

Perceptions of Policy and Programming Needs for Emory's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community



President's Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual
and Transgender Concerns

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Introduction

The President's Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns (PCLGBTC) is charged with advising the President's Office on matters related to Emory's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community. The PCLGBTC aims to monitor LGBT-related activities, programs and services and to advise the President on the implementation of their recommendations, including those concerning the University's Equal Opportunity Policy, benefits for domestic partners, the campus Office of LGBT Life and LGBT studies. The PCLGBTC also aims to develop and support programs at Emory to reduce homophobia and heterosexism, and to conduct studies as needed to address these concerns on campus. In an attempt to better inform recommendations made to the President's Office, the PCLGBTC conducted formative research aimed at understanding the perceived needs of the Emory LGBT community. The research was divided into two parts. The first consisted of in-depth interviews with 22 key policymakers at Emory. Policymakers were selected to represent all divisions of Emory, including Emory Healthcare, Administration, Campus Life, Student Services and each of the academic divisions. Interviews examined issues of knowledge of and connectivity to the LGBT community, access to information on the LGBT community, and perceived programming and servicing needs of the Emory LGBT community. The second part of the research consisted of a survey of 238 members of the Emory community. The survey, conducted via survey-monkey and disseminated through the Office of LGBT Life listserv, examined access to LGBT-related events, information and resources, experience of LGBT-related issues on campus, and perceived programming and servicing needs for the LGBT community. This report details the results of the research and uses these results to make recommendations to improve the Emory experience for the on-campus LGBT community.

Connectivity to the LGBT community

On the whole most respondents reported that they had connections to the LGBT community on campus, although the degree of connectivity to the LGBT community beyond Emory varied. The most commonly reported means of connecting to the LGBT community on campus were through attendance at LGBT-related events (Pride banquet, brown bag seminars), self-identifying colleagues and students, and through direct participation in LGBT activities (PCLGBTC). Although no respondents reported that they did not feel they had connections to the Emory LGBT community, the majority of reported connections were informal (e.g. friends and colleagues) and there was a lack of awareness of some of the formal opportunities to connect with the LGBT community. There was greater variation in the reported connectivity with the LGBT community outside of Emory: the most commonly reported connections were through self-identifying family and friends, although the majority of respondents reported that they did not feel connected to the wider LGBT community.

“Absolutely...I have a lot of contact with the LGBT community through a range of my activities on campus”

“On campus contact is only through work related issues; but off campus through socializing”

“Most of my connection to the LGBT community is on campus...or should I say is through campus; I spend a lot of time on the road accompanied by staff who are from that community”

“I don’t have much connection to the community beyond what is on campus”

“I feel very comfortable with having several entry points into the community; if I have any concerns, issues or anything I feel I can go to someone”

A small number of respondents were able to identify specific activities through which they felt they could connect with the LGBT community: the most commonly reported mechanisms were through the Office of LGBT Life and President’s Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns (PCLGBTC). However, although respondents on the whole did not report connections to the LGBT community beyond Emory, it was often reported that on-campus connections to the LGBT community were more social and informal in nature, with respondents often reporting that they did not feel they had formal access to LGBT-related information, programs and the on-campus community.

“I would yes I feel fairly connected and I have a sense of what the community is and is interested, through my work with the president’s commission; most of what I know comes from the president’s commission”

“I feel close socially but not administratively. For example, I don’t have information on the workings of the commission”

Visibility and Representation of the LGBT Community

Respondents were asked to quantify the size of the Emory LGBT community, and whether they expected there to be variations in the proportion of self-identifying LGBT across students, staff and Faculty. In general respondents struggled to answer this question, with a range of 5-35% of the campus population perceived as being self-identifying LGBT. However, respondents did report that they expected the level of comfort with being out on campus, and subsequently the number of LGBT, to vary across students, staff and Faculty. It was generally perceived that there are a greater proportion of Faculty who are self-identifying LGBT than is found among students and staff. Additionally, it was perceived that the proportion of self-identifying LGBT varied across Schools and Departments; the School of Medicine and Facilities and Management were often reported to be areas in which it was expected that the proportion of self-identifying LGBT would be lowest. Respondents reported a perception that the working climates in both these areas would make it more difficult for a self-identifying LGBT to be out at work.

“First of all, I don’t know the answer.... I suspect it is larger than the 10% that gets bounded about....but people virtually everyday tell me they are gay. I guess our student body is representative of the national average, but our staff and faculty are higher”

“It would certainly be a guess...35%?”

“It would be a wild guess....I would probably guess 15 to 20%, somewhere in there”

“Is self identifying? I don’t really know what the numbers are, my guess is 10%, but I don’t know...but proportionately the numbers are probably the same across staff, faculty and students”

“My guess is it’s stratified; a higher portion of faculty than staff would self-identify, and that among the students that more of the professional and graduate students would self identify”

“In schools outside of the medical school I would say numbers of around 20%...the medical school may bring it back closer to 10%...only because of the demographic profile of the medical school. Student population I would say around 8-20%. And the staff is the fascinating one....I am trying to imagine the heavily male macho culture of F&M, where even to be out comes at a great price, there would be undeniable under-reporting”

Respondents also acknowledged problems in quantifying the size of the Emory LGBT community, not only because routine data collection systems do not collect data on sexual orientation, but because it was felt that sexual identity is often not “*obvious*” thus the LGBT community remains “*invisible*”. Respondents who reported that they had fewer connections

to the Emory LGBT community often also reported difficulties in identifying the LGBT community. A small number of respondents reported that although they often do not know a person's sexual identity, they felt that an individual's participation in LGBT-related activities could often be used as a marker for their sexual identity.

“I couldn't tell you which of my faculty is gay, republican, democrat or Methodist.....if people chose to tell me or they make it part of their public persona then I know it....so I have no real way of estimating the size of the community”

“When you interview a black person for a job, there is no doubt they are black. Similarly for a woman or a man, usually you don't have to ask. The issue of sexual orientation is something that is not self-evident – the question is the extent to which a person from the LGBT community wants their identity known – it is really not that different to issues around revealing your politics.”

“I would be very hard pressed to tell you beyond those who self identify who is gay and who is not, who is catholic and who is not”

“There are individuals I know personally and then there are those on campus who present issues that makes me think they may be gay”

However, there was a generally reported feeling that the size of the Emory LGBT community had grown in recent years, with respondents reporting that they felt increasingly aware of the Emory LGBT community and had recognized a growth in its presence on the Emory campus. The growth in the Emory LGBT community was most commonly attributed to concepts of “*comfort*”, with many respondents reporting a sense that they felt it was now easier to be an out member of the LGBT community at Emory than it had been previously. However, no respondents were able to provide reasons beyond a “*greater sense of comfort*” to explain the perceived growth in the LGBT community. A reoccurring theme in the interviews was the issue of the representation of members of the LGBT community in senior positions within Emory. The majority of respondents were unaware as to whether the LGBT community was represented in senior administrative and leadership positions, and no respondents felt that the LGBT community was adequately represented. However, a small of respondents reported that they felt there was a lack of representation of the LGBT community in senior positions, particularly in senior administrative positions.

“As far as I know we haven't had a major leader on campus who has really been out to taker this on, and sometimes I think it takes really senior leadership to help with these things”

“There is not anyone of the board of trustees or the president's cabinet that currently represents our voice”

“I don’t think that there is anyone who is openly gay or even a group of people who are openly gay, who are in positions of authority on campus”

“I don’t know who all the gay faculty are...I have assume they are here...maybe they are just not out”

Being Out at Emory

Many of the conversations with key informants dealt with issues of being out at Emory, and focused on the challenges this posed for both an individual’s working life and in targeting programs towards the LGBT community. Many respondents reported not only a lack of awareness of the size of the Emory LGBT community, but also expressed difficulties in identifying who is LGBT. The latter often arose from a discomfort with potentially “outing” a colleague or friend; respondents often reported that they acknowledged the potential difficulties that being out may cause, and thus wanted to avoid creating problems by publicly identifying the individual as LGBT. Some respondents reported that although they may have close colleagues/ friends who are self-identifying LGBT at Emory they would refrain from identifying them as such to other people, for fear of “further outing them”.

“The tricky part is for people who don’t want to be outed...so as not to compromise peoples position in the community”

“The hardest one is going back to the issue of who is a recognized member of the community – individuals who are gay or lesbian may not have shared that with the broader community – and the challenge for us is trying to figure out who has access to the information”

“What I feel uncomfortable with and I am told about and now I try to be sensitive with is sensitivities around outing...I feel uncomfortable with my ability to sense that and when it is appropriate and I feel uncomfortable with the communities uncomfot with this”

There were mixed views as to how easy it is for an individual to be out at Emory. Some respondents reported that Emory was a safe and accepting place for an LGBT individual to be out, particularly relative to the rest of Atlanta and Georgia. However, others felt that the influence of living in a traditionally conservative State and being a Methodist Institution still made it difficult to be out at Emory. Many respondents reported that the ability to be out at Emory varied enormously not only student, staff and Faculty, but also across working areas. Again, it was felt that Facilities and Management and the School of Medicine would be the most difficult places to be an out LGBT individual.

“Overall impression is that it is relatively positive...but I have some questions about how open someone can be on this campus. In my previous job there was a lot of comfort with people

being relatively gay or lesbian...as long as they didn't perform in ways that challenged their gender...if you were flaming gay then it was not ok"

"If you are an undergraduate there is no problem, but if you are a third year medical student then people would be asking "what is this all about?"

"I think there are some generational differences within our Staff at Emory; there are different view points, we are in a Methodist school, we are in a place in which our students cannot be ordained in the Methodist church"

"When I think of the senior administration here it seems to me that some of them are not always comfortable being out...and it would seem that we would want to have a campus environment where people would feel comfortable and safe being out"

The ability to be out at Emory was reported to be a combination of two factors: the individuals own comfort with being out in the work place, and contextual factors that included the gender and age composition of the working environment, the Methodist history of Emory, and the surrounding Atlanta community. The role of the individual's level of comfort was, however, consistently reported to be the prime factor in whether an individual would be out at work. Many respondents recognized the fluid nature of being out, that an individual may be willing to self-identify as LGBT in a social setting, but not in the workplace or in a place of worship.

"I think professionals at Emory having varying levels of satisfaction. I think some of it is their own level of comfort, but some of it is the place they work, some areas are much more inclusive than others"

"I do know from talking to colleagues who are gay that they do not feel the same level of comfort being as out as I am – and I don't attribute that to a culture, it may be the individual's comfort level"

"There are times when it is perfectly appropriate and I am comfortable talking about it, and there are times when frankly it is none of your business" – being out

"The extent to which you are out is fluid; you may be out at work, not out at church, and not at home; it is a defensive piece, to protect yourself"

Issues surrounding an individual's willingness and ability to be out at work were identified as barriers to providing programs and services to the LGBT community. Given that unlike many racial or gender groups, LGBT are not physically identifiable, respondents reported that not only did this limit their ability to identify the LGBT community, but limited their ability to provide services directly to the community. Respondents felt that this left the onus for accessing programs and services with the LGBT community. It was often reported that

advances in programming for the LGBT community could be made if a greater proportion of the LGBT community felt comfortable with being out in the work place at Emory.

“Number one, they would have to be willing to be out, and then we could learn what kind of challenges they would have....but they are dealing with them by themselves”

Information on the Emory LGBT Community

Respondents were asked about their access to information on the LGBT community, whether they felt they had sufficient information and how they used this in their work. Responses on the perceived level of access to information on the LGBT community were mixed; while some felt they had access to all the information they needed, others felt completely disconnected from information regarding the LGBT community. However, all those who reported a lack of access to information also reported a desire to learn more about the LGBT community.

“That is one of the reasons I was looking forward to this conversation, I know nothing about your organization, and I would like to know more about it”

“I am frankly so unaware of what the details are that I would not know what the issues are”

Among those who felt they had adequate access to information on the LGBT community, a number of both formal and informal channels of information were reported. The most commonly reported formal sources of information were the Office of LGBT Life, PCLGBTC and Human Resources. However, all those who reported that they had sufficient access to information reported that they gained much of this information from informal social networks made up of self-identifying LGBT colleagues and friends.

“I get information from talking to people; there is never just one source of information for me, so I would seek out people I knew in the community”

“Would certainly ask the president’s commission if I had questions, but not sure what resources y’all have; would definitely ask the LGBT office....not sure if there is an on-line database that the president’s commission has”

“If I don’t know it depends on the range: if it is strictly legal then I go to the lawyers, if I am attempting to get to more experiential issues then I would reach out to the community. Sometimes you do that through formal structures, sometimes through individuals you know”

“I would go to folk who were in the commission if I needed information, I don’t have a challenge in that regard; I don’t feel like I have made a decision in which I didn’t have enough information on for the LGBT. I don’t think it is an issue for me”

“I would go to the office of LGBT life, I would definitely go there and would trust that they are the right people; but I have never had to do that”

Respondents were also asked about their knowledge of existing services and programs aimed at the Emory LGBT community. Despite high levels of reporting of adequate access to information on the LGBT community, many respondents had low levels of knowledge of formal LGBT activities, services and policies at Emory. The level of understanding of LGBT policies and programs was often merely a knowledge that they existed, with a lack of comprehensive knowledge on the details of the programs/ policies.

“I am not aware of the resources; I know the president’s commission exists and it has been active but I don’t know how”

“Very minimal knowledge of it (safe space program), but I know that it exists, and I know that people like it”

“Discrimination laws...well I know about those in general. We are not to discriminate on the basis of sexuality, but that’s all I know”

“Within our benefits I am somewhat aware of our policies, but I don’t always know how they work. Still not sure of how the details of the health benefits work, and if that impacts some communities more than others”

The most commonly reported source of LGBT-related information was the Office of LGBT Life, which all but 2 of the respondents reported being aware of. However, respondents often reported that the Office of LGBT Life dealt primarily with students, particularly undergraduates. For some the location of the Office of LGBT Life in the DUC created a sense that the Office was for students only, while others were under the impression that the Office of LGBT Life was strictly for students only. Respondents often expressed a desire to extend the services offered by the Office of LGBT Life to staff and Faculty.

“I have to say that the office does not focus on faculty and staff in their programs and services in the same way that the center for women does, and that is something that I would like to see change. Actually I don’t think they even focus on anyone beyond undergrad”

“For students I see our office as the primary resource for that kind of information...the extent to which that is or should be extended to faculty and staff is an open question. I see the current role as reaching out to students. I have never heard discussion of the extent to which it would be appropriate for that office to address the needs of staff and faculty”

Only 12 of the respondents were aware of the President’s Commission on LGBT Concerns, and among those who had heard of the commission there was often confusion as to its purpose and role. Some respondents reported a desire to shift the focus of the PCLGBTC towards providing resources for both the LGBT community and those interested in accessing information on the LGBT community. Others reported a desire to have the PCLGBTC play a larger, more visible role in campus advocacy.

“What I would wish for all the commissions is that we could turn it around and they could become more of a resource, rather than an organization that protects and defends – as a resource for research, a central clearing house for information on gay related issues”

“From my perspective what it (PCLGBTC) could do would be to be more policy focused, trying to deal with issues that need to be addressed, versus allowing itself to get caught up in programming”

“Providing recommendations for policies and procedures is what the commission needs to be doing”

Experience of LGBT Issues on Campus

Respondents were asked to detail any LGBT issues that they had dealt with in their working lives on campus. A focus of these questions was on the experience and perception of the scale of homophobia at Emory. Most respondents reported that they felt that homophobia exists at Emory, but that they had not personally witnessed or experienced it. Respondents talked about homophobia as an invisible problem at Emory: they felt that it was a part of campus life but struggled to state explicitly where the problem lay. Some respondents reported that they perceived the presence of homophobia to be inevitable, and examples of homophobic incidents were reported among students, staff and Faculty. All respondents reported a willingness to tackle homophobia; however, many felt that current systems for reporting homophobic incidents were inadequate.

“I don’t think I have heard about anything, which makes me wonder what is being reported: don’t know if that is a good or bad sign”

“I can’t say that I have really experienced it (homophobia) myself, but I am sure that it is here, and that I am a part of it; I don’t think you can grow up in the United States and not be homophobic....the real question is what are you doing about it”

“I see it (homophobia) in things I read on campus, in the student culture. I am not sure yet if it plays into retention and hiring, but I have heard enough stories to think that sexual preference may sometimes be an issue”

“I have been fortunate to have avoided that (homophobia) for the most part – but people probably wouldn’t come to me. I have been involved in some cases involving faculty, and I have made it known it is unacceptable”

Other LGBT-related issues involved difficulties in relationships between Emory community members and acts of intolerance. A small number of respondents reported that they were aware of the issue of acts of intolerance on campus, acts that may not be illegal but were still counter to the anti-discrimination and inclusivity policies of Emory. However, as was the case with issues of homophobia, these respondents also reported that current systems for

reporting and handling these acts were inadequate. The majority of LGBT-related incidents reported by the respondents pertained to relationships and communications between LGBT and non-LGBT members of the Emory community. Common examples included student-Faculty communications or staff-supervisor interactions in which the language used had been offensive to the LGBT individual.

“Can be anything from their experiences talking to their advisors or students talking to their parents.....their feelings of comfort and in being out”

“Faculty – student interactions in which a student was gay and a faculty didn’t realize it and was saying some things that were harmful and discriminatory, and I can think of more than one of those situations that have occurred”

Perceived Needs of the LGBT Community at Emory

Respondents were asked to detail their perceptions of the needs of the Emory LGBT community, in order to facilitate an understanding of how the policymaking community views the main priorities for the LGBT community. Respondents answered this in a combination of two ways; either by talking about the issues they felt were most prevalent in the Emory LGBT community, or by talking about their own needs that they felt needed to be addressed to allow them to better serve the LGBT community. A major theme of the discussion around the needs of the LGBT community was the need for greater communication across and between sectors of the campus. The need for communication was expressed in a number of ways. Firstly, some respondents felt that greater communication was needed between the LGBT and non-LGBT communities in order to allow them to understand the needs of the LGBT community. These respondents often reported that although they recognized that the LGBT community had specific needs, their lack of communication with the community left them unaware of the details of these needs.

“I think there needs to be ways to communicate more effectively to the broader community –I think there are really important things that are going on, and people just don’t know about it”

“Open communication is key – and do people always get to communicate through the right venues. There must be issues and the fact they I am saying that I don’t know what these issues are suggests that there is not good communication”

Respondents also talked about communication in the context of the need to reduce stigmatization and discrimination aimed at the LGBT community. Respondents felt that open dialogue between the LGBT and non-LGBT communities would act to reduce barriers and misconceptions between the communities, could foster a greater sense of understanding of the LGBT community and would help to identify shared experiences.

“Talking about what it means to be open about gay or lesbian and the reactions they have encountered.my asking these questions and people talking about their own experiences, and thinking about how they relate to this community”

“There isn’t as much communication as there should be across campus; how much cross-over is there between groups on campus?”

“The anti-gay rhetoric of many politicians you just couldn’t get away with for blacks or Jews today, people would stand up and say something; you wouldn’t be able to say these things – people have no problem saying they have an anti-gay gender – no one would say it is not ok to be black.there just needs to be a lot more discussion and enlightenment”

“It may be just as simple as getting people in a room and talking it out; to me it seems there hasn’t been adequate discussion about it (the LGBT community)”

Interconnected with discussions of communication were themes of community, and the perceived need to build, strengthen and expand existing communities at Emory. As with discussions of communication, respondents felt that community building activities offered an opportunity to share common experiences, and to use these experiences as the foundations for cross-community interactions.

“More important is a sense of solidarity, issues that cut across communities. No one is just one thing, and there is or should be a sense of shared experience- that doesn’t happen here”

“Lets say for instance if childcare is an issue.childcare is an issue for lots of people...what a great partnership to form around people with young families...wouldn’t it be neat to have something on this issue that is sponsored by facilities and managements and the LGBT community’

A central theme of discussions around the need for community building was the need to foster linkages between “*sub-communities*” at Emory. Respondents talked of a perception that many communities, not just the LGBT community, often existed in isolation, and expressed a desire to see communities brought together through shared programming and activities. Respondents noted that this would first require communication between communities, but that there often lack opportunities for communities to interact. In particular, respondents noted the need for communities to include others from outside their communities in their activities, a need that was noted for many special interest/ minority groups at Emory.

“I think services and particular interest organizations are fine, as long as they have that second goal, to include others not from the community’

“Ultimately we need to think community, and there are within this, sub-communities that need to come out and play...but play together”

“Thing one is having a refuge, having a comfort zone...thing two is to take that energy out into the community and lead activities with it – not necessarily around what it means to be black or means to be gay – but to engage others not from that community”

In order to foster communication and community building respondents noted the need to create a greater sense of openness around issues of sexuality and sexual identity at Emory. While previous discussions on the problems of targeting programs towards the LGBT community had focused on the issue of an individual’s level of comfort with being out, here respondents talked about the need for the entire Emory to be more comfortable in discussing issues of sexual identity. Respondents noted issues surrounding “openness” as problematic in both the LGBT and non-LGBT communities.

“You have people with differing degrees of comfort with LGBT issues, but everyone knows it is important and they if they are not completely comfortable they need to get completely comfortable or be on the moving spectrum towards completely comfortable”

“Allowing people to feel safe and free to discuss these things – people who self-identify and those who do not”

“The ability to fully exhale here and be comfortable....I would imagine, it is a concern about being fully comfortable”

Related to the issue of openness, respondents often talked about the need to change the “culture of Emory”. Although no specific programming or policy recommendations were made, respondents talked of Emory’s culture which they felt was often inhibitive of people being out and did not foster open discussions of sexuality and sexual identity.

“I don’t think it is a policy issue, I think it is a culture issue. I am sure there could be some policies, like the bathroom policy that would help. I think policies can make some level of difference, but I think it is about the culture and climate – having more open discussions on campus. I really think it is about a culture of open discussion – I think most people on campus don’t even know what the safe space is, and wouldn’t know the sticker if they saw it; I don’t think that is the type of culture we want to have”

When talking about the need to make shifts in Emory’s culture respondents often addressed the need to create a greater understanding of the LGBT community. Respondents expressed a desire for greater communication between the LGBT and non-LGBT communities, and to utilize communication strategies as a means to reducing perceived stigma and discrimination surrounding the LGBT community. Respondents often identified areas of Emory or sectors of the community that they felt required increased sensitization in their work with the LGBT community. The needs of LGBT students were often mentioned through the needed for Faculty to recognize diversity in sexual orientation among the student body. Once again

differences in the comfort levels and ability to be open were identified across employees, with Emory staff identified as having the greatest difficulties in sustaining an open environment.

“Having folk understand that there is nothing different or negative...helping folk to understand that it is not a negative. Helping people who have these biases, who come in with these biases, to stretch themselves, so they can go beyond whatever provincial mindset they have”

“I think anyone who is working with students should be open to talking, or at least acknowledging, that not all students may have the same sexual orientation”

“Probably in certain work areas, certain departments...in certain departments you might have less open people. I would think at the Faculty level you would have people who are more open... but in the non-faculty job areas and those that work less with people would probably be the areas that are more challenging”

Some respondents were able to make specific recommendations to improve the campus climate for the LGBT community. However, many respondents talked of the shared needs of the entire Emory community, noting that there were many issues that affected both the LGBT and non-LGBT communities equally. The pursuit of solutions to these common issues was mentioned as a strategy for improving communication across the various communities within Emory.

“Just as they would relate to anyone regarding the ethical treatment of people and their principals”

“Fears about not being able to adopt, loose custody of a child, or not find housing – all of these things can affect people who work at Emory”

“The needs are the same as any other community, but that is not to say the expression of the needs is the same. I think people need to know that they are respected and that people need to know that people care about their experiences. And that there is some place that they can go, some physical space, as opposed to a website; some physical space to feel safe”

“I don’t think there is a need to provide special services, except maybe for students who have just left their homes and need more support, and may need services”

Specific policy recommendations made by the respondents covered a range of policy, programming and training initiatives. Several respondents mentioned the need for increased work in both understanding and providing programs and services for the transgendered community. These respondents reported that more training was needed to sensitize people to the needs of the transgendered community, and also suggested a feeling that transgendered people were not fully included in either the Emory or LGBT communities. Other specific sub-groups within the LGBT community were identified as having programming and policy

needs. Many respondents reported a feeling that the needs of LGBT staff and Faculty were not met by the current LGBT Office, which it was perceived was solely targeted towards students. Those respondents who felt that there was a lack of LGBT representation in senior positions at Emory also reported a perceived need for training of potential future LGBT leaders.

“Where people have reported wanting more training has been in transgender issues and the use of the word queer. I think it is a generational thing, for people of my generation it is a slur, like the use of the n-word”

“It seems to me one of the biggest challenges is the “T” issue; some groups don’t even include the “T” and there is work to be done. We are not good at thinking through things such as bathrooms...I think we have a long way to go with the “T” issue”

“Campus life attempts to handle the students services, Sara Lynn’s office really was a champion for students, but in terms of employees and staff there is a whole other level of service that needs to be provided; there isn’t a dedicated office for staff, and Sara Lynn’s office is really student focused...it really can’t handle everyone”

“As a university I wish we could come up with a way of identifying future (LGBT) leaders and putting them in the pipeline so they can help people in the future”

The need for training was also mentioned by several respondents in the context of a need to provide more information to the non-LGBT community on the needs of the LGBT community. Specifically, several respondents noted the need for diversity training to become an integral part of professional development training for Emory staff and Faculty. Most of the respondents had heard of the Safe Space Program, and a small number suggested that the program needed to be expanded to cover whole buildings/ schools within Emory, so as to provide “safe zones”.

“I actually think it is just time. I think the commissions need to say that everyone needs to do x number of professional development hours per year, and the institution has to be committed to this to providing time, opportunities and including this in evaluations”

“I think the safe program is a really good one...and I think to build on that is going to be important, and we need to push that as a best practice, so that entire buildings are safe”

Discrimination and prejudice were repeatedly mentioned as issues perceived to be a problem for the LGBT community at Emory. Although few respondents had direct experience of homophobic incidents, many respondents reported a perception that homophobia exists on campus. The reduction of homophobia and related acts of intolerance were often mentioned as priority programming needs for the Emory LGBT community. Respondents reported recent incidents involving websites on which it was perceived homophobic remarks were

made. However, respondents also reported that although they perceived homophobia to be a problem, it was a problem that was hard to quantify and steps were needed to develop reporting mechanisms that could also yield an estimate of the scale of the issue.

“The second thing I worry about is the community itself – there are these two electronic bulletin boards – and I am old enough to remember when people wrote things on bathroom walls – and it is the same thing. It defames, and slanders and names people”

“The good side of this is that at least we get to know what is under the surface and to see what the norms and expectations are of the wider community”

“I worry that we may not have a good handle on the range of prejudice on one hand and bigotry on the other that may exist in our community”

Although the majority of respondents were able to make recommendations for ways to improve the Emory experience for the LGBT community, a small number of respondents felt they did not have sufficient information on which to base recommendations. These were the same respondents who were unable to identify formal mechanisms for gaining access to information on the Emory LGBT community.

“My role is in leadership, to build bridges on campus, but without knowing what the issues are it is hard to say specifically what I could do”

“As a group I am really not aware of a set of issues that the group or that the community feels that is a fundamental issues that they feel they face everyday...don't know that they have had the same voice or history that other groups may have had”

LGBT Climate Survey

The LGBT Climate Survey received a total of 238 responses, 100 of which were from students and the remaining 138 from staff and Faculty. Of the 100 students responding to the survey, 73% were from the Rollins School of Public Health and 15% from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Of the 138 non-student responses, 78% were from staff and 19% from Faculty. The majority of respondents self-identified as heterosexual (55%), with 20% gay men, 13% lesbian women, 6% bisexual and 4% identifying as queer. The majority of respondents identified as female (67%). Respondents universally reported contact with the LGBT community: 91% reported friends and family who identified as LGBT, while 86% reported having Emory colleagues who identified as LGBT. Involvement in Emory LGBT-related activities was relatively low: only 41% reported that they had been involved or attended a LGBT-related activity at Emory. Of these, 57% had heard of the activities through friends and colleagues, and only 31% had heard through formal channels (e.g. listservs or flyers). The most commonly reported LGBT-related activities in which respondents have been involved were: the Pride banquet, Emory Health Alliance, Coming Out Week activities, Safe Space orientation, PCLBGTC sponsored events and the PCLBGTC holiday party.

A significant proportion of the respondents (28%) reported having a direct experience of homophobia on campus; of these, only 55% were aware of any on-campus resources to which they could report acts of homophobia or could be utilized to help them deal with these experiences. The most commonly reported experiences of homophobia included the use of derogatory or offense language on Emory campus. Respondents commonly reported hearing the use of the word “gay” to be synonymous with stupid. Environments in which respondents reported hearing offensive language included the DUC, student residences, working environments (offices) and classrooms. A number of student respondents reported that they often felt offended by the insensitive language used by Faculty or classmates during class. A small number of specific acts of homophobia were reported, including: negative comments made to members of the PCLBGTC at Staff-fest, witnessing offensive graffiti in student residences and elevators, and staff experiences of supervisors who would not permit the displaying of the Safe Space sticker.

A significant proportion of respondents (30%) were not aware of any resources or sources of information for the LGBT community at Emory, while 50% of respondents were aware of resources but had never accessed them. Among the small percentage of respondents who reported accessing LGBT resources, 39% felt that they were helpful. The most commonly

reported formal channels for information for the LGBT community at Emory were the Office of LGBT Life, PCLGBTC, Student Health Services, Emory Pride and GALA. Many respondents reported informal channels for accessing information, which commonly included friends and colleagues, while some respondents identified current and past members of the PCLGBTC as acting as sources of information.

Respondents were asked to detail their perceptions of the needs of the LGBT community at Emory. The most commonly reported need was the need to create a “safe” environment, free from discrimination and homophobia. Many respondents expressed a desire to see programs initiated that tackled misconceptions about the LGBT community and to provide diversity and sensitivity training throughout the campus. Another commonly reported need was community building; respondents reported a desire to see greater ties built not only between the LGBT and non-LGBT communities, but also within the on-campus LGBT community. Many respondents reported not knowing of LGBT-related activities or resources, and not knowing other LGBT members of the Emory community. Respondents expressed a need for more activities that allowed communication both within and beyond the Emory LGBT community. The lack of services and resources for Emory LGBT Faculty and staff were repeatedly reported to be an urgent need for the Emory LGBT community.

When asked to suggest specific policy changes that could improve the Emory environment for the LGBT community, most respondents noted a need for sensitivity training to reduce perceived discrimination. Expansion of the Safe Space program to include whole schools and institutions and resources and activities aimed specifically at LGBT staff and Faculty were also commonly reported needs for the LGBT community. A significant number of respondents also expressed a desire to see greater LGBT representation in senior administrative positions at Emory. Unfortunately, a large number of respondents made suggestions for policies that are already in place at Emory. Among these, the need for domestic partner benefits and the inclusion of sexual identity in anti-discrimination legislation were the most commonly reported needs.

Recommendations

The results reveal a range of perceived needs for Emory's LGBT community, and interestingly, similarities in the perceived needs were observed between policymakers interviewed and the small sample of Emory's community that participated in the survey. The most commonly reported needs for the on-campus LGBT community dealt with initiatives to reduce homophobia, discrimination and stigmatization, and centered on the need for increased opportunities for interaction and communication between the LGBT and non-LGBT communities. Specific sub-groups within the LGBT community, including transgendered people, self-identifying LGBT Faculty and staff, and LGBT working the School of Medicine and Facilities and Management were identified as requiring greater targeting of resources. The recommendations arising from this research are:

- The programming and resource needs of LGBT Faculty and staff were reported to be currently under-served. Many felt that the Office of LGBT Life was too student focused, and the many were not aware of any resources available for LGBT Faculty and staff. Efforts are needed to meet the needs of LGBT Faculty and staff, including: efforts by the Office of LGBT Life to reach out to Faculty and Staff, publicity to create awareness of the program opportunities available to Faculty and staff, and opportunities for LGBT Faculty and staff to network and form an on-campus community.
- Awareness of LGBT-related activities and programs on campus is lacking, both in the LGBT and non-LGBT communities. Many reported a lack of awareness of LGBT-related activities, those who were aware of programs and policies often did not know their content, and many requested policies that are already available at Emory. There is clearly a need for greater publicity of Emory's LGBT-related programs and policies. This could be achieved by a website that acts as central source for on-campus LGBT information, to include information on HR policies, student, staff and Faculty events and activities, advocacy initiatives, training and network opportunities. The website, which would need to be widely publicized, could be housed in the Office of LGBT Life, which may go some way to reducing the perceived study focus of the office.
- Many participants reported a feeling that the LGBT community was not represented in senior positions. However, several of the policymakers interviewed self-identified as LGBT. The disconnect between perceived and actual representation has the potential create the feeling that the voice of the LGBT community is not being

heard/ represented at Emory. This can be addressed in several ways; by providing opportunities for out senior LGBT Emory employees to tell their stories and reach out to the LGBT community (this could take the form of highlighting key LGBT Emory employees through personal stories told via the proposed website or in Emory publications), or through providing networking opportunities (for Faculty, staff and students) centered around professional development and diversity training. At other institutions simple activities such as Associations of LGBT Faculty and Staff have been an effective mechanism for promoting networking, community building and increasing a sense of representation.

- Two key areas that were expressed in all interviews were the need for community building and communication. These interconnected themes were important to both the LGBT and non-LGBT communities. There is clearly a need to provide opportunities both across and within the LGBT and non-LGBT communities at Emory. Some of the recommendations made so far may achieve this, for example activities that create opportunities for social and professional networking. However, opportunities for interaction, which will lead to community building and communication, need to have a formal structure. Emory has recently identified key strategic themes to move the institution forward as a cutting-edge research University. Emory could adopt a similar process to identify key issues to be addressed to make Emory a stronger, more cohesive, community. For example, LGBT life could be a key theme along with themes of race, identity and connectivity, and the interconnectedness between each of the themes. Activities that encourage discussion and understanding of these themes could be conducted across campus and could be embedded in research, advocacy and policy initiatives. The first step would be the identification of the key themes and the development of a strategic plan to bring these to these issues to the forefront of on-campus discussions. This would directly address the lack of openness that was expressed by many policymakers.
- Respondents expressed a need for sensitivity and diversity training for Faculty, staff and students. Although many respondents were aware of the Safe Space program, many wanted this to be expanded to either cover entire institutions, or wanted the training to be developed into a formalized system of diversity and sensitivity training at Emory. Suggestions included the development of diversity and sensitivity training opportunities to be offered by Human Resources, a by-request system in which training could be requested from either the Office for LGBT Life or the PCLGBTC, and training to become an integral part of the undergraduate curriculum.

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- The transgender community was often highlighted as lacking resources and policy/programming attention, even within the LGBT community. There is clearly a need for greater promotion of the Transgender Initiative, undertaken by the PCLGBTC during 2006-07, which succeeded in having transgender included in Emory's anti-discrimination policy. However, more needs to be done to meet the needs of Emory's transgender community; this must start with an attempt to more fully understand the unique needs of this community and to provide a vehicle for their voice to be heard in the Emory community.

The central theme of each of these recommendations is a need for greater communication, both within and between Emory communities. Communication, however, needs a home, a place to grow and develop. The key recommendation from this research is for Emory to begin to develop new opportunities for networking, discourse, training and collaboration. This will not be achieved by focusing on the LGBT community in isolation; campus and community-wide initiatives are required to foster openness and communication around all themes of identity here at Emory.