

Illinois Wesleyan University 2013 LGBT Campus Climate Survey Executive Summary



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Introduction

The climate for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people at Illinois Wesleyan University reflects both challenges and opportunities. In some respects, there has never been a more supportive environment on campus for LGBTs, and in others, stubborn obstacles remain that diminish student success and development. Campus acceptance mirrors general social trends of more openness towards and inclusion of non-heterosexual identities and individuals. Yet as an entity committed to a social justice mission, IWU has a burden of responsibility to actively examine its culture, identify inequities and create change such that LGBTs have equitable opportunities to engage the campus as fully as heterosexual peers.

As the student arrives on campus as his or her full authentic self, including all aspects of his or her developing character and identity, intellectual abilities and potentials, interests, passions and unique qualities of personhood, the culture and climate of an institution provide places of immediate and strong connection, and spaces of challenge and strong disconnection. For some students, the latter is provided in greater proportion to the prior.

In particular, students who differ from the majority--such as those who represent racial minorities, are non-heteronormative, celebrate underrepresented faith traditions, or live with disabilities, to provide a few examples--may experience more obstacles to full inclusion and participation on campus. LGBT students, for example, may encounter attitudes, behavior and cultural assumptions that diminish or deride their fundamental self-understandings. They may be harassed emotionally and physically. They may experience intentional and unintentional microaggressions. They may be told in a number of ways that who they are is unwelcome, unsafe or unvalued (Nadal, Issa, Leon, Meterko, Wideman, & Wong, 2011). Exploring and attending to the campus climate for marginalized members is critical practice for institutions that seek to create fully inclusive cultures supportive of student learning and development.

Trans* inclusion, apart from lesbian, gay, and bisexual counterparts who share a civil rights struggle and movement but often diverge in culture, goals and advocacy of trans* counterparts in times of stress (see *The Michigan Messenger*, 2007), is worthy of considerable note. LGB students may experience a level of acceptance on campus that far exceeds that experienced by trans* students in many ways, but creating a safe campus climate for trans* students is no less grounded in creating education and awareness, and providing opportunities for exploration and self-understanding, and fostering support services.

The purpose of conducting an LGBT campus climate survey is to establish a baseline understanding that describes the perceptions and experiences of campus from the perspectives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students, as well as from those of heterosexual and cisgender (see Definitions) students. Using a rigorous application of quantitative and qualitative methods, a carefully conducted study provides an opportunity for collective self-reflection, and the ability to ground an understanding of the ways that individuals experience the campus

climate as members of underrepresented and majority groups, and will ultimately help to reveal places where the campus can seek to make progress and create spaces that better reflect campus goals of diversity and inclusion.

Responses to the LGBT climate study generally converged around four major themes: Comments describing the general campus environment related to LGBT identity; the campus programmatic environment around LGBT issues; calls for institutional support and change; and considerations directed towards IWU's culture of men and masculinity. Each of these themes is explored below.

General Campus Environment For LGBT Persons

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.

Fast facts and findings

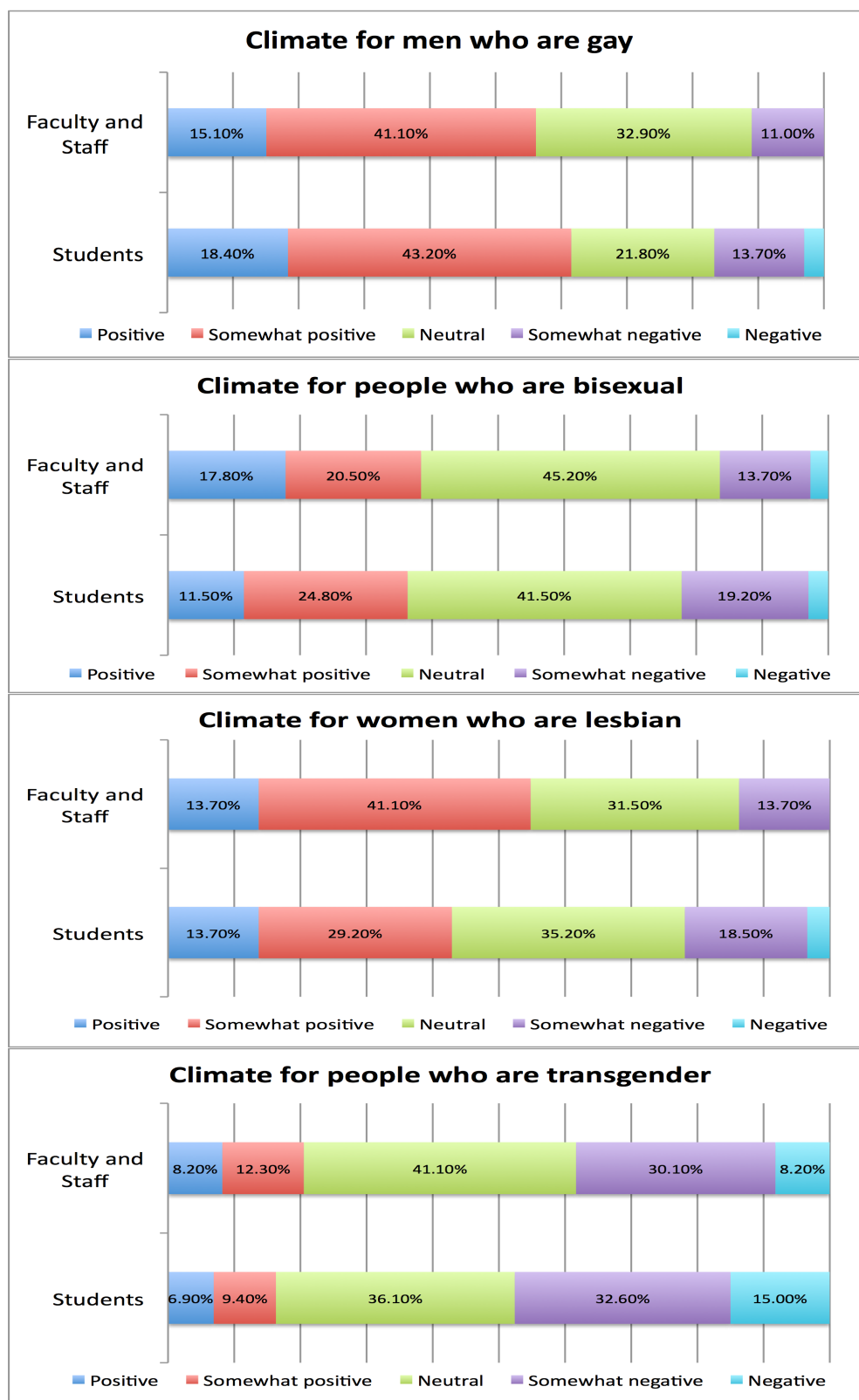
General observations

- 75.7% of student respondents report a very or somewhat accepting campus climate for LGBT people, while 10.9% perceive it as unaccepting or very unaccepting.
- LGBT students rate the campus climate as less accepting than heterosexual peers.
- Among LGBT student participants, first-year LGBTs find the campus climate to be least accepting, compared to upper-division LGBTs. Among all survey participants, first-year heterosexuals rate it most accepting.

The charts on the following page show how participants responded to questions about the general climate for gay men, bisexuals, lesbians and trans* people, revealing that while majorities describe the climate as positive or somewhat positive, it is not universally understood to be so.

Faculty and staff perceptions

- 68.1% of faculty and staff respondents indicated the campus climate to be somewhat or very accepting for LGBT people, while just 3.4% indicated that the climate was somewhat or very unaccepting. A considerable 21.8% of faculty and staff respondents indicated that they did not know the campus climate for LGBT people and could not provide a rating.

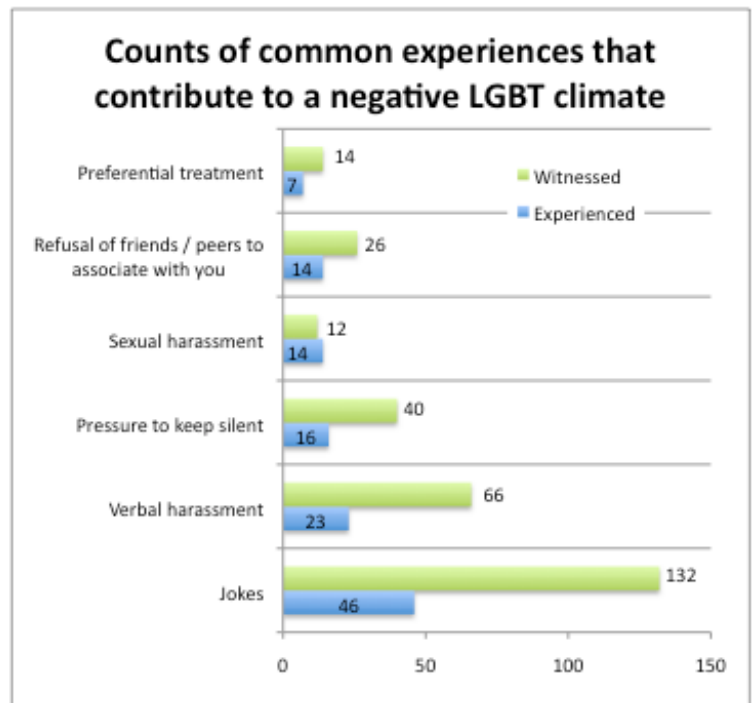


Intersections of identity: LGBT and MALANA

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

Experiences that contribute to a negative climate

- Reporting on *their own personal experiences*, students indicate that jokes demeaning to LGBT people are the most common contributor to a negative climate (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*, students indicate that jokes demeaning to LGBT people (witnessed by 51%) remain the most commonly witnessed experience that contributes to a negative climate, 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%), and preferential treatment (5%).



The negative climate for LGBTs detrimentally impacts the climate for heterosexuals as well:

- Among heterosexual students only, jokes (*personally experienced* by 10%) remained the most common negative experience, followed by sexual harassment (3%), verbal harassment (2%), and refusal of friends or peers to associate with those who identify as or are perceived to be LGBT (2%).
- Among heterosexual student respondents only, jokes demeaning to LGBT people (*witnessed* by 51%) remained the most common negative interactions witnessed by survey participants, followed by verbal harassment (20%) pressure to conform to a heteronormative environment (12%), refusal of friends or peers to associate with those who identify as or are perceived to be LGBT (9%).

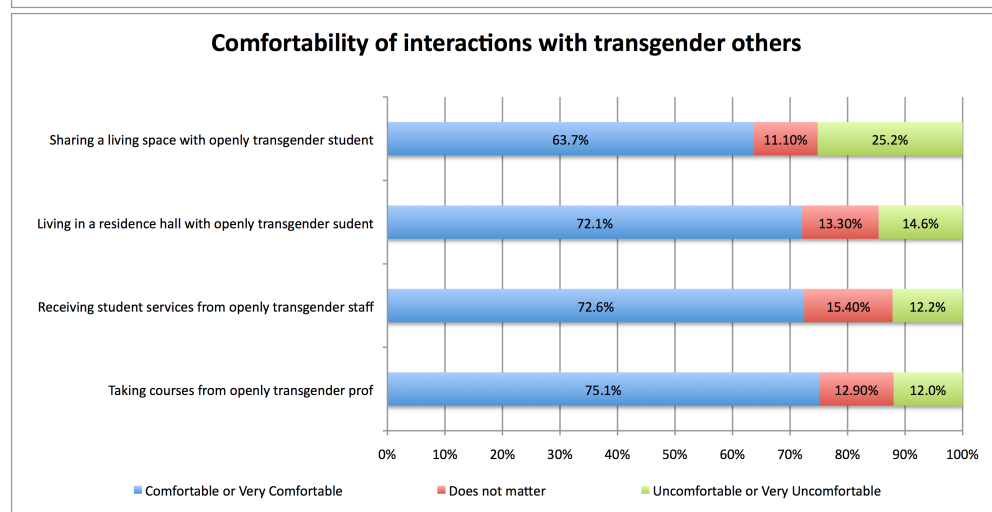
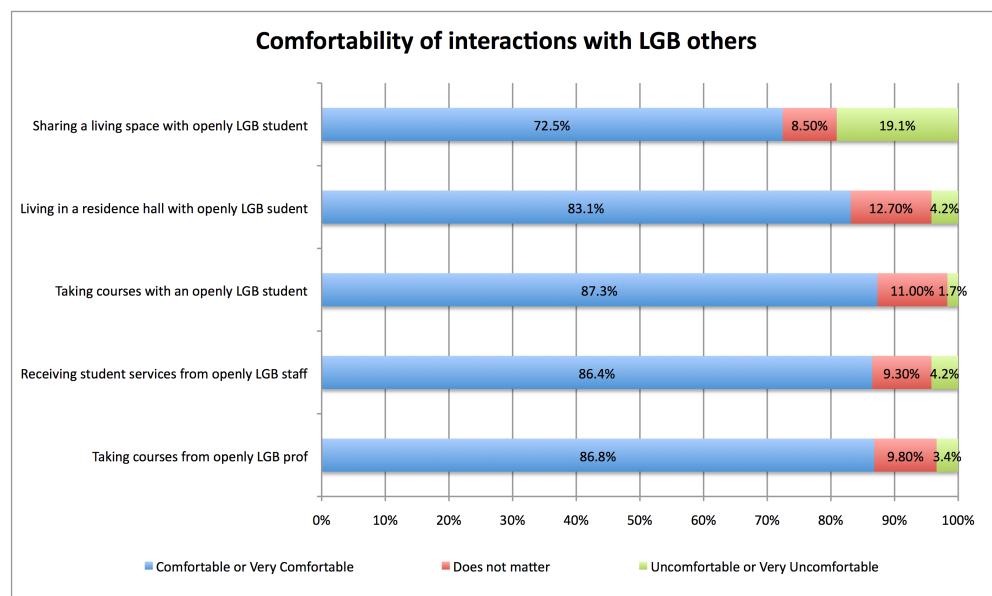
Fears for physical safety

- 10 students (80% of them LGBT-identified) and 3 faculty/staff members (66% of them LGBT-identified) report sometimes or often fearing for their physical safety because of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression within the last year.

Knowledge of and comfortability with LGBTs

- 46% of students report not knowing any openly LGBT faculty or staff on campus, while another 41% report knowing 1-3. The remaining 13% of respondents know 4 or more LGBT faculty/staff.
- Only 6 respondents report not knowing any LGBT peers, while 18% report knowing 1-3 openly LGBT peers, 44% report knowing 4-9 openly LGBT peers, and 35% know 10 or more openly LGBT peers.

The following charts reflect student perceptions of their comfortability with LGBT others:



Participant voices

Some student survey participants pointed to a campus environment that felt relatively safe for them. One self-identified LGBT participant shared, “Overall, IWU does an excellent job of creating a safe environment for LGBTQ individuals, even if I may not have taken advantage of it in full,” and another pointed to existing success in fostering LGBT identity, sharing, “I know several individuals who came out for the first time because they were students on this campus, so we must be doing a fairly decent job of creating a welcoming environment.”

Yet others disagreed, and felt that the campus climate could be more accepting. A student respondent who identified as an LGBT ally disclosed “I have heard of [discrimination] existing from my LGBTQ friends.” Other students shared examples of experiences that felt unwelcoming or hostile: “My impression is that the problems I have had personally with harassment are a very small minority of students at Illinois Wesleyan.” Another recounted, “I have experienced verbal harassment and jokes myself, but I have seen these things occur even more often with other people. I also have seen people pressured to be silent, and I know of one instance in which there was a roommate conflict because of sexuality.” Many participants described a campus environment where peers frequently use “gay” as an insult and call one another “fag” regularly with one participant expressing that he or she “hear[s] them almost every day.”

Even students who don’t self-identify with an LGBT identity related experiences of intolerance or hostility directed at themselves and others. One participant explained, “I’m straight, but friends openly use phrases like ‘faggot’ in daily conversation,” and another related, “I am a straight man who has received jokes about sounding, looking, and acting gay.” Another related, “I have been made fun of for being gay before, although I do not identify as gay. Also, because people identify me as straight, I am sometimes made quite conscious of preferential treatment.” Finally, another explains that outright “I’ve been told by friends that if I were gay/lesbian, they wouldn’t be my friend.”

Finally, some student participants were clear that students with some identities may experience a less accepting climate than more culturally normative peers. “I think overall gays, lesbians, and bisexuals are better understood here than any other community I know of that’s integrated with LGBT and straight individuals. However, I think transgender individuals have to live in hiding in fear of ridicule, persecution, and embarrassment.” This conviction that the campus climate for trans* students as being starkly more challenging than that for LGB peers was a common refrain among participants, and certainly provides triangulation with quantitative measures that describe the campus climate for trans* people as the least accepting of the major LGBT archetypes.

While many of the student survey participants felt that campus progress on LGBT issues was both insufficient and critical, other respondents strongly questioned the necessity, pace and need for change around issues of LGBT inclusion. A considerable number cautioned LGBT persons against embodying a victim role, or felt that LGBTs were often too vocal in describing their concerns or negative experiences related to sexual orientation and gender identity. “Stop making such a big deal about everything. Calm down and stop crying,” wrote a participant, and another remarked, “People are way too sensitive on this campus. IWU is extremely accepting of LGBT individuals.”

Others took issue with an institutional cultural stance that encourages or permits behavior framed as immoral. A faculty/staff participant expressed that “LGBT persons are best served when they are encouraged and helped to live chaste lives. Instead, IWU seems to embrace a modern idea that one’s sexuality is driven only by urges and feelings, and can’t be mastered by discipline and reason.”

Even self-identified LGBT students described concerns about promoting campus engagement around issues of sexual and gender identity. One remarked, “The one thing I don’t get about IWU is why so much talk about sexual orientation. All the talk about sexuality makes me uncomfortable. When I walk into class I have no thoughts about telling the professor or class ‘I am gay!’ Some people need to know like close friends and roommates. It’s good to have resources, but I feel like there’s a line that’s going away between what is private and what is not. Stop making this a big deal!”

Yet, many participants related a lived experience where words and actions created a harmful and threatening environment. “I walk through the halls and campus holding hands with my girlfriend. We, as two females together, are stared at, laughed at, and hear jokes or offhanded comments about it.” Another described that “people that consider themselves ‘accepting’ will often make uncomfortable jokes about ‘hooking up’ with me because I’m bisexual.” For these students, the implications of jokes and comments have real emotional consequences, and describe a climate that fails to allow LGBT students the safety to develop and succeed in ways comparable to heterosexual peers.

A final theme emerged from students who identified a campus climate that failed to acknowledge the broad range of identities that fall at the fringes or entirely outside those embodied in our most common experience of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and trans* people. One student described his or her experience of hearing “various jokes from peers, making fun of individuals who cross social norms.” The social norms critiqued here don’t simply describe the heteronormative majority, but also create space for “safe” LGBT identities. For instance, one participant described that “honestly, bisexual women are seen as sexy, but bisexual men are not.” Characterizing same gender loving women as only always attractive and bisexual (from the perspective of the masculine gaze, of course) reduces the threat of alternative sexualities to traditional social norms and to masculinity.

An alternative example is the stereotype of the feminine gay man, described by another respondent who shared that “with the music and theatre program at IWU, I think the campus is much more accepting of gay males, because people are more likely to personally know someone who is a gay male.” Another student affirmed this perception, articulating “I think there is a general consensus on our campus that being gay is acceptable, but only in the stereotypically narrowly defined role of the feminine gay man. It is great for the people who fit that role because it can be helpful for people to accept them, but it makes it harder in some ways for those who don’t fit that narrowly defined role because for a lot of people that is how they understand gay men and not fitting into that role is perplexing on our campus.”

For students whose identities fall outside of these acceptable norms, the campus climate can be remarkably less accepting. “Students often comment on my androgynous appearance. If I tell them that I’m demi-sexual, they either dismiss it outright as attention seeking or ask about my childhood sexual experiences. Some will make jokes and most will avoid me after that.” As students use their experience at Illinois Wesleyan University to grow, develop and determine a comfortable and authentic sexual orientation and gender identity, it can be significantly detrimental to be dismissed, externally defined, or discarded as attention-seeking.

One participant shared his or her perception that “the majority [of students] aren’t forced to step outside their comfort zone and expand their ways of thinking—which make it seemingly ‘okay’ for acts of discrimination to occur.” The challenge of engaging students widely in conversations about how to interact with and in support of one another and in the context of a variety of identity intersections speaks to a lack of institutional capacity in this regard.

Other students suggested that efforts related to trans* inclusion would help break down these expectations of conformity. “Focus more on transgender equality,” wrote one, and another suggested that “if someone’s been through life and deemed it necessary to have a sex change, they’ve gone through a difficult life so far. Let’s not make it any more difficult by IWU not being understanding of transgenders. I don’t want friends or peers to feel they did something wrong if they did it to better themselves.”

Conclusions and recommendations

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 Around LGBT Issues

Summary

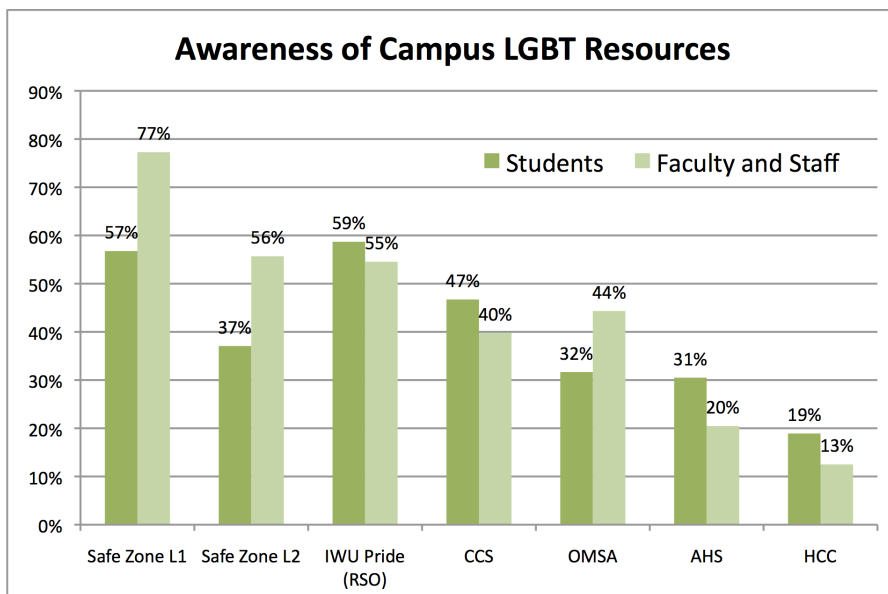
Many comments from student participants were directed towards promoting a rich and vibrant campus programming culture around issues of LGBT identity. Such a culture would allow students the opportunity to learn more about others, to relate their own experiences, and make sense of the world and culture 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.

Fast facts and findings

Campus resources to support LGBTs

- IWU Pride was the most often identified resource among students, selected by 59% of student participants. A close second was Safe Zone, with 57% of participants indicating awareness of sexual orientation programming, and an additional 37% indicating an awareness of educational programming around gender identity. A number of student service areas followed.
- Among faculty and staff, Safe Zone was the most commonly reported LGBT support resource (known by 77%), with IWU Pride (identified by 55%) following.
- First-year students with an LGBT identity had a considerably less robust awareness of the variety of LGBT resources than upper-division peers.
- Of all respondents, 54% of student respondents (and 37% of faculty and staff respondents) agreed or strongly agreed that LGBT resources and organizations are adequately publicized at IWU, while 21% (23%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- LGBT student participants were less likely than heterosexual peers, by a statistically significant margin, to agree that resources are adequately publicized.

The following chart reflects student and faculty awareness of campus LGBT resources:



Participant voices

Participants described more than a few types of programming that would be appreciated related to LGBT identity and understanding. One participant suggested “lecture series, integration with courses,” perhaps similar to some of the curricular clustering efforts that are currently taking place around social justice and human rights. Another said, “I would love to have rallies on campus to support people in the LGBT community,” while another shared, “seminars, open podiums, workshops in a BIG setting such as Hansen or Shirk to hear each other’s feelings and just educate us on what LGBTQ life is and means.” Others echoed “more open talks, events,” and “book reading, discussion panels, workshops.”

One participant called to mind an existing framework that might be employed as a model. “Do something similar to RHA’s Inclusion Week. The week addressed several issues of socioeconomic ranking, race, and sexual orientation. There should be more weeks throughout the year that focus on the specific issues, too.” Another suggested, “I think it would be cool to have a ‘Meet a Gay’ Day, where students can be exposed to gays and see that they are just normal people, instead of just listening to other people’s stereotypes.” Another idea that was posited included passive programming designed to show support for LGBT peers: “Wear a certain color to show they are LGBTQ or in support of it.” Finally, a student participant suggested connecting LGBT programming with students already strong commitment to serving others, saying “I think an LGBT organized event for charity (e.g., clothing or food donation) would be wonderful to do something good and prove to the campus that to be united by being LGBTQ is nothing but a positive force of love and goodwill.” A faculty/staff participant recollected that “I personally felt empowered by students’ quad chalkings of positive LGBT messages a few years ago—maybe around coming out day? Anyway, I thought I was beyond

being influence-able by that kind of thing but it did give me a pleasant lift!” and a second suggested “a social get together for the LGBT Community to include a potluck and/or cookies and milk during the holiday,” further explaining that “to get the community together once per semester in a totally social atmosphere would be great.”

Not all commenters, however, felt that there was value in providing additional campus programming, or focusing efforts there. Although within the minority of commenters, one respondent argued that “in my opinion, large speakers and events don’t do much good because the people who go to those things are already accepting of the LGBT community.” Another offered “while targeting prejudiced students as opposed to the victims would be ideal, it is just not practical to seek out bullies and try to change the minds of closed-minded people. They will think what they want, and as long as they don’t speak out or act out, who cares?”

The registered student organization IWU Pride Alliance was widely recognized as a prominent, perhaps the most prominent, resource and support for LGBT students. Many participants expressed that Pride served as a home, a safe space, and felt indispensable in navigating the campus as an LGBT individual. One suggested that “I think a bigger presence from the IWU Pride Alliance [, and] more funding for that group would help.” Others felt that there were other ways in which the Pride Alliance could become stronger in helping to meet LGBT students’ needs. One student suggested that the campus keeps the group at arms-length, saying, “as it is, it behaves as a certain group that is really quite distanced from the ‘rest’ of the campus.” Another felt that it was challenging to break into an already tight knit group of peers: “When the community puts on events, a lot of people feel uncomfortable because it seems cliquish and exclusive. If we opened the community up more, had more programming in halls, this would help.” A third student described the challenges of an identity intersectionality that coalesced around his or her LGBT and racial identities, saying, “I feel that I am singled out by the LGBT community within the greater IWU community. I believe that this is an issue that needs to be handled in the greater LGBT community, however, so the issue can wait. For now, it may be best just to deal with the representation and strength of the LGBT policies, organizations, resources, etc. Because at the moment, while they exist, they have virtually no presence like much of the multicultural resources on this campus.”

This student’s concern about a lack of presence or prominence of LGBT resources and supports was widely shared among survey participants, both students and among the faculty and staff. Simply giving more visibility to existing programs, was one course of action prescribed by participants, who suggested, for instance, “they should post fliers to allow people that are LGBT to join their community so that they can feel more comfortable,” and another asking for “more safe zone trainings throughout the year.” A faculty or staff participant shared, “the Safe Zone is terrific, but what happens afterwards to keep awareness of issues?” Another faculty or staff member indicated that he or she “was unaware there are specific resources for LGBTQ students in counseling, Multicultural Student Affairs, health services, or career center,” asking, “is there a resource page I should know about? If so, some publication of that would be helpful. If not,

there should be one.” Another faculty or staff member suggested that LGBT resources outside of the campus were essential to convey as well: “I think somewhere community resources need to be listed as well for those that may want other options rather than just campus options.”

Still others suggested that existing resources were simply insufficient to accomplish the level of support required. One student noted the commitment of different areas on campus in support of LGBT students, and suggested the need for more: “Maybe not something new, but branching-off of OMSA to be more inclusive of the LGBT community.” A faculty/staff respondent made a similar observation, noting that “right now it seems like LGBT is ‘lumped in’ to the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs. Ideally, a separate office would make sense for this population, as our Office of Multicultural Student Affairs seems to be MALANA student focused.”

Conclusions and recommendations

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.

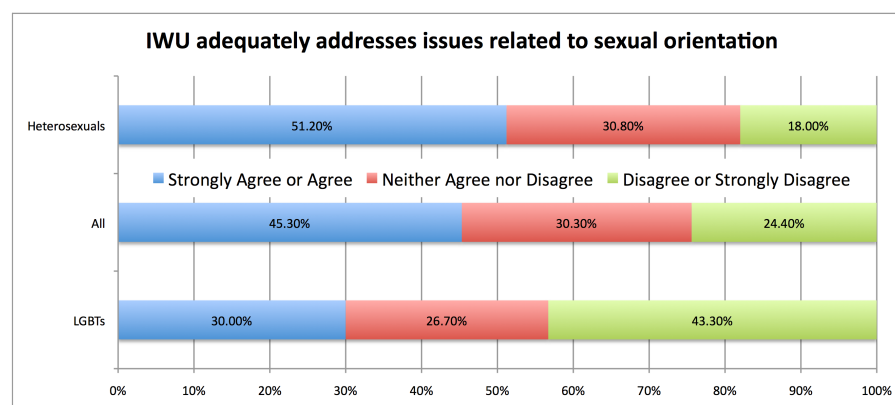
Fast facts and findings

Awareness of LGBT inclusion in IWU's non-discrimination statement

- 85% of student participants and 86% of faculty and staff participants correctly indicated that sexual orientation and gender identity/expression are included in the University's non-discrimination statement.

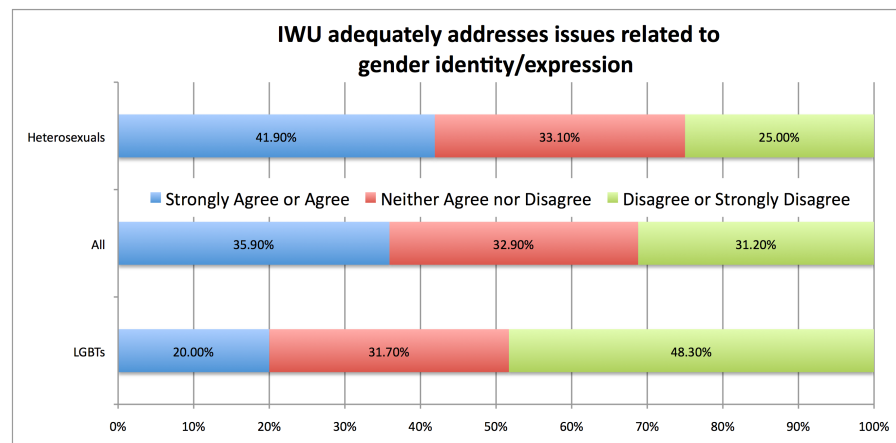
Institutional response to issues related to sexual orientation

- 45% of student participants agreed or strongly agreed that IWU responds appropriately to issues related to sexual orientation, while 24% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Among faculty and staff, 47% similarly affirmed institutional actions, while 17% disagreed.
- When differentiated by LGBT or heterosexual identity, a statistically significant disparity was observed, with LGBT participants indicating that the institution should do considerably more in response to issues related to sexual orientation.



Institutional response to issues related to gender identity and expression

- Of student respondents, 36% agreed or strongly agreed that IWU responds adequately to issues related to gender identity and expression, while 31% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Among faculty and staff, 35% similarly affirmed institutional actions, while 18% disagreed.
- Again, LGBT participants indicated that the institution should do considerably more in response to issues related to gender identity and expression than heterosexual peers.



Fostering an LGBT inclusive curriculum

- 68% of student respondents indicated an interest in taking an LGBT studies course
- 50% of faculty respondents indicated a willingness to provide classroom instruction in LGBT studies.

Participant voices

Many of the commenters pointed to Illinois Wesleyan University's commitment to diversity, and questioned the degree to which LGBT issues were considered to fall within it. Some commenters felt that the institution should take a prominent stand in support of issues important to LGBT equality. A faculty/staff respondent challenged that the institution places relatively little importance on LGBT identity within the diversity framework: "Diversity on this campus means ethnicity. One rarely, if ever hears diversity as supporting, recognizing, or even addressing our LGBTQ+ needs. If the statistics of 1/10 people are gay, then there are 200+ gay people on this campus. Ever year we should welcome 50+ students and faculty. Where is the celebration of our culture? I have never heard our President, or the Dean of Faculty or Students refer to us." A student participant recognized the fundamental challenge that institutions face in making such declarations, saying "with all of the political correctness things that colleges and the nation [are] going through right now, it will be pretty tough for the university to try to help out the LGBT community without asking probing questions or crossing some type of PC line that could possibly offend someone."

Finally, a student noted that “the best thing IWU can do is continue to offer support and resources to LGBT students who might be struggling.” This support should come at all levels, in many forms, and be omnipresent. It suggests that affirmation is required at the highest levels of leadership, that consideration is necessary at decision-making tables on the administrative and instructional sides of the house, and requires that faculty and staff be robustly educated about the issues and concerns relevant to creating safe and supportive spaces for LGBT students. As such, the continued education of faculty and staff was an important theme.

A number of student participants gave voice to experiences of LGBT oppression in their interactions with faculty and staff members. “I had a professor who verbalized their negative feelings about the transgender community to me and several other students staying that transgender people freaked them out. It was very unprofessional and made me feel uncomfortable,” shared one student, while another expressed that “there is a student in my major who is not out as gay, but our school is so small that stories get around. Anyway, a professor is encouraging this student to continue to express himself as straight in order to have a higher likelihood of getting jobs.” Another explained that “a professor asked me why I was gay and if I knew I was going to hell.” Another exclaimed, “there has to be more than ONE teacher out on campus, but I only know because I work closely with her in the [academic] department.”

Most students and faculty who responded to the survey seemed to agree that a broad inclusion of the lives and experiences of LGBT people represented in the curriculum is beneficial. One faculty member noted that “having courses in the curriculum would be great” and more than one student recalled course content that addressed issues around LGBT identity, even if the course itself did not predominantly present as LGBT-focused. One student noted that exposure to LGBT issues was more important for students preparing for particular career paths: “More inclusion in the curricular maps on LGBT population when applicable. For example, nursing, sociology, psychology and pre-med students should be required to take safe zone training or professors should address this community in lecture.” Still others identified courses in human sexuality and various disciplines that would seem to fit right into an LGBT studies framework.

Of particular concern among respondents was the ability of some students to avoid acknowledging or exploring LGBT issues (as well as other identity-related oppressions) by avoiding awareness events, campus programs, or courses that challenge students’ comfort zones. 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.”

Several students drew comparisons to the Gateway program which introduces critical writing skills through a variety of interdisciplinary lenses. “I think as part of our Gateway we should

have a transition into what it means to be a liberal arts institution, and what it means to be at IWU. It doesn't mean anyone has to compromise their beliefs or be uncomfortable around anyone, but that everyone has tolerance and respect for human beings, regardless of who they love, who they have sex with, or how they identify and express themselves." A second student suggested that, "I think events such as book reading, discussion panels, workshops addressing these differences, etc., should be mandatory, at least for first-years."

Faculty and staff agreed, in some instances, with one professor indicating that "I think we really need to have a class on this topic at least. Lesbianism appears in a couple of instances in the material for the classes that I teach and you can tell that it really makes the students uncomfortable to talk about. I am usually the one who brings it up and there is a lot of silence," and a second faculty member suggested that "The Women's Studies Program should become the Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program."

Not all faculty agree that curricular inclusion is necessary or valuable, however. One faculty participant indicated that he or she doesn't "believe that such a course is necessary in higher education. This is an awareness and respect issue and having a course about such an issue would not add value to the students learning." Another suggested that his or her moral framing of the LGBT issue might be unwelcome, saying "I would teach such a course from the perspective that students should master their desires, in order that they might experience greater freedom. I do not think IWU would allow me to teach such a course." It is a sentiment that forewarns some of the entrenched resistance that suggestions for broader curricular inclusion or reform might encounter.

The experiences of LGBT students are characteristic of a range of intolerances that create perceptions in the minds of students and lore among them about a lack of campus acceptance for students and others with LGBT identities. They stem from a lack of knowledge on the part of faculty and staff about the expectations that IWU has for them around student interaction, and a lack of awareness and education that is provided around issues of LGBT identity. One faculty/staff participant wrote that "staff not directly involved with students need to be made aware of policies. Leaders, such as the Vice Presidents, need to lead by example." It isn't sufficient that programs such as safe zone are offered to willing faculty and staff who choose to participate, and are disregarded by others who continue to propagate a climate where some members of the community are devalued based on inalienable characteristics. A student suggests that the institution must "create a culture of respect and zero tolerance for discrimination. This needs to start with staff setting a good example," and a second says to "have a zero tolerance policy when it comes to verbal put downs in class. If professors hear things like that in class, they should speak up. The reason people keep using words like 'gay' and 'fag' is because no one ever tells them they can't."

There are certainly places and spaces where this support is given, and institutional expectations are upheld. A student participant shared that for some peers "no policy could change how they feel, and the policies that are in place in regards to harassing behavior are

already in place. For example, when I reported [incidents involving LGBT harassment] to the Associate Dean of Students, her exact words were, ‘I don’t think we’ll be able to find out who did this, but if we do, I promise you, they will be in my office, making a case as to why they should be allowed to stay at this university.’” Another faculty/staff member shared a personal commitment to living authentically with and for his or her students: “I am always very comfortable with myself because I think it is important for my young queer students to see positive gay role models in their lives. I don’t see very many colleagues that do this, but I would love all of my queer colleagues to keep this in mind.”

Along with general questions and challenges about the role of the institution and those who serve as leaders and figures of authority within it, many comments were directed towards focused change in particular areas of the campus. One general practice that was critiqued as a challenge across functional areas of campus, including on this survey, was the collection of identity-based demographic information on forms and applications. A student asked for “more than just male and female as choices on campus surveys,” and a faculty or staff member suggested “include more gender expression terms on applications/forms (not just male/female).” Others pointed to institutional practice around and sensitivity around gender transition, with one student suggesting that if a person transitions genders while in school, “any evidence thereof should not be publicly accessible to any students or faculty on campus, including in the photo directory online. That material should be confidential and at the discretion of the transgender individual to disclose.” Presumably the capture and disclosure of data such as this spans a number of policies and campus service providers, and requires dialogue and collaborative solutions.

A second general infrastructure concern coalesced around campus bathrooms. More than a few faculty and students called for more unisex bathrooms, with one student commenting, “most [bathrooms] are male and female only. Hansen has changed their bathrooms to be unisex, more buildings could do this with very little change needed,” and a faculty/staff participant adding, “gender-neutral bathrooms would make spaces more accessible and welcome to trans members of the IWU community.” Bathrooms were also identified as sites for LGBT identity resistance and expressions of intolerance. “There is anti Queer graffiti in some of the bathrooms, including Shaw Hall,” wrote one student commenter. Other comments were directed, almost always in constructive ways, towards the identification of opportunities for the campus community to grow stronger in its commitment to and visible support of LGBT persons.

Conclusions and recommendations

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.

Participant voices

A considerable and concerning number of comments were raised by student participants about the role of men and masculinity within the campus culture and how that manifests and translates into a context that is regularly threatening towards LGBT persons and misogynist. Participants shared some very personal experiences that illustrate the conflation of these two oppressions. For instance, one student respondent shared, "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." Another shared her experience and understanding of it, saying "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. Even outside of party environments, men often ask me about whether or not I find other women hot and want me to describe it in detail, presumably because they're aroused by the idea of two women being together, and fail to understand that my attraction to women is not an attention-seeking behavior, but a very important and real part of my life."

In describing personal experiences related to sexual orientation and gender identity, another student recalled "guys grabbing my butt. 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," with another conveying "I am a straight female, but I feel that the large majority of us hear things or are teased about our bodies/sexuality that straight men do not understand what they are actually doing. Maybe they just don't care." Finally, one student expressed frustration:

“Honestly, bisexual women are seen as sexy, but bisexual men are not. We need to address this!”

Comments seemed to suggest that much of the problem stems from campus enclaves of hyper-masculinity, specifically with men involved in fraternities and in athletics. One LGBT-identified chapter member expressed, “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.” Another indicated that “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.”

Still another student shared “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,” and a fourth cautioned “watch out for fraternity hazing related to these issues.”

The ability of students, particularly male students, to find campus spaces that are relatively protective of a privilege that allows, at best, and encourages, at worst, the harassment, intimidation, exploitation and perhaps verbal and physical abuse of women and LGBT-identified students is alarming. One peer notes, “I would argue that there are many students at IWU who are not expected to grow socially, and don’t take the opportunity to do so.” To truly make change in the campus climate for LGBTs, and coincidentally for women, careful consideration about fraternity culture and athletic culture, about campus men and masculinity, must be undertaken. Without making inroads into these spaces and places, it is unlikely that true change will be made or sustained.

Conclusions and recommendations

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 full research report that informs this executive summary is available for examination, and includes 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.

Definitions

Campus culture. Refers to the fundamental assumptions that guide patterns of behavior, determine sites of participation and modes of interaction, and are represented in the symbols, stories and artifacts one encounters on the campus (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Campus culture is so deeply ingrained that it may exist below the level of awareness for many of the campus constituents.

Campus climate. The way that a person experiences the institution's culture (Peterson & Spencer, 2000). The current attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of students, faculty, and staff concerning the level of respect towards individual needs, abilities, and potential. Campus climate is the way that the culture is translated into lived experiences. A metaphor linking campus climate and campus culture is that of the symptoms and condition. Campus climate can show the symptoms of a dysfunctional campus culture, and those symptoms may be reduced or eliminated, sometimes quickly, in the short-term. However, if the campus culture, or underlying condition, is left untreated or unchanged, the symptoms will recur or manifest in other harmful ways over time.

Bisexual. Describes those who experience sexual and affectional attractions to same-sex and opposite-sex others.

Cisgender. The alignment of male-bodied with masculine gender expression, or female-bodied persons with feminine gender expression. Characterized by people living traditional, socially acceptable gender identities.

Gay. Describes those who experience sexual and affectional attractions to same-sex others. Often used to refer to both men and women, or just to men when so modified, as in "gay men".

Gender. Describes the social construction of maleness and femaleness, as characteristics both masculine and feminine, that also correspond to the biological placement of the reproductive organs as external or internal, and/or the make-up of the 23rd chromosome as XY or XX, respectively.

Gender binary. Describes a strict social construction of gender as either male or female, as corresponding with biological and chromosomal sex characteristics. Resistance to the gender binary is found among those whose sex and gender do not correspond, or who find the gender binary confining to their preferred expression or non-expression of gender. The binary also does not account for or explain those who are transgendered or other-gendered, or whose genital composition reflects characteristics inconsistent with or in combination of both the penis and vagina.

Gender expression. The ways in which one expresses one's gender identity in terms of behavior, appearance, speech, and movement.

Gender identity. The psychological sense of one's gender (for example male, female, intersex, genderqueer, transgender).

Heterosexual. Describes those who experience sexual and affectional attractions to opposite-sex others.

Identity development. The process by which one comes to understand their sexual and affectional attractions.

Lesbian. Describes women who experience sexual and affectional attractions to other women.

LGB. An acronym for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual, describing collectively those who identify with these labels, and only very rarely incorporating additional identities or variations.

LGBT. An acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender, often used as a broadly reaching term that describes non-heteronormative people, and allies. Sometimes expressed as LGBT+, LGBTQ, LGBTQ+, LGBTQQIA+, etc., where the additional letters might represent Queer, Questioning, Allies or Asexuals, Intersex, and the "+" sign symbolizes many additional identities within the non-heteronormative umbrella, such as same-gender loving, two-spirit, mamoo, butch, etc. In this document, LGBT is used as an inclusive term that encompasses non-heteronormative people.

LGBT resource center. Typically a physical space on a college campus designed to serve the needs of LGBT students by creating a safe space where students can exist as their authentic selves, and providing services around advocacy, programming, education, policy and awareness.

Microaggression. "Brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership" (Sue, 2010, p. 24) bounded by characteristics such as race, gender, gender identity, sexual-orientation, religious belief, ability, socio-economic status, etc. Readers are invited to consider invisible messages that are both verbal and non-verbal, as well as delivered environmentally.

Sex. Biological description of individuals as male or female based on the general configuration of the reproductive organs as external or internal, and/or the make-up of the 23rd chromosome as XY or XX, respectively

Sexual orientation. The inclination or capacity to develop intimate emotional and sexual relationships with people of the same gender (gay, lesbian), a different gender (heterosexual), neither gender (asexual), or any gender (bisexual, pansexual).

Trans*. An umbrella term that describes a range of gender identities that do not conform with traditional social expectations. Could include transgender, transsexual, cross-dressing, drag queen, genderqueer and a multitude of unique manifestations of gender expression and identity.

Transgender. A person whose biology and gender identity do not conform to the male/masculine and female/feminine binary.

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