

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to examine the experiences of GLBT students at The Ohio State University. Specifically, data are presented regarding students' responses to being a member of an underrepresented group; other reports focus on students of colors and students with disabilities. In this report, GLBT students were asked a series of questions specific to their group, including being asked to provide their own comments regarding the climate at OSU. By using both quantitative and qualitative data, this report explores various aspects of students' experiences as a member of an underrepresented group on campus.

Methodology

This report is generated from the Campus Climate for Diversity Survey, a survey of the climate at OSU. The framework for the survey consisted of:

1. Individual factors including demographic characteristics, the extent of contact students had with diverse populations prior to entering the University, and personal actions and beliefs regarding issues of diversity;
2. Environmental experiences including the University as a welcoming environment, the classroom environment, curriculum content and instructional methods, campus life experiences with diversity, experiences as a member of an underrepresented group, and support services;
3. Outcome perceptions including the impact of campus diversity of student learning and development, satisfaction and general impressions of campus since enrolling, and campus climate initiatives to address diversity issues.

The survey instrument was created by reviewing similar instruments from seven other schools and adapting them to Ohio State and the comprehensive nature of this study. Various members of the campus community reviewed the possible questions and offered suggestions on which questions and formats would provide the University with the most helpful data.

With the assistance of the Office of the Registrar, a stratified random sample of 4,000 Ohio State students was selected through the student database of all students at the end of winter quarter, 2000. Students who were scheduled to graduate in March or had not scheduled classes for the spring quarter were not included. African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian/Alaskan Native students were over sampled in order to be able to make comparisons across race/ethnicity. Because only 123 American Indian/Alaskan Native students attended Ohio State at the time of the survey, all were included in the sample.

The collection of the data was coordinated by the Office of the Registrar Testing Services. In this process, students selected were initially contacted during the first week of spring quarter by e-mail informing them that they had been selected to participate in the study. The first mailing of the survey occurred during the second week of April and a postcard reminder immediately followed. A second survey was sent at the end of the first week of May to students who had not yet responded and a final e-mail reminder was sent shortly after the second mailing of the survey. Bookstore gift certificates were offered as incentive for students to complete the survey.

A total of 1,223 surveys were received for a response rate of 30.6 %. Given the extensive length of the survey, the response rate is respectable.

Because certain racial/ethnic groups had a higher chance of selection than other members of the population and because women were more highly represented in the sample than in the population,

appropriate weighting was required in order to generate accurate population representation. As such, mathematical corrections have been made in order to bring the percentage of different racial/ethnic groups (including gender) to represent the percentage in the population.

Limitations

As with all survey research, this study has a number of limitations. First is the possible non-response bias and the lack of any controls for such a bias. It is possible that students who took the time to complete the survey are different from those who did not; for example, respondents may have had stronger feelings on issues surrounding diversity than non-respondents. However, the inclusion of the bookstore gift certificates may have provided the incentive for those students who otherwise would not have completed the survey to participate in the study. Second, in examining how certain groups responded to the survey, some comparisons are stronger than others. In some areas, there is low representation of certain groups. For example, students who indicated that they are gay, lesbian, or bisexual must be combined in order to make comparisons across sexual orientation. Other groups including American Indian/Alaskan Native students, international students, and students with disabilities are not highly represented. Third, all surveys are subject to potential sources of imprecision and bias which may be associated with the question wording and/or ordering and the length of the survey.

Demographics

Of the GLBT students who responded to these questions: (See the Appendix for a complete demographic profile of the survey respondents.)

- GENDER: 34% were female and 49.3% were male
- RANK: 68.2% were undergraduate students; 22.4% were graduate students; 7.5%, professional; and 1.5% non-degree. Among the undergraduate students, 10.4% were Rank 1; 16.4% Rank 2; 6.0% Rank 3; and 35.8% Rank 4.
- RACE/ETHNICITY: With regard to race/ethnicity, students responded in the following ways: (Please note that students provided multiple responses when applicable)
 - 9.0% were African American/Black
 - 6.0% were American Indian/Alaskan Native
 - 3.0% were Appalachian
 - 9.0% were Asian/Pacific Islander
 - 9.0% were Hispanic American/Latino(a)
 - 68.7% were White/Caucasian
 - 3.1% were international students
 - 9.0% responded “other”
 - In addition, 7.5% responded that they were multi-racial.
- GPA: 3.4% had a GPA of less than a 2.0; 34.5% had between a 2.0 and a 2.9; and 62.1% had a 3.0 or above.

FINDINGS

This report examines GLBT students' experiences as members of an underrepresented group. The quantitative questions asked students: 1) if they had experienced negative consequences as a result of their sexual orientation; 2) the importance of being comfortable disclosing their sexual orientation to the people around them; 3) whether or not they felt comfortable disclosing their sexual orientation to certain groups of people; and 4) whether or not they had used the services of Student Gender and Sexuality Services. In addition, students were asked to provide their own comments regarding the issues or experiences they encountered as a member of an underrepresented group on campus.

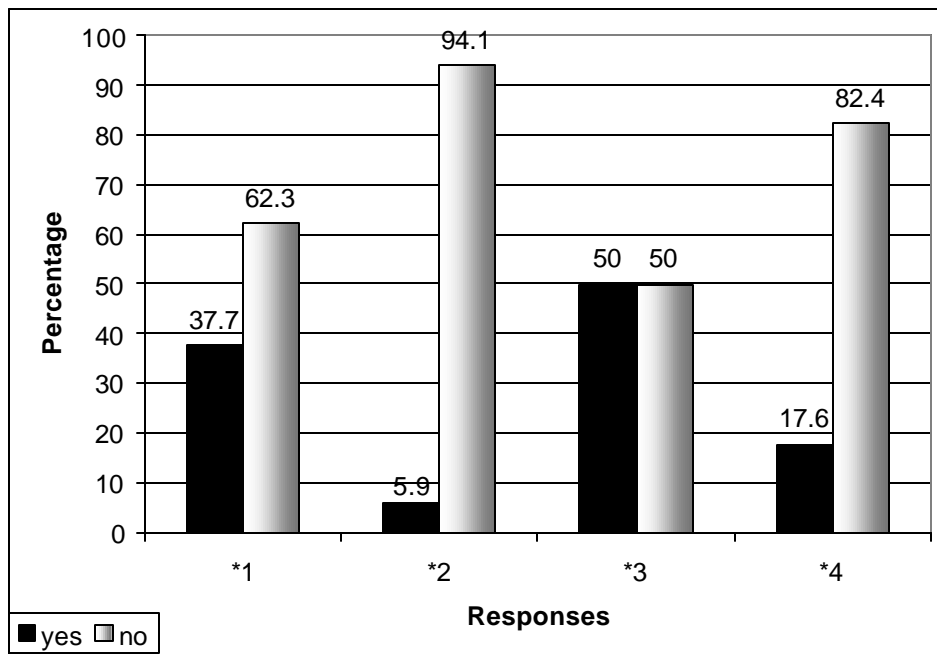
GLBT students' experiences

Negative experiences

Students were asked if they had any of the following experiences at OSU: 1) fear of their physical safety because of their sexual orientation, 2) denial of university employment or promotion due to their sexual orientation, 3) fear of negative consequences or discrimination from an instructor, TA, or staff member, and/or 4) been the victim of a hate crime.

- Most GLBT students responded that they had not experienced denial of university employment or promotion due to their sexual orientation (94.1%).
- Almost 18% replied that they had been a victim of a hate crime at OSU.
- Half of GLBT students revealed that they had experienced fear of negative consequences or discrimination from an instructor, TA, or staff member.
- In addition, over 37% of students answered that they had experienced fear for their physical safety because of their sexual orientation. (See Chart 1.0)

Chart 1.0: Have you experienced any of the following at OSU?



Note:

*1 = Fear for my physical safety because of their sexual orientation

*2 = Denial of University employment or promotion due to my sexual orientation

*3 = Fear of negative consequences or discrimination from an instructor, TA, or staff member

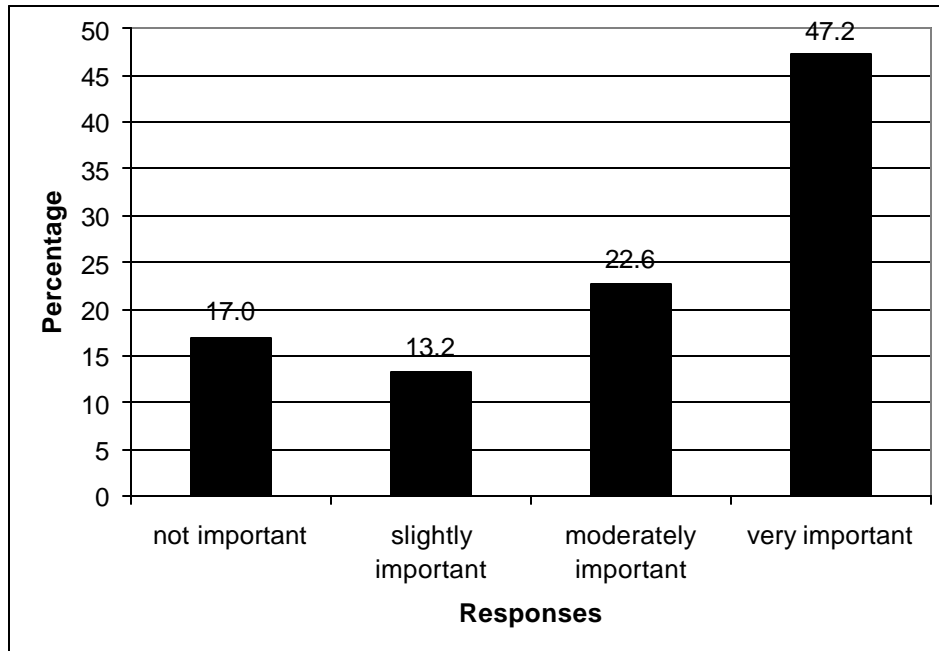
*4 = Hate crime victim

Disclosing their sexual orientation

Students were also asked how important it was that they felt comfortable “coming out” to others and to whom they felt comfortable disclosing their sexual orientation.

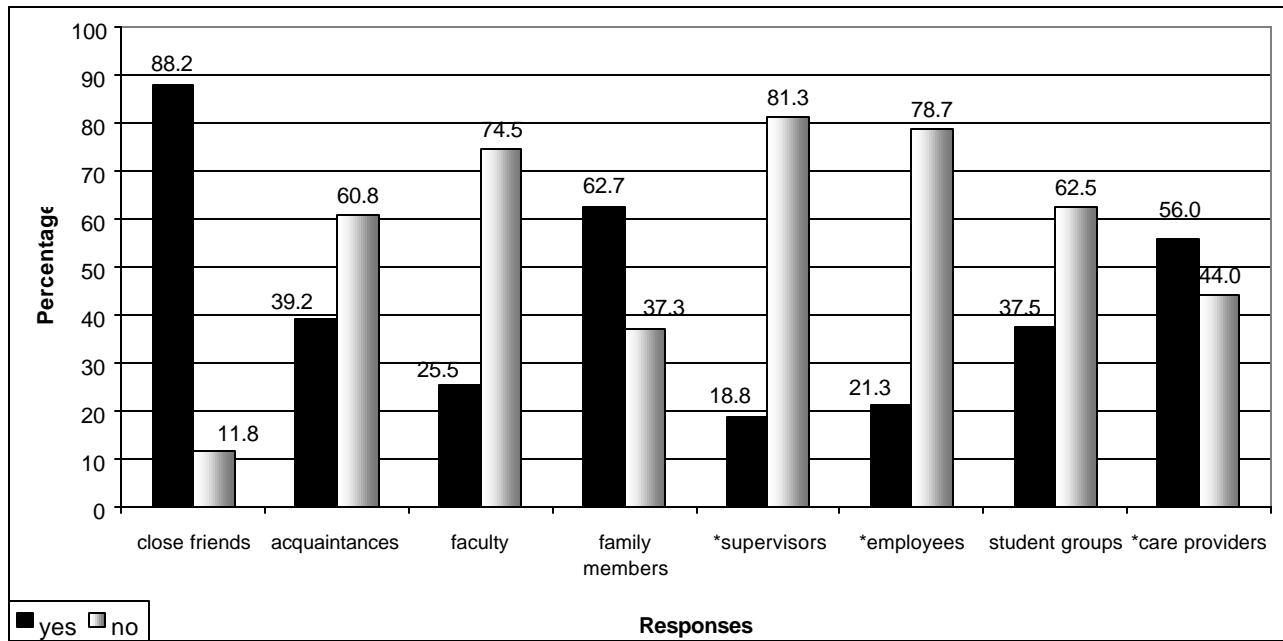
- When asked how important it was that they felt comfortable disclosing their sexual orientation to the people around them, over 47% of GLBT students indicated that it was “very important,” 23% of students said “moderately important.” (See Chart 2.0)

Chart 2.0: Is it important that you feel comfortable disclosing your sexual orientation to the people around you?



Although for most students, it was important that they feel comfortable disclosing their sexual orientation to others, many indicated they were uncomfortable doing so with most of the campus groups mentioned.

- Most GLBT students (over 88%) indicated that they felt comfortable disclosing their sexual orientation to their close friends.
- Fewer students responded that they felt comfortable telling their family members (62.7%) or care providers (56%).
- Most students revealed that they were uncomfortable disclosing their sexual orientation to either their co-workers at the university (78.7%) or to faculty members (74.5%).
- Also, over 60% of students responded that they did not feel comfortable “coming out” to members of their student groups or to their acquaintances.
- Evidence suggests that students are not comfortable disclosing their sexual identity in the workplace with approximately 80% being uncomfortable disclosing their sexual identity to their supervisors or to their co-workers. (See Chart 2.1)

Chart 2.1: Do you feel comfortable disclosing your sexual orientation to...?

Note:

- *supervisors = job supervisors at the University
- *employees = fellow employees at your place of work at the University
- *care providers = campus health care providers

Utilizing Student Gender and Sexuality Services

Students were also asked if they used the services of Student Gender and Sexuality Services and, if they didn't, why not.

- Over 94% of students indicated they did not use the services of Student Gender and Sexuality Services.
- The reasons why students did not use the services of Student Gender and Sexuality Services were diverse. Over 29% of students said that they did not want to be identified by their sexual orientation; 25.4% of students responded that they were not aware of the office; and over 20% of students expressed that all of their needs were being met elsewhere. (See Chart 3.0 & 3.1)

Chart 3.0: Do you use the services of Student Gender and Sexuality Services?

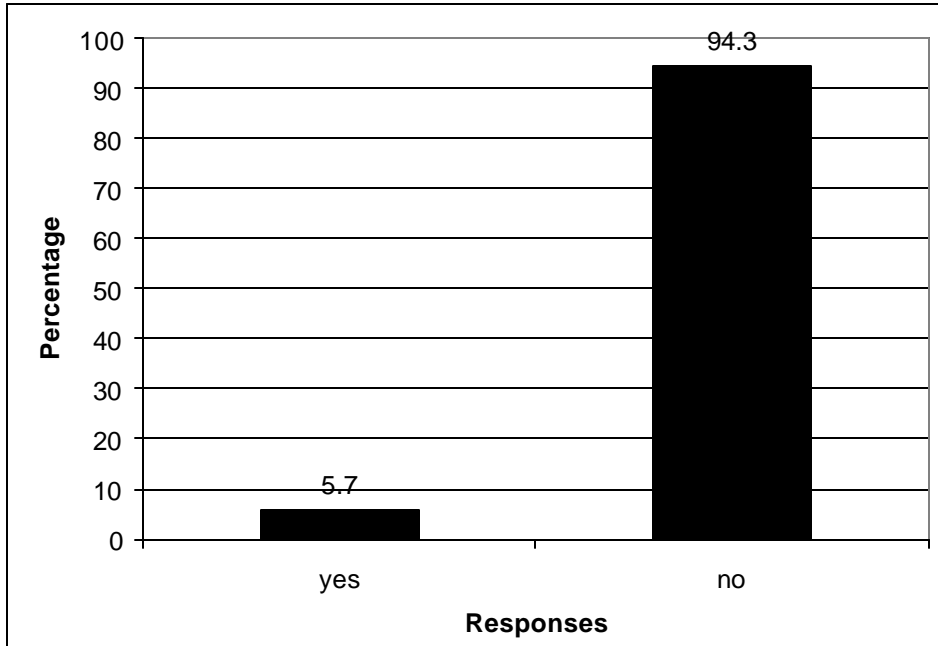
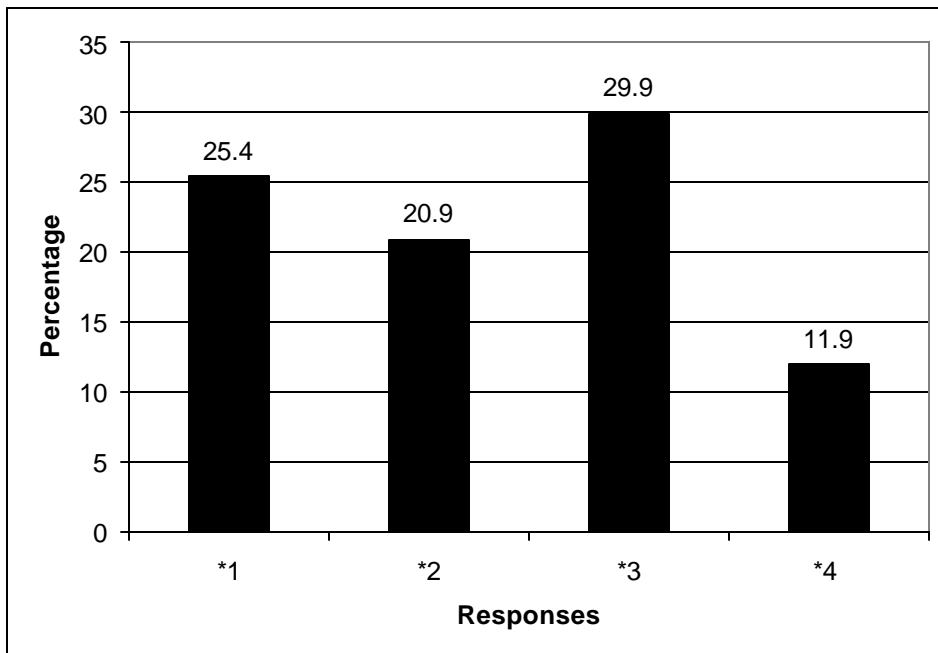


Chart 3.1: If you no, why do you not use the Office? (Multiple responses, not equal 100%)



Note:

- *1 = I am not aware of the office.
- *2 = All of my needs are being met elsewhere.
- *3 = I do not want to be identified by my sexual orientation.
- *4 = Other

Comments on experiences/issues as a GLBT student on campus

GLBT students were asked to provide comments regarding their experiences as a member of an underrepresented group. Overall, the comments illustrate a climate that may be unwelcoming for GLBT students. Such comments are consistent with other findings from the Climate for Diversity Survey.

Two themes emerged from their comments. The first focuses on students who have experienced – directly or indirectly - negative or disparaging comments toward GLBT students on campus. The second theme revolves around students who perceived a lack of institutional support for GLBT students through a lack of funding for GLBT programs and the lack of classes focusing on GLBT issues. However, because of the low number of GLBT students who responded to the survey (and even fewer who provided comments to this question), the themes provide areas for further examination regarding the climate for and experiences of GLBT students at OSU.

Negative or disparaging comments toward GLBT students

Six students commented on experiencing or observing aspects of the OSU and Columbus community, which create a less than welcoming environment for GLBT persons. Their opinions varied on whether these were isolated issues in an otherwise supportive environment or if they were indicative of a hostile climate. A Hispanic, Rank 4 student wrote about her experience as a lesbian at Ohio State and in Columbus:

I have heard many people on campus criticize gays/lesbians. Since I do not look like a lesbian, I feel I am hearing true opinions that would otherwise not be shared. When I am on/near campus (and in the city) with my girlfriend (who looks gay) people stare and call out obscenities to us. I came to Columbus with the understanding that this is a gay friendly city. But I am more fearful of appearing gay here than I was back home.

Her comments demonstrate that because of her ability to “pass” she may get a more accurate view of the attitudes toward GLBT students on campus. She also noted that because of the comments made to her and her girlfriend, she does fear for her safety. Similarly, a Rank 4, gay student, 26 years old, wrote about his uneasiness “coming out” to others because of negative comments made in his presence about homosexuality:

Comments made by people make me nervous about revealing my sexual orientation even though the comments are not directed to me specifically. I am open with a number of my classmates but the bulk of the discussion that has gone on has been after a few drinks.

Supporting these comments, a heterosexual, professional student also commented in this section. She stated, “While heterosexual, I have friends who aren’t. I have never before been on a campus that seemed to so threatening to homosexuals.” She, too, observed a climate that was hostile toward homosexual students.

Other students spoke about more formal ways that they experienced disparaging comments toward GLBT students. A professional student described her observations about the negative image of GLBT persons in the Lantern.

While I certainly appreciate freedom of speech, I am constantly taken aback by the vital, hateful, and plainly ignorant articles in the Lantern regarding gays and lesbians. As a lesbian, every time I pick up a copy of the Lantern I feel insulted and unwelcome.

A white, male, professional student who is bisexual experienced disparaging comments through graffiti on campus, but he also acknowledges that overall the environment at OSU is good and better than what he has experienced in the business world.

Bad attitudes are generally unspoken. Homophobic graffiti on bathroom walls dates back to 90's at least in many buildings—ridiculous and often dating to 80's AIDS scare. OSU and Columbus are awesome overall. It's all far worse at a Fortune 500 company.

Similarly, a graduate student who is bisexual commented on the classroom environment and some faculty, who may not represent the majority but who affect the overall climate on campus.

The problem is not that discrimination based on sexual orientation is widespread. The problem is having one or two faculty who are insensitive or clueless and who say stupid things or encourage inappropriate classroom discussion –and they don't even realize it's inappropriate!! How do you deal with that when they're tenured members of a profession that is supposed to "police" itself? No other faculty member will speak on your behalf because of academic freedom in the classroom and, believe me, in a doctoral program, you can't make waves. So, we do surveys where we "generally agree" that the climate is "pretty good" and then the problems just continue.

This student's comments illustrate how a few members of a community can influence the overall climate with views that may not be reflective of the majority, and, thus, limits the usefulness of survey data to truly demonstrate what the campus climate is like for students of difference. In her comments, she also talked about issues within the faculty structure – particularly tenure and academic freedom – and the lack of power students feel they have in changing their environment because of the fear of repercussions.

These students provide some additional understanding of the experiences of GLBT students, specifically regarding how they may experience fear for their physical safety, fear of negative consequences or discrimination, and hate crimes.

Lack of institutional support

While mostly graduate/professional students focused their comments on the unwelcoming climate for GLBT students, a number of undergraduate students commented on the lack of formal campus support for programs and classes geared toward GLBT issues. A white gay student, 21 years old, said:

I believe that for the most part, [my] experiences have been positive ones. However, this is primarily due to other GLBT students I have encountered and not the university. I believe that effort has been shown on the university's part but there are currently little or no classes for my group like there are for the other groups.

This student perceived that the curriculum does not provide the same level of course work geared to GLBT issues as there were for other underrepresented students. His positive experiences at OSU were

because of the support and connection with other students rather than any formal efforts of the institution. Speaking in a more generic way about diversity, a Rank 1, gay student noted that the lack of course work on diversity awareness enabled those who needed the sensitivity the most to avoid such classes.

Messages about the benefits of diversity and especially opportunities to participate in activities that promote diversity awareness/sensitivity, because they are not integral parts of the curriculum, are too easy for the ignorant and prejudiced students to avoid. But aren't THEY the ones who most need to be educated about diversity issues?

Other students commented on the lack of support for GLBT programs. Specifically, these students commented on the Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Alliance (B-GALA), a gay, lesbian, and bisexual student organization. A Hispanic, gay student, 20 years old, noted a lack of formal diversity education related to sexuality and limited financial support for B-GALA:

As far as sexuality goes, that [diversity education] should be implemented somewhere, perhaps UVC. But that is one thing campus needs most of all. Also, the B-GALA group (which I am not part of, but interact with) has a very limited supply of funding as opposed to other groups.

A Rank 4, white student said:

I feel that as a queer individual at this university, I am not adequately represented by the organizations/agencies on campus that are supposed to support me. This includes B-GALA (which only acts as a non-academic social club) and gender sexuality services. It would be nice to see the university embrace the academic culture of queer people in the same way that some racial/ethnic communities have been embraced.

This student felt his needs were not being met by the support services in place, although he did not provide specific feedback on what was missing. He, like other students, also commented on other underrepresented groups being more fully embraced and supported on campus. A Rank 4, gay student (who also mentioned the comments he had heard others make about GLBT persons) wrote:

The reputation of B-GALA is that it is young and immature and not representative of the gay lesbian population as a whole, i.e., mostly feminine guys and masculine women. The [academic] department tends to be a very lonely place for a gay man. I only recently met the first and only gay [academic department] student. I do know and associate with one gay...instructor. Counseling and Consultation and the gay men's support group have been the most support I have gotten.

Although he did not find B-GALA as an organization that met his needs, finding a student and a faculty member that were "out" provided support for him in a department where he was isolated as a gay man. He also spoke to the importance of the support he received through Counseling and Consultation Services.

Overall, these GLBT students felt the university offers insufficient support for GLBT students on campus, especially compared to what other underrepresented populations appear to receive. They noted that more university support is needed in order to increase the public's awareness and understanding of GLBT groups.

Appendix A

Campus Climate for Diversity Respondent Demographics

- **GENDER**: 51% were female; and 49% male
- **RANK**: 68.6% were undergraduate students; 22.4% were graduate students; 7.4%, professional; and 1.5% non-degree. Among the undergraduate students, 10.4% were Rank 1; 16.4% Rank 2; 5.9% Rank 3; and 35.8% Rank 4.
- **RACE/ETHNICITY**: (Please note that students provided multiple responses when applicable)
 - 9.0% were African American/Black
 - 3.0% were American Indian/Alaskan Native
 - 10.4% were Asian/Pacific Islander
 - 9.0% were Hispanic American/Latino(a)
 - 61.2% were White/Caucasian
 - 3.0% were international students
 - 4.8% responded “other”
- **GPA**: Among the undergraduate students 4.7% had a GPA of less than a 2.0; 44.2% had between a 2.0 and a 2.9; and 51.2% had a 3.0 or above. Among the graduate and professional students, 7.1% had between a 2.0 and a 2.9; and 93.3% had a 3.0 or better. Other students did not provide their GPA.
- **“HOMETOWN”**: When asked where they spent most of their lives before college, 22.4% of students responded that they were from a rural area or town, 16.4% from a small city; 23.9% from a large city or metropolitan area; and 32.8% from a suburb.
- **AGE**:
 - 7.1% were 18 or younger
 - 20.3% were 19 or 20
 - 17.2% were 21 or 22
 - 12.5% were 23 or 24
 - 7.8% were 25 or 26
 - 7.8% were 27 or 28
 - 7.8% were 29 or 30
 - 4.7% were between the ages of 31 and 35
 - 12.6% were between the ages of 36 and 40
 - 6.4% were over 40
- **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**: 11.1% of the sample responded that they had a disability (visual, hearing, speech, mobility, psychiatric, or learning)
- **RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION**: (in descending order of frequency)
 - 28.4% Non-religious
 - 17.9% Roman Catholic
 - 9.0% Protestant
 - 7.5% Pagan
 - 6.9% Baptist
 - 6.0% Agnostic
 - 4.5% Jewish
 - 4.5% Buddhist
 - 4.5% Atheist
 - 4.5% Other (including Eastern Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, Pentecostal, Jehovah Witnesses, Amish/Mennonite, Born Again Christian, Quarter, Zoroastrian, Disciples of Christ and more)
 - 3.0% Muslim

- COLLEGE ENROLLMENT:

College Enrollment	Percent
Arts	19.4
Biology	1.5
Business	1.5
Education	9.0
Engineering	6.0
Food, Agricultural, & Environmental Sciences	6.0
Human Ecology	1.5
Humanities	19.4
Law	1.5
Math & Physics	3.0
Medicine and Public Health	4.5
Pharmacy	1.5
Social & Behavioral Sciences	9.0
Social Work	1.5
UVC	10.4