

PROPOSAL FOR A GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER
RESOURCE CENTER

Prepared by
Bryce Hughes and Philip Sutherland

With Assistance From

GLBT Advisory Board
HERO (Helping Educate Regarding Orientation)

May 13, 2004

Background

As Gonzaga University's enrollment increases, so too does the diversity within our university community. Race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation are only a few of the differences that enrich us with unique perspectives and experiences. But as the editorial pages in the *Gonzaga Bulletin* will quickly show, such differences also present unique challenges. There are challenges both to the University leaders to support its minority populations as well as challenges to each member of the Gonzaga community as to how he or she will interact with such diversity.

With regard to sexual orientation, Gonzaga does support a number of positive programs: groups such as HERO and the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) Support Group and activities like Sexual Orientation Awareness Week and Day of Silence. Unfortunately, Gonzaga still experiences many of the same difficulties experienced by students on other less-supportive campuses. Incidents of jokes, graffiti, and harassment still exist. In addition, many GLBT students, staff, and faculty feel a sense of loneliness and alienation when they must hide part of who they are out of fear of reprisal by less-accepting colleagues. Clearly, more still needs to be done for our GLBT population to feel welcome, accepted and supported at this school.

A GLBT Resource Center would help these students feel more comfortable on this campus. Not only would such a center send a clear message that Gonzaga University values the presence of its GLBT students but the Center would also serve as a physical location supportive to sexual minorities. There is a space in Unity House that will serve as the location for this center. This location is ideal because the house is intended to be a common ground for students of many differing backgrounds. Right now the house has done an excellent job helping students of differing ethnic and racial backgrounds feel welcome, and having the Center in Unity House will extend that invitation to students in differing sexual minority groups. Finally, educational resource materials can serve to better educate the campus about sexual orientation and the experiences of GLBT persons.

As the mission statement expresses, preparing our students for "an enlightened dedication to the Christian ideals of justice and peace" is one of the primary educational and formational goals of this University. Diversity is present outside of Gonzaga and it is important that our students be properly prepared for it lest they react negatively out of fear, misunderstanding and a lack of real experience with people who are different than they are. Such moral sensitivity can only occur through intentional educational efforts and the example set by the University through a solid commitment to those Christian principles of justice, human dignity, and love which motivate and illuminate all that we do.

Gonzaga University has an obligation to its students, staff and faculty that its campus be a welcoming, supportive and harassment-free environment for all people, especially for its minority populations. Gonzaga also owes its students mental and intellectual preparation, through that same thirst for justice that motivates the institutional structures, to offer the world their gifts of love, liberation and peace.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the GLBT Resource Center is five-fold:

Education—As evident in our motto, “Educating the People the World Needs Most,” education is by far the most meaningful purpose of the center with regard to the campus community at large. Part of our commitment to humanistic, Catholic, and Jesuit education is “knowledge of traditions and cultures different from our own.”¹ The community center would be a place for both faculty and students to find literature and materials related to different aspects of GLBT lives, including academic, cultural, and especially faith-oriented.

Support—The Center would be a place where students in sexual minority groups can find other welcoming and accepting people, helping to build community. Many GLBT people are afraid to reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity and often are not able to benefit from that support.

Awareness—The center will assist with awareness programming through HERO and Unity House. The very presence of the community center on campus will even make our community more aware of its, often invisible, GLBT population.

Voice—Those individuals associated with the center, such as the advisory board or the staff person, could provide an institutional voice for GLBT students, staff and faculty.

Programming—The center will serve as a place for the organization of events and activities pertaining to the issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity at Gonzaga.

Structure

Unity House and its designated work-study and/or possible AmeriCorps volunteer (the position is currently pending) will run the daily operations of the Resource Center. The AmeriCorps volunteer comes through cooperation with CCASL (Center for Community Action and Service-Learning) while the work-study would be with the office of Diversity. HERO and its advisor as well as the newly formed GLBT Advisory Board will be involved with planning and activities of the Center. The Advisory Board consists of HERO officers, its advisor and selected students, staff, and faculty, and will provide institutional support for and advise the Center with long term planning and integration of the Center into larger university structures.

The Resource Center will be located in a currently unoccupied room in Unity House. The budget for setting up and operating this center is located on the following page, with most funding coming from a combination of alumni donations and departmental support. This location will encourage collaboration between Unity House and HERO and will serve to attract students who are more likely to be supportive of the Center’s purpose.

¹ University Mission Statement

Resource Center Proposed Expenses

(those not designated as per year occur once as an initial expense)

- Literature..... \$1000
- Publications..... \$500/yr
- Phone line..... \$250
- Phone \$250
- Programming..... \$500/yr
- Publicity Unity House (per Dr. Reyes recommendation)
- Office Supplies..... Unity House (per Dr. Reyes recommendation)
- Furniture..... donated
- Staff person AmeriCorps/Diversity Work Study

Total Initial Expenses..... \$2000

Annual Operating Budget..... \$1000/yr

2006 Update

While we did get the proposal approved, the budget was never approved and the center functions solely through collaborations with other departments. My position is funded through an AmeriCorps grant (through Washington Campus Compact) as mentioned in the proposal, and there are two work study positions in the office, one through the Diversity Office and one through our Service-Learning department. Through my first year running the office, much of this policy structure has evolved and developed from the original proposal text.

Hughes, Bryce E

Special Project Coordinator, AmeriCorps Campus Compact
GLBT Resource Center, Unity House Cultural Education Center