches and evaluates their job performance. Lateral officers are subject to the same training program if deemed beneficial. The following job behaviors are included in this training and evaluation, which represent some of the concerns at issue:

- Attitude Towards Public/Campus Service
- Relationships with Students
- Relationships with Faculty/Staff
- Acceptance of Culturally Diverse Groups and Individuals
- Self-Control
- Control of Conflict
- Verbal Communication Skills

ULPD indicates that their policies are sufficient given that the accreditation processes include modeling our written directives from national standards, including guidelines regarding use of force, de-escalation, specifically:

Officers should treat every contact as an opportunity to show professionalism and care for the persons they serve. When time and circumstances reasonably permit, officers should consider whether a subject's lack of compliance is a deliberate attempt to resist or an inability to comply based on factors including, but not limited to medical conditions, mental impairment, developmental disability, physical limitation (deafness, mobility, blindness, etc.), language barrier, cultural barrier, situational stress, drug interaction, or behavior crisis.

In addition, Chief Steven Green has pledged to have representatives available from ULPD to attend COSW or any other campus organization meetings upon request to address any additional questions or concerns.

University Administration

University administration worked closely with ULTRA, the Student Government Association, the LGBT Center, and other stakeholders to actively review existing policies and/or create additional policies to ensure UofL is a safe and inclusive environment for our transgender students. Our aim is to create an environment where every student feels safe, respected, and valued.

The President and Provost clearly stated to the entire University of Louisville community that trans students are an important and valuable part of our community, and to abide by our Cardinal Principles, the university will actively demonstrate its commitment to being a Community of Care, demonstrating respect, and valuing diversity and inclusion.

We are certain that by implementing proactive initiatives such as those indicated above, in conjunction with continued community involvement, we can achieve long-term good change on our campus. On a regular basis, campus reports will be provided on the progress toward developing actions, including the status of reviewing policies that affect the trans community and groups that have conversed on the matter. Thank you for your patience and continuous support as we work towards building a more inclusive future.

Lee Gill, J.D.

Vice President for Institutional Equity
University of Louisville