

## **Experiences as a Member of an Underrepresented Group: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Students**

### **KEY FINDINGS**

Related to the university climate are certain issues or services that are specific to a given population. In the Climate for Diversity survey, one section, Experiences as a Member of an Underrepresented Group, addresses such issues. These key findings focus on the responses of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) students at Ohio State and include summaries of both open-ended and closed-ended questions.

GLBT students were asked if they had a series of negative experiences as a result of their sexual orientation, about their comfort level disclosing their sexual orientation to others, and if they had used the services of Student Gender and Sexuality Services.

- Half of the GLBT students responded that they had feared negative consequences or discrimination from an instructor, TA, or staff member, and over 37% feared for their physical safety because of their sexual orientation. Almost 18% replied that they had been a victim of a hate crime.
- Almost 70% said that it was either “moderately important” or “very important” that they feel comfortable disclosing their sexual orientation to the people around them.
- While most students (88%) indicated that they felt comfortable disclosing their sexual orientation to their close friends, over 74% said they were uncomfortable disclosing their sexual orientation to either their co-workers at the university or to faculty members. Over half (56%) said they were comfortable “coming out” to campus health care providers.
- Over 94% of GLBT students indicated that they had not used the services of Student Gender and Sexuality Services. Of these students, 25% indicated that they were not aware of the office, 21% felt their needs were being met elsewhere, and almost 30% did not want to be identified by their sexual orientation.

Students were also provided with the opportunity to provide comments about their experiences at a GLBT student at Ohio State. Although few GLBT students provided such comments, two themes emerged from the students’ responses.

- Students commented on the negative or disparaging comments they had heard or read directed at GLBT persons at OSU and in Columbus. Specifically noted were verbal obscenities, articles in the Lantern, graffiti in bathrooms, and insensitive comments by several faculty members.
- Other comments focused on the perception of a lack of institutional support for GLBT students and issues. Some comments addressed the lack of course work geared toward sexual orientation and others on the lack of funding and support services dedicated to GLBT students.