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2013-2014 Clemson LGBTQ Task Force Recommendations

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LGBTQ Task Force Recommendations 2013-2014



PRESIDENT'S
LGBTQ  TASK
FORCE

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Background

In December of 2011, a group of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and other Clemson community members came together to discuss the invisibility of the queer and trans communities in the “Clemson family” message. The event was held at the Madren Center and sponsored in part by the then-Dean of Students Joy Smith. One of the motivating factors of the meeting was Clemson University’s unfortunately low score, 2 out of 5 stars, on the National LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Assessment tool from *Campus Pride*. The average score among the Top-20 Public Schools (*U.S. News & World Report*, 2013) is 4.4 out of 5 stars. Of the Top-25 Public Schools, only Clemson scored below a 3 out of 5 stars. Our main motivation stemmed from the controversial off-campus beating of a gay Clemson student. Leading up to the confrontation gay slurs were used against two students and one student suffered a physical attack.

From the meeting’s exhaustive list of findings, three items were identified as priorities: establishment of a LGBTQ commission, establishment of a LGBTQ resource center, and same-sex spousal benefits. Of the three, the establishment of a commission was pursued by Leon Wiles (Chief Diversity Officer), Susan Hilligoss (English faculty), and Joshua Morgan (library staff). Bylaws were drafted, and in November of 2012, a smaller representative group appeared before President Jim Barker to present their rationale for the establishment of a commission. The president responded by appointing a task force to act in an advisory capacity and to continue the discussion about how to make members of the queer and trans communities feel welcome and safe in the Clemson family.

Purpose

- The purpose of a Clemson University Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) Task Force is to serve in an advisory capacity to the university administrators, faculty, staff, and students regarding matters which affect LGBTQ people.

Objectives

- To create a welcoming environment that supports both inclusion and diversity.
- To make recommendations regarding the policies, procedures, and practices which affect the LGBTQ campus community, with the goal of improving access and opportunities.
- To ensure that the university appropriately addresses issues of safety and welfare of LGBTQ faculty, staff, students, and guests.
- To advise the university administration, faculty, and staff on matters pertaining to the LGBTQ campus community.
- To establish and maintain strong collaborative partnerships with organizations and entities which support the purpose, mission and vision of the LGBTQ Task Force and the University such as Clemson Alumni Society for Equality (CASE), Clemson Gay-Straight Alliance (CGSA), etc.



Executive Summary

The following recommendations are based on national, state, Clemson University research findings of campus climate, and task force research. Statistics can be found in the appendices. Within this document are the top 5 recommendations the task force selected as being the most important for many reasons, chiefly the safety and rights of students. Implementing these top recommendations will pave the way to changes proposed in the secondary recommendations.

In creating these recommendations, the task force brought in one of the researchers and authors of the Campus Pride LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate survey, Dr. Susan Rankin. Dr. Rankin's presentations were based upon her decades of research and analysis to show how detrimental a negative climate can be towards persons in the LGBTQ community, both students and employees, on a college campus. Several members of the task force then interviewed and collaborated with various departments at Clemson. Those departments include, but are not limited to the CU Police Department, Office of Housing, Libraries Administration, Dean of Students Office, Gantt Center for Student Life, Redfern Health, and the Chief Diversity Office.

Through these interviews, we were able to identify the gaps those departments revealed in our own self-evaluation of the Campus Pride LGBT-Friendly Climate survey, and start a discussion on the potential solutions to filling those gaps. We found that many of the administrators we talked to are more than willing to continue the discussion and help implement solutions they and the task force agree are a best fit for Clemson University. In the data directly related to Clemson, we noticed a lack of knowledge amongst the student body on LGBT issues, which is also supported by national and state data. Most of our undergraduate student body at Clemson are from South Carolina high schools, who, in the attached GLSEN report, have experienced a startling amount of homophobic and transphobic harassment and attitudes towards LGBTQ students from other students and teachers. Due to no fault of its own, Clemson University is accepting freshmen who have either been verbally or physically harassed based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, or have been the perpetrators of such harassment.

The task force finds the support of the President and much of the departments' administrations as a great positive force for change, but the general outlook of Clemson students and staff is that not much action is taking place to correct many of the policies holding back protection and support of LGBTQ students, faculty, and staff. We encounter many surprised reactions when we inform people there is a presidential task force at Clemson to monitor and advise on LGBTQ issues.

Therefore, we request that the recommendations listed within this document be approved by the administration and allowed to be implemented with the full collaboration and cooperation of each department directly involved. To single out the final recommendation of the top five, this process of implementation would be most helped by changing the status of the task force to one of a full presidential commission, implying a long term commitment to a largely overlooked and historically underrepresented part of the Clemson family.



Primary Recommendations

1. Create an institutionally funded LGBTQ resource center or office on campus with a FTE for education and support services.

It is vital to provide a safe environment for queer and transgender members of the Clemson campus. A resource center would work towards this goal to be applied university wide, while being a permanent, designated area for LGBTQ resources and a meeting space for the community and its allies. To fulfill an even greater need, the resource center should also serve as a Women's Center and/or multicultural center.

In the 1990s and 2000s, there were vocal voices against gay rights and groups on campus, chiefly from the campus editorial, *Tiger Town Observer*. Many students were "outed" by the newspaper (copies of which can be found in Clemson Libraries Special Collections) and student government representatives were named in the papers as advocates for gay student rights in an attempt to have them voted out of their positions. An anti-gay marriage rally was even held by the editorial and another student group on campus in 2006.

Though students are fully within their rights to practice free speech, it has tarnished Clemson University's climate, causing many to view the campus as homophobic and unwelcoming. Combine these rallies with the general climate of being gay in the South, and the pressure of being one's self can truly impact a student's well-being and their academic performance.

- Developing educational programming specifically based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression
- Planning campus-wide LGBTQ events, such as National Coming Out Day, World AIDS Day, National LGBT Month, Lavender Graduation, etc.
- Encouraging the start of new student organizations and the continuance of existing organizations, such as Clemson Gay-Straight Alliance
- Offering conference support for local, regional, and national conferences pertaining to LGBTQ issues and students
- Creating a culture of challenge and support for students, as well as faculty and staff
- Creating on-campus community education programs for residence halls
- Implementing and maintaining a gender-inclusive living learning community for queer, transgender, and ally students
- Working with Central Spirit and Clemson Athletics to produce an NCAA "You Can Play"-themed video in a show of support for gays and lesbians in Clemson sports
- Work with Clemson University productions to produce an "It Gets Better" video, similar to University of South Carolina's video featuring their president and many other top-level administrators



2. Add gender identity and gender expression to the university's non-discrimination policy.

The addition of sexual orientation to the non-discrimination clause represented a considerable advance in Clemson University's message of a welcoming and inclusive institution. Protecting gender identity and gender expression not only ensures the protection of queer and transgender students and employees; it also signals that Clemson welcomes and openly recruits queer and transgender students and employees. The inclusion of these identities will also lend credence to Clemson's image as being one of the top public universities in the country. 19 out of the Top 20 Public Universities from the 2013 U.S. News & World Report's annual guide to "America's Best Colleges" include gender identity or expression in their non-discrimination policies.

The statement should read as:

"Clemson University does not discriminate against any individual or group of individuals on the basis of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation or veteran's status or genetic information."

3. Provide a mechanism for transgender students to use a preferred name on all publicly available school records (including identification cards).

Transgender students often go by a first name which differs from their legal name and corresponds more appropriately to their gender identity. Moreover, a legal name change can be prohibitive to these students due to significant legal, social, familial, financial, and time-related barriers. A student's legal name, in such a case, can "out" the student as transgender by alerting others to the incongruity between their legal name and their apparent gender identity. This circumstance can severely jeopardize a student's safety, lead to uncomfortable and confusing social situations, and cultivate deep and persistent minority stress within the individual.

The cumulative effects of minority stress can lead to self-destructive behavior and even suicide. According to the National Transgender Discrimination Survey from 2011, 41% of transgender individuals reported having attempted suicide at some point in their lives. In 2012, a transgender Clemson student committed suicide in the midst of her transition, a time when stresses from issues like name usage are highest. Allowing transgender students to use a preferred first name on all publicly-accessible records (phone book, class rolls, TigerOne card, etc.) will ensure their safety, eliminate confusion and outing in classrooms and social situations, and substantially alleviate their minority stress and its harmful effects. Currently, 8 out of the Top 20 schools offer such an option, including University of Texas in Austin.



4. Make and implement a plan for gender-inclusive housing on campus.

Gender-inclusive housing options allow students to choose a living environment that is emotionally and physically safe for them and creates an advocate for students. Currently, Clemson University housing staff assists students in making the best possible, safest arrangement for them. Unfortunately, this forces students to out themselves to unfamiliar staff, and places the responsibility on students to seek a welcoming and safe housing environment. Nine out of the Top 20 schools offer LGBT-themed housing options, and 17 out of the 20 offer transgender students the “open to be housed in keeping with their gender identity/expression”.

The majority of the university's residence hall system limits living arrangements to same-gender roommate pairings, which is not supportive or comfortable for some students. The addition of a gender-inclusive housing option acknowledges the diverse needs of the student body and helps further develop a residence hall climate that is positive, respectful, and inclusive for all residents. In particular, this housing option would provide an on-campus living option for students who might otherwise, by necessity, live off campus and be further away from campus resources that should be readily available to all students. We recommend, with consultation from the Housing Office administration, that there should be an on-campus, gender-inclusive housing option, and that students should be able to select their housing preference without having to advocate for themselves in a way no other student has to.

5. Create a standing commission to advise the administration on LGBTQ issues and concerns.

The creation of the LGBTQ Task Force was a great leap forward for Clemson University's image and message of diversity and inclusion. The task force has increased visibility and positive views towards the institution amongst internal and external audiences. Throughout the past year, the task force has sought out partners across campus to participate in outreach activities and to facilitate communication among faculty, staff, and students. Beyond the recommendations put forth in this document, much work is still needed to improve the perception of a lack of institutional and administrative support. Fourteen out of the Top 20 schools have standing committees to advise administrations on LGBTQ issues.

The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer communities are among the historically underrepresented groups on campus. Being born queer or transgender spans race, age, gender, religion, ethnicity, ability, or socioeconomic class. The essence of being a “task force” posits an end date for its mission. The task force's mission is not necessarily a finite set of goals, but a culture of respect and inclusion that calls for continuous work. This task force seeks commission status in order to engender the consistent institutional support that our university needs to demonstrate to the queer and transgender members of the Clemson family.



Secondary Recommendations

- Provide gender-neutral, single occupancy restroom facilities in all current and future buildings. These restrooms would provide a safe space for transgender individuals, a private space for parents with children, individuals requiring ADA compliant spaces, and anyone with caretakers.
- Actively demonstrate LGBTQ-inclusive language in all speech and writing pertaining to diversity or multiculturalism on campus.
- Deans and supervisors should encourage Ally training for all their employees.
- Provide peer-taught training for public safety officers on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression issues and concerns.
- Admissions application should provide a space for a student to identify their preferred pronouns and their gender: transgender male, transgender female, male, female, etc.
- Offer monetary compensation to employees with same-sex partners in lieu of being able to provide spousal health benefits. This is a major factor for retention of faculty and staff, who might otherwise leave, which would incur the expensive costs of rehiring. Recruitment of talented individuals also suffers when opportunities at Clemson aren't as extensive as those in surrounding states that do provide such compensation.
- Encourage and expand LGBTQ/Queer Theory in the classroom. The approval of additional courses which are cross-listed in the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Minor (as well as the Women's Leadership Major) would allow students a more clear path toward the academic study of LGBTQ/Queer Theory. These courses could be taught in any department, but should have a specific designation to allow students to seek out and receive credit for a core of courses to strengthen an academic emphasis on this area of study.



Appendix A. Task Force Members

- **Students** – Matthew Abrams; Gregory Angeloff; Megan Denison; Richard Duncan; Blair Durkee (Secretary); Martin Maloney; Courtney McKeive; Dalton Mills; Emily Urban
- **Staff** – Alrinthea Carter; Robin Chambers (Co-chair); Joshua Morgan (Chair); Terri Vaughn
- **Faculty** – Meredith McCarroll; Kelly Smith; Harold Stevens; Will Stockton

Appendix B. Definitions

- *Ally*: Someone who advocates for and supports members of a community other than their own. Reaching across differences to achieve mutual goals.
- *Gender identity*: The gender an individual identifies as psychologically, regardless of what sex they were born.
- *Gender expression*: The expression of oneself in external presentation and/or appearance (e.g., hair style, clothing, mannerisms).
- *Transgender*: An umbrella term used to describe anyone who is born of one biological sex, but identifies psychologically as the opposite sex.
- *Queer*: An umbrella term to refer to all LGBTQ people.



Appendix C. Statistics

- 2012 Campus Climate survey conducted by the Gantt Center for Student Life
 - 27% respondents selected sexual orientation to the question asking what forms of discrimination they have experienced.
 - 30% of respondents selected sexual orientation when asked what forms of harassment they have experienced.
 - Again, 30% of respondents do not believe students are supportive of their fellow transgender peers.
 - Finally, 30% of student respondents responded “Yes” to being asked if they have witnessed discriminatory behavior on campus within the past 12 months.
- Campus Pride 2010 National Campus Climate Survey
 - 33% of queer and 38% of trans respondents seriously considered leaving their institutions due to the challenging climate.
 - 13% of queer and 43% of trans respondents feared for their physical safety.
 - 43% of queer and 63% of trans respondents concealed their identity to avoid intimidation.
- GLSEN 2013 South Carolina schools climate survey– these statistics are important because 65% of Clemson’s student body is from South Carolina. Please see attached document.

Appendix D. Task Force Activities in the Past Year

- Communications Committee
 - Website established
 - Logo established
 - Facebook page created and maintained to communicate ongoing activities in the Upstate
- Safety and Security Committee
 - Identified campus and community leaders who deal with safety issues
 - Created a worksheet with interview questions
 - Meeting with CUPD Chief Link and staff
 - Meeting with Chief of Police for CU, Chief of Police for City of Clemson and Sheriff of Pickens County
- October 11 - National Coming Out Day
 - Library books put out on display to be checked out, along with information about the task force and coming out
 - Joined CGSA on the North Green and handed out information about the task force and its mission
- November 18-24 - Laramie Project
 - Helping to organize focus group for Laramie Project to discuss issues raised by the play
 - Organizing outreach event prior to each performance with representatives from Gantt Center, GSA, Campus Ministries, and the Task Force
- February 3 - Visit to UNC Charlotte’s multicultural resource center



- Met with Joshua Burford, assistant director for sexual and gender diversity, to discuss ways in which UNC Charlotte has sought to engage its LGBTQ community to improve recruitment, retention, and their health and well-being.
- April Spring Blitz
 - Staffed a table to increase awareness of LGBTQ resources and friendliness at Clemson University for potential students and their parents.
- Worked with Gypsy Teague and Ed Rock in the library to use donated reward funds from Kelly Smith for purchasing LGBTQ library resources
- In the summer, task force member Richard Duncan worked in collaboration with Director of Residence Life Kathy Hobgood on the conversion of all public access, single-occupancy restrooms within the residence halls from being single-gender to gender-inclusive.



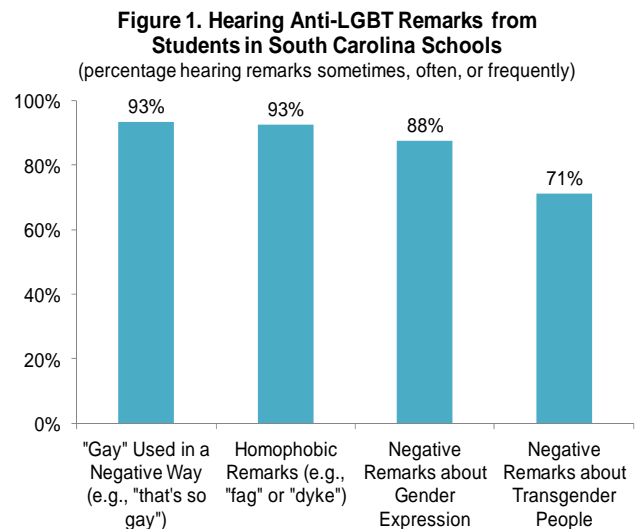


2013 STATE SNAPSHOT

Findings from the GLSEN 2013 National School Climate Survey demonstrate that South Carolina schools were not safe for most lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) secondary school students. In addition, many LGBT students in South Carolina did not have access to important school resources, such as having a curriculum that is inclusive of LGBT people, history, and events, and were not protected by comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment school policies.

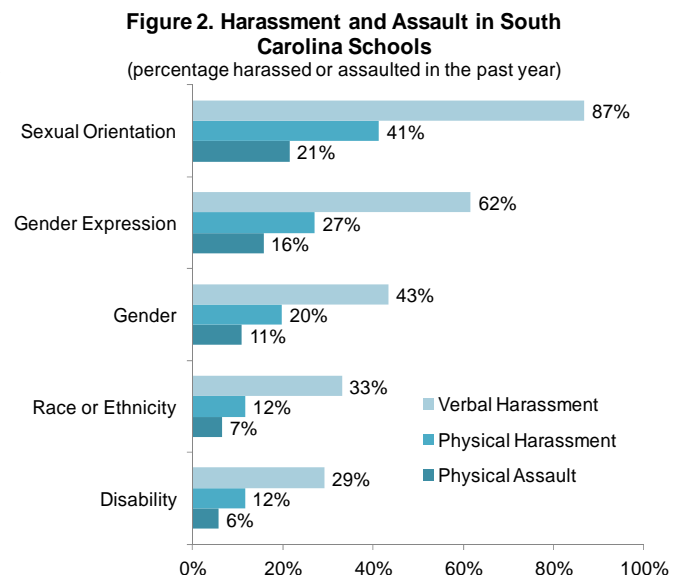
FACT: The vast majority of LGBT students in South Carolina regularly heard anti-LGBT remarks.

- More than 9 in 10 heard “gay” used in a negative way (e.g., “that’s so gay”) and other homophobic remarks (e.g., “fag” or “dyke”) at school regularly (i.e., sometimes, often, or frequently; see Figure 1).
- Nearly 9 in 10 regularly heard other students in their school make negative remarks about how someone expressed their gender, such as comments about someone not acting “feminine” or “masculine” enough (see Figure 1).
- 7 in 10 regularly heard negative remarks about transgender people (see Figure 1).
- Students also heard anti-LGBT language from school staff. 33% regularly heard school staff make negative remarks about someone’s gender expression and 30% regularly heard staff make homophobic remarks.



FACT: Most LGBT students in South Carolina had been victimized at school. The majority of these incidents were not reported to adult authorities.

- The majority experienced verbal harassment (e.g., called names or threatened): nearly 9 in 10 based on their sexual orientation and more than 6 in 10 based on the way they expressed their gender (see Figure 2).
- Many also experienced physical harassment and physical assault: for example, 4 in 10 were physically harassed (e.g., pushed or shoved) based on their sexual orientation and nearly 2 in 10 were physically assaulted (e.g., punched, kicked, or injured with a weapon) based on the way they expressed their gender (see Figure 2).
- Students also reported high levels of other forms of harassment at school: 93% felt deliberately excluded or “left out” by peers; 89% had mean rumors or lies told about them; 67% were sexually harassed; 52% experienced electronic harassment or “cyberbullying”; and 50% had property (e.g., car, clothing, or books) deliberately damaged and/or stolen.

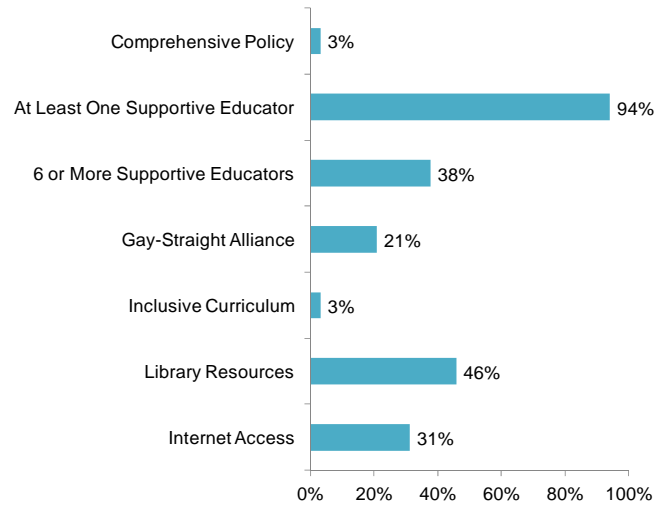


- 65% of students who were harassed or assaulted in school *never* reported it to school staff, and 56% *never* told a family member about the incident. Among students who did report incidents to school authorities, only 19% said that reporting resulted in effective intervention by staff.

FACT: Many LGBT students in South Carolina did not have access to in-school resources and supports.

- Only 3% attended a school with a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policy that included specific protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression (see Figure 3).
- Nearly all could identify at least one school staff member supportive of LGBT students, but only 38% could identify 6 or more supportive school staff (see Figure 3).
- Many did not have LGBT-inclusive curricular resources: only 3% were taught positive representations of LGBT people, history, and events, and only 31% could access information about LGBT communities on school Internet (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Availability of LGBT-Related Resources and Supports in South Carolina Schools



RECOMMENDATIONS

School-based supports such as comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies, school personnel who are supportive of LGBT students, Gay-Straight Alliances, and LGBT-inclusive curricular resources can positively affect school climate for LGBT students. Findings from the *2013 National School Climate Survey* demonstrate that students attending schools with these resources and supports report more positive school experiences, including lower victimization and absenteeism and higher academic achievement.

Given the high percentages of LGBT students in South Carolina who experience harassment at school and the limited access to key resources and supports that can have a positive effect on their school experiences, it is critical that South Carolina school leaders, education policymakers, and other individuals who are obligated to provide safe learning environments for all students take the following steps:

- Implement comprehensive school anti-bullying/harassment policies;
- Support Gay-Straight Alliances;
- Provide professional development for school staff on LGBT student issues; and
- Increase student access to LGBT-inclusive curricular resources.

These actions can move us toward a future in which all students in South Carolina will have the opportunity to learn and succeed in school, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

To learn more about GLSEN and to get involved, visit www.glsen.org or contact glsen@glsen.org.

GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network) is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

In 2013, GLSEN conducted the eighth National School Climate Survey (NSCS), a biennial survey of the experiences of LGBT youth in U.S. secondary schools. The national sample consisted of 7,898 LGBT students from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. A total of 121 respondents were attending schools in South Carolina. The majority of the South Carolina sample was White/European American (69%), 15% multi-racial, 7% African American/Black, 6% Hispanic/Latino, and 4% Asian/Pacific Islander. The gender composition was 39% cisgender female, 39% cisgender male, 11% genderqueer, 7% transgender, and 4% some other gender (e.g., genderfluid). Most (96%) attended public schools. The school community makeup was 50% rural/small town, 32% suburban, and 18% urban. The results reported for South Carolina have a margin of error of +/-9%.

For the full 2013 National School Climate report or for any other GLSEN research, go to www.glsen.org/research. Follow @GLSENResearch on Twitter.