REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON
GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER ISSUES

I. Statement of the Committee Function or Charge
The UW-Madison Committee on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues was created in 1994 by the Faculty Senate as the Committee on Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Issues and was charged with reporting to the senate on the state of the curriculum and campus climate for LGB students, faculty, and staff. Although in subsequent years the committee was reorganized as a joint-governance committee and renamed to include explicitly transgender concerns in order to strengthen its reach and representation, its function is basically unchanged. By recommendation of a previous assessment, the committee offers a formal report at least every three years.

II. Past Year’s Activities
This committee met monthly during the academic year 2008-09. We continued to advocate for the recommendations made in our tri-annual report of May 2008 (Faculty Document 2056). Over the course of the year, domestic partner benefits became the committee’s primary focus. In an effort to capitalize on interest in the issue during the Wisconsin state elections and take advantage of Governor Doyle’s willingness to support domestic partner benefits, the committee worked with Vice Provost Steve Stern’s Task Force for Domestic Partner Benefits and also made recommendations on its own. In mid-2009, the Wisconsin legislature and Governor Jim Doyle approved giving state employees domestic partner benefits.

The committee is also happy to report that several of its recommendations concerning the LGBT Campus Center have been adopted. The Campus Center has developed materials to be distributed to incoming students and has also increased support for LGBT seniors and allies exploring graduate and professional opportunities. Additionally, some progress has been made towards obtaining a more suitable space for the Campus Center, although it may take several years for a move to actually occur.

III. Current Issues
During the 2009-10 academic year, the committee aims to focus on establishing better communication and support within the university administration, particularly with the office of the Vice Provost for Diversity and Climate, which could provide continuity and follow through concerning issues that take more than one year to resolve.

The committee would also like the university to conduct a survey, similar to the one that is being distributed system-wide, to gather information about LGBT concerns on the Madison campus, specifically. We have contacted Lisa Beckstrand, who heads the Inclusivity Initiative, about adapting and administering the survey.

We also seek to create social and professional networking opportunities for LGBT people and their allies. Although it is not the committee’s responsibility to hold events, some individual members are interested in working with Vice Provost Steve Stern’s office to provide forums for intellectual and social exchange, including a winter event connected with Carnivale and a book group.

IV. Future Issues/Recommendations
A number of the issues raised in the 2008 report are still relevant. The committee will continue to work on them during this academic year and in the future. They include:

1. We recommend that the Vice Provost for Diversity and Climate assume campus-wide oversight of LGBT issues and report annually in December to this committee on the initiatives undertaken and results achieved campus-wide in this arena.

(continued)
2. We recommend that the College of Letters and Science provide the following new support for the LGBT Studies Certificate Program: a 100%-budgeted faculty line in LGBT studies with a tenure home in any appropriate area; a 15% increase in funding for the undergraduate advisor position in the Department of Gender and Women’s Studies in recognition of that position’s responsibilities for advising LGBT Studies Certificate students.

3. We recommend that the College of Letters and Science Office of Student Academic Affairs work with the LGBT studies faculty to solicit increased First-Year Interest Group opportunities dealing with LGBT themes, perhaps in conjunction with the Madison Initiative for Undergraduates.

4. We recommend that University Housing create a residential learning community focused on LGBT themes for undergraduates at all levels on the UW-Madison campus.

5. We recommend that the campus secure and stabilize the operations of the LGBT Campus Center by funding the academic staff positions of the center through 101 monies.

6. We recommend that the LGBT Campus Center (supported by additional campus resources), in coordination with the Office of the Dean of Students and the Office of the Vice Provost for Diversity and Climate, continue to develop a mentorship program pairing students and faculty/staff.

7. We recommend that the Office of Admissions give greater attention to the recruitment of LGBT students by improving accessibility to LGBT information on its website, attending national LGBT recruitment fairs, and working with the LGBT Campus Center to create a recruiting pamphlet on LGBT life at UW to distribute to various high schools and allies groups.

8. We recommend that the administration consider and monitor the place of LGBT issues in the Inclusive Excellence Plan that is currently being enacted on campus. To date, it seems that LGBT issues have not been addressed as consistently or as vigorously as other issues of diversity.

V. Summary
The Committee on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues remains committed to improving life on the UW-Madison campus and beyond for all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender expression. We have identified and will continue to look for aspects of the university important to LGBT people and their allies that can be improved.

VI. Committee Membership

Faculty:
Thomas Armbrecht, chair
Nan Enstad
Judith Houck
Michael Ramsey-Musolf
Stephanie Tai

Academic Staff:
Lori Berquam
Mary Hitchcock

Students:
Elliot Rezny
David Wilcox

Consultants (unofficial):
Ruth Adams
Jim Steakley
Lindsey Stoddard-Cameron
Eric Trekell

CNCS Liaison:
Robin Sereno

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