

CCSLGBTQPA 2015

Campus Climate and Support

The CCs provide access to the highest level of the Administration, and guidance in addressing issues and reviewing policies that affect campus staff, faculty, and students. LGBTQ individuals are uniquely “invisible” since they cannot be identified by external characteristics or stigmas. Over the past decade, as social norms have evolved, several campus and extramural committees and groups have established a more visible profile.

What challenges continue to exist for support of LGBTQ individuals, and more specifically, what resources are available or lacking in supporting staff, faculty, and students? How can we evaluate and improve the campus climate, and improve partnerships with other diverse groups (GSC, qUIC, GLMA) and under-represented communities?

Education

UIC has consistently received an “A” from the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance for the Higher Education and Teacher/Social Work Preparation Program in Illinois. In 2009, UIC was the only institution to receive an “A”, and in 2012, was one of ten institutions to receive an “A”. Greater recognition of the importance of diversity and inclusion has led to the appointment of a Vice Provost for Diversity at UIC.

What changes in the climate and curriculum can we anticipate to educate and mentor the next generation of LGBT scholars, culturally competent healthcare providers, and key staff in community-based organizations and foundations? Foundations like the Hass Fund, 21st Century Fellowship, targets and supports leaders of color in gay and lesbian rights organizations.

Public Service and Outreach

Scholarly research that deepens our understanding and expands our sensitivity to the cultural complexities of LGBTQ individuals also provides a unique forum for public policy dialogue, initiatives, and advocacy. Past successes include the historical scholarship of Professor D’Emilio contributing to the 2003 *Lawrence v. Texas* Supreme Court decision, Professor Horn’s research on peer harassment in adolescence, and the phenomenal recognition of identifying bullying in schools and promoting anti-gay efforts, and research in healthcare by Professors Hughes, Matthews, and Ramirez-Vallez to foster intervention for LGBTQ people and overcome barriers to treatment and screening of health issues. Faculty, staff, and students also contribute in a myriad number of ways to the community that reflects upon the strength of the UIC Great Cities Commitment: Howard Brown Health Center, Center on Halsted, Chicago History Museum, Gerber-Hart Library, Chicago Reeling Film Festival, etc.

How can we engage more strongly with our community, corporate, foundation, and government partners in Chicago, the state of Illinois, at the Federal level, and around the world?

Research

UIC has a substantial number of faculty—both west and east campus—that carry out research on LGBTQ issues of national importance and recognition. We have scholars that undertake studies on LGBTQ youth and education, healthcare and health disparities of under-represented communities, mental health and substance abuse, HIV/AIDS infection and treatment, and community advocacy and public policy. Our faculty draws talented graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to UIC. Funding for these studies include internal university sources as well as the NIH, CDC, NSF, and other federal, state, city, and foundation sources in the social sciences and humanities.

Can the CC, perhaps in collaboration with the GSC, foster the establishment of an ongoing working group of scholars to formally create a Midwest hub for critical dialogue with exterior and internal (matching?) funding? What current issues would a team of scholars be interested in exploring (e.g., aging LGBT population, transgender discrimination, critical cultural dialogue about family, religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity, social justice, cultural competency in healthcare professional training)?

In 2008, UIC was awarded a grant from the David Bohnett Foundation to create a seed fund to support faculty and graduate research relevant to the LGBTQ community. Can this be a template for further funding initiatives and seed funding? This would provide an opportunity to support an ongoing group of faculty focusing on research that would eventually grow to a center for LGBTQ studies, or expand and couple with existing departmental programs, and diversity and cultural centers. Foundation sources include David Bohnett Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, Vanguard Charitable, Tides Foundation, Northern Trust, or Tawani Foundation.

Strategic Plan 2014-2020

The CC carried out a strategic plan analysis in 2006 to develop a shared vision. Much has changed and evolved since that plan was developed, but the original mission of the committee to provide leadership on issues relating to the LGBTQPA communities remains the same: to foster greater participation and productivity by all members of the campus community. What follows is a summary of the strategic areas, goals, and objectives that were to be accomplished by 2010.

What has been accomplished or changed, and what challenges lie ahead?

1. Institutional Commitment and Policy: Ensure that all UIC policies and practices are inclusive and supportive of LGBTQ people and their families.
2. Advocacy and Support: Provide advocacy and support for LGBTQ faculty, staff, and students on campus.
3. Curriculum and Pedagogy: Ensure that the UIC curriculum is inclusive of LGBTQ topics.
4. Research and Scholarship: Facilitate support for LGBTQ research at UIC.
5. Intra- and Inter-group Relations: Increase visibility of LGBTQ entities on campus and enhance efforts at collaboration and connectedness among LGBTQ entities at UIC and with other groups and organizations on campus.

The GSC and CCSLGBTQPA

Many of the other Cultural Centers are aligned with departmental units within the university. However, the GSC is unique in operating without alignment to a single department or center.

A diversity briefing was held for the BOT in October 2010:

While nationally, 43% rated the overall campus climate as homophobic (Rankin, 2003), 30% of the respondents personally experienced harassment due to sexual orientation or gender identity, and 20% feared for their personal safety. Recent campus climate surveys rated UIC at 5 of 5, but note that there is no formal LGBT studies program, though courses are available. It also notes that there is no active LGBT alumni group.

Key challenges include (1) university environments reflect the larger society, and the lack of inclusive elements across campus, (2) decreasing and inadequate resources which impact student recruitment, retention, and academic success, (3) inability to track relevant retention trends beyond anecdotal evidence, (4) infrastructure of University does not allow adequate flexibility for policy changes when needed, (5) remaining inequities for same-sex couples who participate in DP benefits (i.e., taxes and eligibility), (6) raising awareness about LGBTQ people and their intersecting, multiple identities (e.g., race, class, immigrant status, religious affiliation, and ability), (7) recruit and retain diverse LGBTQ faculty and staff to be scholars and/or professionals in their field, role models, and mentors, (8) sustain LGBTQ research across multiple disciplines by emerging scholars and seasoned scholars. Many of these challenges have been noted by the CC before.

Current and future action steps: (1) support LGBTQ centers' efforts on development and fundraising initiatives, (2) hold all diversity centers harmless in times of budget cuts, (3) promote Safe Zone and diversity trainings for all faculty, staff, and students, and especially new hires, (4) support all campuses conducting a campus climate survey at least every five years, (5) increase marketing of UI to prospective students, faculty, and staff as LGBTQ inclusive, (6) increase advocacy and support for transgender students in the creation of more gender neutral, single sex, restrooms, easier ability to change name and gender identity on University records, transgender sensitive housing option, and broader health insurance coverage, (7) increase LGBTQ alumni support continuing LGBTQ graduation ceremonies, alumni events, and communication in UT Alumni Association materials, (8) recognize UI pre-eminence as a major Midwest center for LGBTQ research, including continued promotion of seed funding grants for LGBTQ research.