

Illinois Wesleyan University 2013 LGBT Campus Climate Survey Numbers and Recommendations



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General campus environment for LGBTs

76% of student respondents report a very or somewhat accepting campus climate for LGBTs.

11% find it unaccepting or very unaccepting

LGBT students experience it as less accepting than heterosexual peers.

Among LGBT student participants, those who identify as white find the campus climate for LGBT people more accepting than those who identify as MALANA.

Number of students who fear for their physical safety sometimes or often due to sexual orientation or gender identity/ expression: **10** and of those, **8** identify as LGBT.

Just **6** participants don't know an LGBT peer and **79%** know **3 or more** LGBT peers.

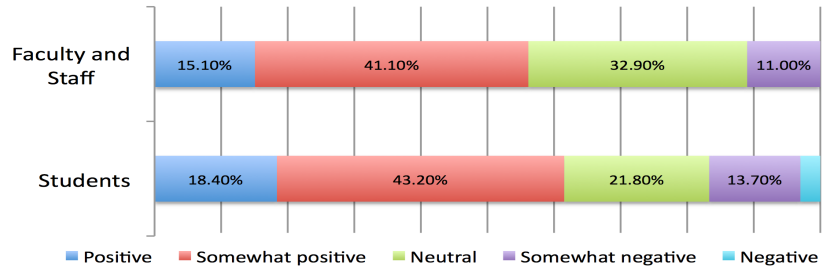
46% of students don't know an LGBT faculty or staff member.

Jokes that demean LGBTs contribute to a negative climate for LGBTs and heterosexual students.

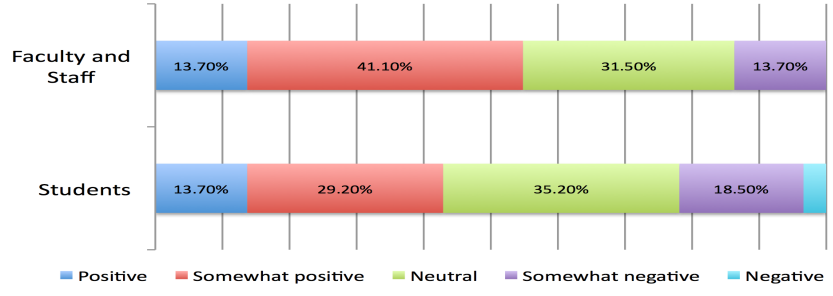
SUMMARY

Survey results suggest that many students find a relatively safe and supportive campus environment that fosters LGBT identities. Further, LGBT-identified students speak of finding connections to people and places on campus that support them, be it a connection with an LGBT faculty or staff member or a major, department and career field compatible with an envisioned LGBT future. Yet those same students also find entrenched resistance to their identities, sometimes in unavoidable contexts, such as interactions with closed-minded peers, faculty or staff, on athletic teams or, at times, in social spaces such as residence halls or RSOs. In these contexts, students must choose to be uncomfortably out or to conceal important facets of their identities.

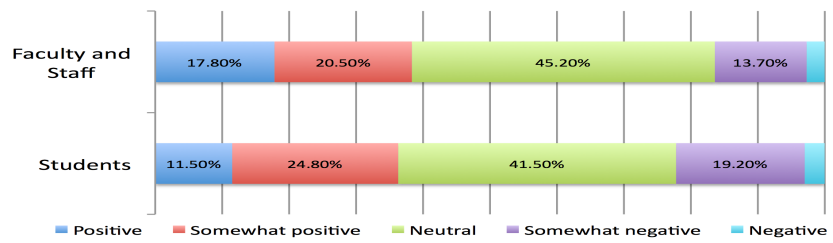
Climate for men who are gay



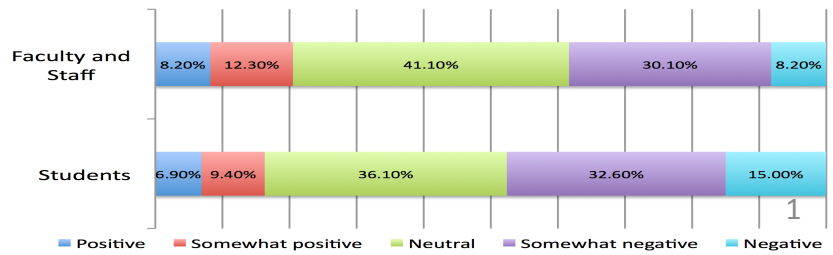
Climate for women who are lesbian



Climate for people who are bisexual



Climate for people who are transgender

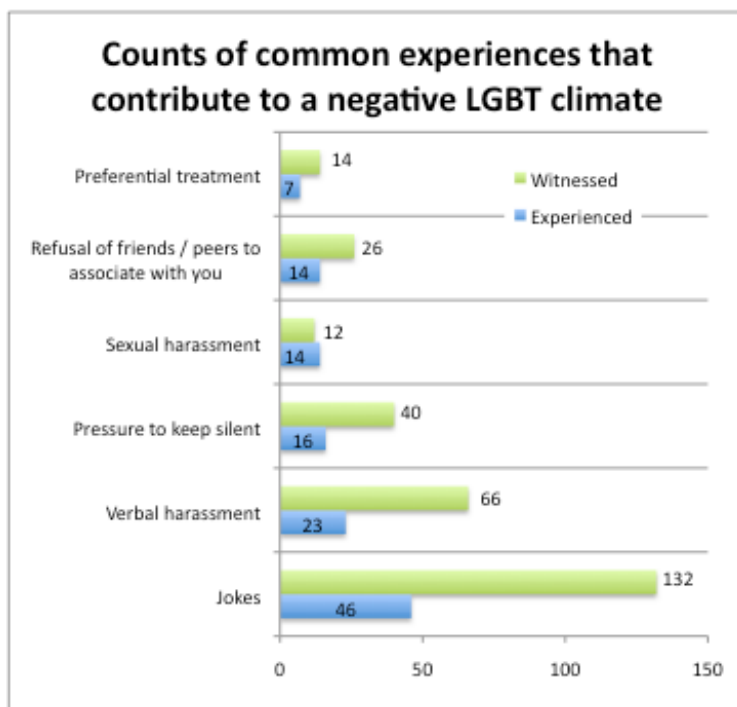


Reporting on *their own personal experiences* that contribute to a negative campus climate, students indicate:

- jokes demeaning to LGBTs are most common (experienced by 18%), followed by
- verbal harassment (9%),
- pressure to conform to a heteronormative environment (6%),
- sexual harassment (5%), and
- the refusal of some on campus to associate with those who are or are perceived to be LGBT (5%).

Based on *interactions they have witnessed*:

- jokes (witnessed by 51%), followed by
- verbal harassment (25%)
- pressure to conform to a heteronormative environment (15%)
- the refusal of some on campus to associate with those who are or are perceived to be LGBT (10%)
- pressure to leave campus housing (6%)
- preferential treatment (5%).



The conclusions and recommendations below are offered to improve the **general campus environment** for LGBT persons.

- Ongoing and regular climate assessment must be continued to determine progress or lack thereof, and to identify additional progressive pathways that accompany culture changes that take place on the campus and beyond.
- Because the student body is almost fully reconstituted every four years, an ongoing cycle of training around interpersonal differences, bystander behavior, conflict management and other associated skill sets targeting student leaders, such as RAs, TOLs, FSL leaders, athletic team captains, and RSO officers should be implemented.
- While faculty cohorts do not cycle as quickly as those of students, skill development around fostering respectful interactions with students, creating inclusive learning environments, and fostering growth among diverse learners would be a few of several such appropriate topics around which to dialogue.
- Because students with trans* identities were identified as those least understood, accepted and supported on campus, activities specific to fostering an understanding of gender identity and creating support for trans* students should be broadly initiated among students, faculty and staff.
- The bias response protocol should be publicized among LGBTs with the intention to foster supportive and tolerant communities, and to gather information about incidents and experiences of bias encountered by LGBTs and allies.
- The university should continue to leverage outreach and support of LGBT student, alumni, faculty and staff, and community cohorts to create opportunities for interaction, growth and progress in support of LGBT and student development initiatives.

Campus programmatic environment for LGBTs

SUMMARY

Many comments from student participants were directed towards promoting a rich and vibrant campus programming culture around issues of LGBT identity. Such a culture would allow students the opportunity to learn more about others, to relate their own experiences, and make sense of the world and culture on campus and beyond. While divergent opinions exist about the degree and amount of programming related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and LGBT identity that should exist on campus, the study did clearly reflect that much of the conversation around LGBT topics is sourced from IWU Pride Alliance, The Office of Multicultural Student Affairs and the Safe Zone program. Diversifying the source of LGBT programming should be a goal, with opportunities for intersectional programming explored through: classrooms, residence halls, chapters, RSOs, leadership programs, disciplinary lenses, student activities, vocational programming, athletics, etc.

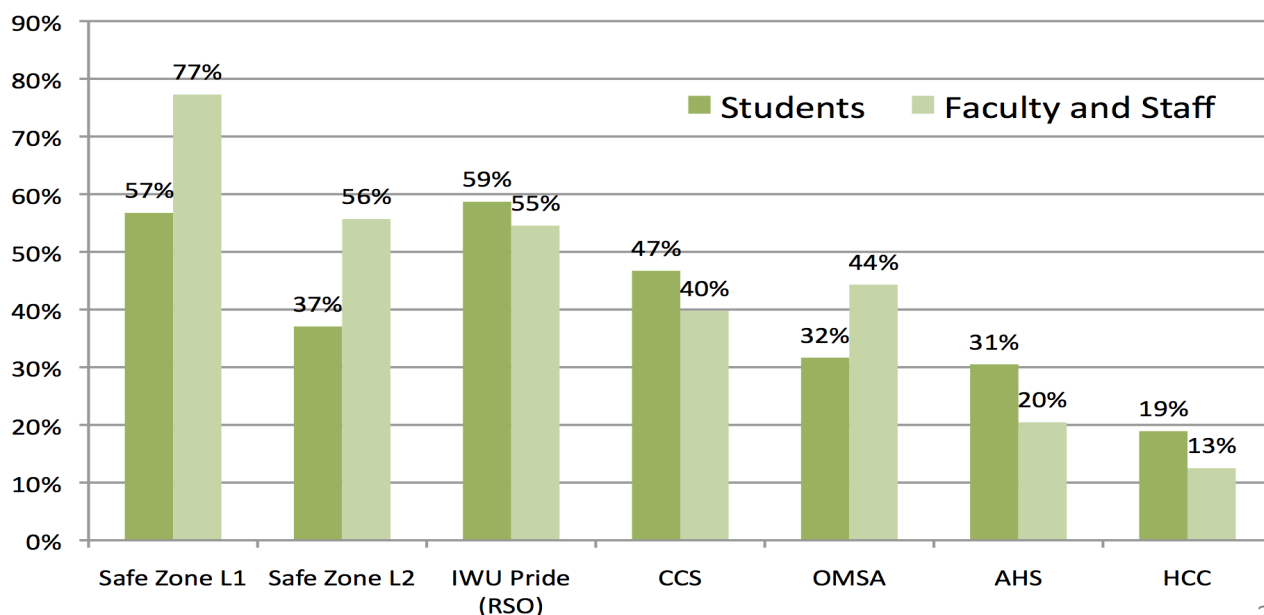
IWU Pride was
identified by
59%
of student participants.

Others were:
Safe Zone (57%)
and Counseling
Services (47%)

First-year students
with an LGBT
identity had a
considerably less
robust awareness of
the variety of LGBT
resources than
upper-division peers.

Are LGBT resources
and organizations
adequately publicized?
54% **21%**
agree or strongly agree disagree or strongly disagree
By a statistically significant margin, LGBTs are more likely to disagree

Awareness of Campus LGBT Resources



The recommendations below are offered to improve the **campus programmatic environment** around LGBT issues.

- Survey respondents noted a particular lack of awareness about campus resources available to support IWU's LGBTs. More than several questioned whether this information was available online, and the lack of a visible web presence that discusses and suggests campus resources seems an easy challenge to overcome, and a place for the campus to begin to remediate the dearth of visibility around LGBT supports.
- Collaborative programming efforts should be explored to cross-program, and cross-promote speakers and events related to LGBT issues or that feature LGBT persons.
- Conversation should take place about how to increase involvement in dialogues that touch on LGBT issues and culture by those less inclined to actively seek out such conversations. This might lead to unconventional programming intersections that would bring together a diverse collection of participants to explore the intersection of mutually compelling interests. The use of small programming grants for this purpose could foster this kind of boundary-breaking programming activity.
- The campus should undertake awareness raising activity around LGBT support resources, and to foster the creation or articulation of additional resources of benefit to students with LGBT identities from within existing functional areas.
- LGBT and ally faculty and staff should be encouraged to apply their knowledge of LGBT identity and experience through a practice or discipline lens to further exploration of the unique roles and potentials that LGBT students have to create knowledge and/or praxis in the disciplines and professions.
- Exploration of a campus LGBT resource center or professional staff dedicated to providing LGBT supports should be considered. Many institutions of higher education provide resource centers or other spaces, along with dedicated professional staff in support of LGBT students and programming on campus. IWU has opted for a model that distributes the responsibility for supporting LGBT students broadly across student affairs and other areas, but risks that such efforts feel superficial because the responsibility is not the articulated responsibility of any individual unit. Some participant feedback suggests that reconsideration of this support strategy may be fruitful. One student commented that he or she had had "positive experiences with many people I have not opened up to: if it came up, I believe I could. All the same, I personally haven't felt completely confident in my abilities to be open about it, though that has little to do with the expressed environment." While the student does not make the connection between activities that directly target LGBT identity development for the purpose of facilitating personal confidence building, per se, many institutions have seen that LGBT students can benefit from efforts that intentionally and directly engage them in skill development and personal capacity building.

Calls for institutional support and change

SUMMARY

Many participants had suggestions for steps that might be taken institutionally to enhance the climate for LGBT students, faculty and staff. An appreciation of diversity that prepares students for productive life beyond IWU is a core mission of the university, and the degree to which IWU effectively meets that mission, particularly around LGBT issues, is assumed by some and questioned by others. Yet the pace of change and understanding around LGBT culture and identity necessitates that the institution will continually need to make adjustments to the content, frequency and tone of its messaging around LGBT support to be effective and felicitous.

85%

of students know that sexual orientation and gender identity are included in IWU's non-discrimination policy.

68%

of student participants indicated an interest in taking an LGBT Studies Course

50%

of faculty participants indicated a willingness to provide instruction in LGBT Studies

A student commented that "the people that do not attend awareness events are the ones that discriminate the most. It would be good to include some sort of seminar, similar to gateway class, for freshman to take to give more perspective and acceptance—not only to LGBTQ but for race and privilege as well." Another echoed, "I believe some mandatory events or short talks in classes should be given on acceptance and understanding of the community. The problem with what is offered now is that it is a choice to participate."

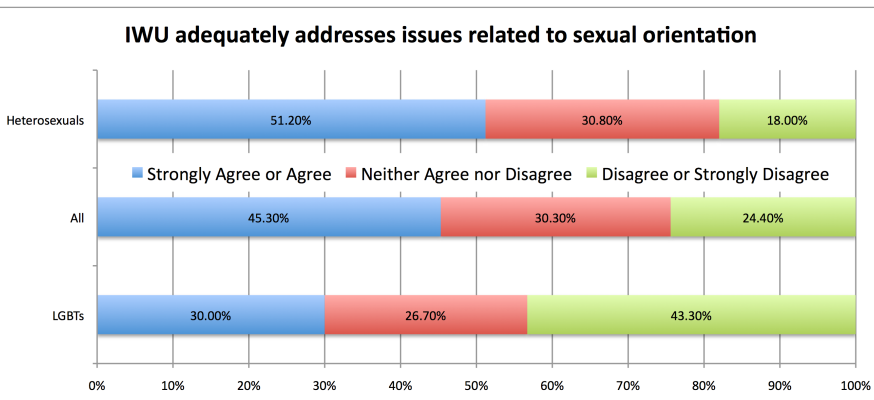
Does IWU adequately respond to issues related to sexual orientation?

45%

agree or strongly agree

24%

disagree or strongly disagree



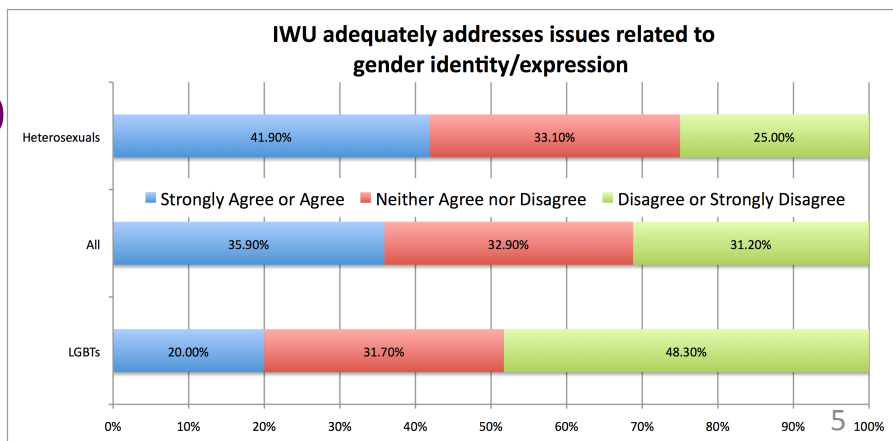
Issues related to gender identity / expression?

36%

agree or strongly agree

31%

disagree or strongly disagree



LGBT participants disagreed considerably more than straight peers with the adequacy of institutional responses.

The recommendations below are offered to **affirm institutional support** for LGBT students, faculty, staff.

- IWU should affirm that the value and importance of diversity at IWU necessarily includes differences of race and ethnicity, but extends further to specifically include sexual orientation and gender identity differences, as well as the many additional ways that individuals come to uniquely understand themselves as complex social beings.
- Overt expressions of support for LGBT inclusion should be offered by institutional leaders, such as the President, Provost, Vice President for Student Affairs, and those from other areas across levels and divisions. These expressions should be authentic and timely, and coordinated with IWU Pride Alliance to leverage opportune intersections with programming and cultural celebrations.
- Faculty allies and academic affairs leaders should initiate conversations with peers around academic LGBT supports, classroom opportunities, microaggressions, and opportunities for students to explore identity through relevant and appropriate coursework.
- An institutional commitment to the judicial policy of no tolerance towards harassment was noted in the study. However, campus climate is generally constructed around smaller moments, and the experience of microaggressions that might not reach the bar of harassment, but ultimately result in a hostile climate. Conversation should take place around expectations and support for faculty, staff and students to collectively enforce community standards around civility, and disrespectful, offensive and intolerant language and interpersonal interactions.
- To identify specific needs appropriate to trans* students, and the preparedness of IWU to respond to those needs, a tabletop exercise should be convened that explores how a trans* student would overcome administrative tasks associated with a gender transition, such as records management and preferred name usage, arrangement of appropriate housing and classroom accommodations, medical and mental health supports, career preparation, extra-curricular involvement including athletic participation, etc. Based on the gap identified during the tabletop exercise, consideration of policies and infrastructure around trans* identity should ensue.
- The potential for listing interdisciplinary course offerings within the framework of gender and sexuality studies should be explored.
- A brief discussion of supports available to LGBT students and employees should be included as a regular part of new employee orientation.
- Campus surveys that collect demographic information should reflect inclusive consideration of sexual orientation and gender identity, as should forms utilized by human resources. This expectation of inclusion should extend to surveys and forms provided by external partners.
- The presence and prevalence of gender inclusive bathrooms should be explored across campus facilities, and changes made to expand offerings in areas that lack gender inclusive bathroom access.
- Bathrooms and other areas should be monitored for demeaning graffiti; documentation and removal of such should be immediate.

Concerns directed towards IWU's culture of men and masculinity

SUMMARY

The most unexpected outcome of the study were comments that revealed experiences and observations of participants that call into question the degree to which progress can be made around LGBT issues until and unless significant dialogues take place that unpack the role of men and masculinity in the space of change. The study shed light on campus cohorts, such as those involved in fraternities and athletics, that may have been traditionally excluded from these dialogues, by choice, design or destiny. However, exploring and unpacking the campus climate and culture is impossible without engaging more broadly than has been previously accomplished.

Related quotes and comments from student participants:

"I am bisexual and when it comes up in conversation people (primarily males) joke or make lewd sexual comments. This has happened numerous times, especially when I was living in the dorms and didn't have the same opportunity to leave campus."

"As a pansexual woman, men who are aware of my sexual orientation often pressure me to make out with other girls for their own pleasure. They do not understand that my identity is not for their own exploitation or enjoyment, and this makes me feel highly discouraged to be myself, especially out at parties and the like."

"I have been yelled at for refusing to dance with guys at parties. It's expected for all girls to be willing to grind up on every guy at a party in certain places. I won't do that with anyone and it causes a lot of anger and aggression for some guys."

"At the moment it's very difficult to be LGBT in athletics and Greek Life. While certain sports (like Track) and certain fraternities (like Acacia) have done well at handling it, others are alarmingly lacking."

"Women, especially in the Greek system, are viewed as objects—especially women who publicly will make out with each other. On multiple occasions, I have witnessed derogatory attention being given to women kissing each other at parties—which speaks to disrespect on both the women for doing it, and for the men who ogle them."

"I have never witnessed it firsthand and strongly believe that IWU is an open campus, but have heard otherwise from a few people who have been harassed by others, particularly drunk fraternity members."

The recommendations below are offered to explore **concerns directed towards IWU's culture of men and masculinity**.

- While the comments collected in this study were compelling, they are hardly definitive, and were not the focus of the study. To better understand how men and masculinity intersect with a campus climate welcoming to differences in gender and sexuality, more assessment needs to be done that explores attitudes and assumptions of these cultural actors, with a focus on highly masculinized spaces, such as those within fraternities and athletics.
- Potential programming on men and men's issues should be explored to help provide intentional development of healthy masculinities.

Conclusion

Like many campuses, the IWU of today would be comparatively unrecognizable to previous generations in its current support of LGBT students, faculty and staff. Many campus leaders have worked diligently over decades to create active and visible supports for LGBT students, intentionally working towards a campus environment that is welcoming and attractive to prospective students and families, that more fully includes current LGBT members, and that aligns with mission outcomes for graduates' ability to function in a global workplace.

While creation of an inclusive environment requires efforts from across the campus, specific services targeted towards LGBT students on a campus serve as a hub of activity, critical resistance and forward movement in confronting and transforming a campus culture for the better. The climate of a campus for LGBT persons plays a significant role in an LGBT individual's ability to be successful. IWU has come a long way towards creating such a climate, but much work remains to be done. These study results and recommendations should provide an essential roadmap to guide some of those activities as the university makes additional progress towards the goal of full inclusion of LGBTs.

Detailed Research Report

The executive summary and full research report that informs this document is available for examination, and includes more specific details about assumptions, limitations, methodology, participants, measures, quantitative and qualitative analysis, and complete and detailed findings.

In summary, the study authors collected both quantitative and qualitative data through a 29-item web-based survey. There were 259 student participants (participation rate of 12.9%), and 88 faculty and staff participants (participation rate of 18.4%). Responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and frequencies, comparisons of means, and the coding and analysis of open-ended questions.