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An Advisor's Reflection on Camp Pride

Megan Karbley, Tulane University

As a self-proclaimed educator and mentor, I like to think I best manifest these proclamations when working with the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students on my campus. Sure, it is seldom flawless, but there is a steadfast passion and dedication to students' identity development embedded in my personhood. This passion reverberates—and is affirmed—every summer when a student returns from Camp Pride Summer Leadership Camp (sponsored by Campus Pride). For the last 3 consecutive years, Tulane University has sent its LGBTQ Student Leaders to Camp Pride and, without fail; every student comes back to campus with a fire, energy and readiness for action that has fueled the progressive work on our campus. As their educator and mentor, it is my responsibility to help direct their energy into action on our campus.

Created by, and for, LGBT student leaders in 2001, Camp Pride is an annual summer camp that hosts leaders in an effort to empower and educate students from campuses nationwide. In the last three years that Tulane University has sent LGBT student representatives to Camp Pride, participation in and support for our LGBT and ally campus community has increased tremendously. Students are returning to Tulane with tools that, to-date, we have not been able to provide. Perhaps most important is that students return to campus with a sense of self-efficacy, affirmation, and pride that is impossible for them to achieve on any campus where they are among the marginalized.

As an advisor to Tulane University's Student Women Embracing Equality at Tulane (SWEET), I have the important responsibility to continue the achievement of Camp Pride in working with our SWEET president, sophomore Sarah Spiegelman. Sarah admits that her expectations of attending Camp Pride were low: "I expected to be sent to a patronizing leadership conference where I would be preached to about the merits of vague leadership qualities and patted on the head for daring to be an out LGBTQ student leader." To the contrary, Sarah actually experienced, "an overwhelming wake-up call of how much work there is to do on my campus and across the country, how important it is that this work be done, and exactly how to do it."

So, what's next? As advisors, how can we continue the work of Camp Pride? Different campuses have different resources, time, and money dedicated to LGBT efforts. However, in an effort to re-create an affirming experience for LGBT students without othering them, we must provide opportunities for students to expand their vision beyond their organization and into the greater campus community.

On all campuses, LGBT advisors must negotiate campus climate and politics with students' personal identities, overall LGBT campus needs, and limitations of resources. How do we balance the minutia of campus politics while honoring the liberating experiences of our student leaders? And, how can we too, remain liberated and empowered to expand the work of Camp Pride?

This article seeks not to provide answers, but to pose questions we all consider at some point. Maybe, through our own resources, such as the SCLGBTQA, we can open a dialogue that provides an affirming backdrop for our own work so that we remain mindful of the purpose of our work more so than its limitations. Or, that we simply move forward with the same fuel that ignites our students to create campus communities that are better than when we started.

It's Time! Welcoming our LGBTQ Students Back to Campus

Craig Leets, Pennsylvania State University

As we enter the month of August, many student affairs educators are looking forward to and planning for the end of the month. Orientation staff are hosting their final sessions as student activities units are preparing for welcome weeks. Career services staff are looking forward to those eager students who are hoping for resume critiques and mock interviews beginning on the second day of the semester. In residence life, resident directors are preparing for RA training and the impending move-in of residence hall students. In this final preparation and reminiscing about the lost days of summer, student affairs educators should not only be thinking about how they will serve students

in their various functional areas, but also considering the identities of these students and how they might best be served given their unique intersections of identities.

Specifically, student affairs educators have the opportunity to be thoughtful and intentional in how they will support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) students when they return to campus in the fall. For some campuses, this might be as easy as exploring the webpage of the campus LGBT student services unit, possibly an office or a center focused on creating a more inclusive campus for LGBTQ students, staff, and faculty, and seeing how one might become involved with the center's programming and other initiatives. However, for other campuses without institutionally funded services devoted to the LGBTQ community, preparing for the arrival for LGBTQ students might require more research, exploration, coalition-building, and networking across campus.

On campuses without LGBT services, there might be opportunities for a student affairs educator to support a student group on campus that provides a welcome and affirming space for LGBTQ students. While this organization might already have an advisor, student affairs educators can show their support by attending events sponsored by this organization or attend the group's open meetings. In this instance, although the staff member is not directly advising the organization, showing up allows LGBTQ students to see that there are supportive staff members in functional areas across campus.

Additionally, even without a specific LGBT services unit, the campus might provide an educational program, sometimes called Safe Zones or Safe Space. A staff member can sign-up and attend one of these trainings, which often will result in some token that can be posted outside or in the office to provide a visible representation of this staff person's support of LGBTQ people.

One of the needs of LGBTQ students is role models and mentors on campus. LGBTQ students need to connect with staff and faculty who share their identity or are strong allies. In visiting the LGBT student organization or interacting with LGBTQ students, there are opportunities for staff members to serve as role models and mentors or to connect students with staff and faculty on campus who can serve in this capacity. Also, LGBTQ students need role models and mentors who share similar intersections of identities, such as LGBTQ people of color. Connecting students with role models and mentors on campus can greatly improve the experiences that LGBTQ students have on campus.

Most importantly, staff members should identify how they can improve the experiences of LGBTQ students on their own campuses. Student affairs educators should connect with similarly-minded colleagues on their campuses to create a more affirming climate for LGBTQ students, staff, and faculty. Even on campuses with LGBT services, LGBTQ students should be supported across campus in every functional area, not only in one center or office on campus. As the beginning of the new academic year grows ever

closer, student affairs educators have the opportunity to think critically about how they will work to improve the experience of LGBTQ students on their campuses in the upcoming year.

The First Year

Petey Peterson, Vanderbilt University

This year, the SCLGBTQA will be featuring a column in each newsletter, chronicling one higher ed professional's journey from graduate school to a full time professional LGBT-focused position. Petey Peterson just started a position as the Program Coordinator for Vanderbilt University's Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Life (LGBTQI). This is the first in a 5-part series highlighting different moments in Petey's transition.

From Student Activist & Leader to Full-Time Professional

As February quickly approached, in my final semester of graduate school, I could no longer put off fully diving into my job search. The search began rather slowly. I knew that my previous experiences had set me up for a position with an LGBT or Women's Center, but I also knew these positions were far and few. I was also interested in broadening my experiences beyond identity centers and branching into the fields of residence life, student activities, or orientation. However, as my search process inched along, my inbox continued to fill up with job openings for LGBT-focused positions across the country. I could not help but apply for several of these. In the end, I was fortunate to find my niche at Vanderbilt University as the Program Coordinator for LGBTQI Life.

My transition from being a graduate student to a full time LGBTQI professional presented three major differences. My first was the realization that I was no longer working on behalf of the LGBTQI community as an activist, a person within the movement, a student leader or graduate advisor. I was now a full time professional serving a very specific population of LGBTQI identified students, staff, faculty, and alumni. I had to shift my lens and how I approached my work in order to best serve LGBTQI individuals as a full time professional at Vanderbilt University. There was now a new set of needs and expectations within in this context and I am still in the process of learning these to best serve Vanderbilt's campus.

The second piece of my transition that stood out to me was that I no longer had papers to write, classes to attend, and a 20 hour assistantship to work at (which was never really 20 hours, but more like 40). I now have far more free time. I have eight whole hours to complete my work, instead of trying to fit it in to just a few hours a day in-between classes. As nice as this transition sounds, I have come to miss the classroom. I have missed my co-hort members and having time set aside in my day to engage in critical

conversations about the work we are doing and how we can better higher education through our work. I have found myself wanting to continue those conversations in my staff meetings and with my new colleagues but often, there is limited to no time for this type of in-depth dialogue. Yet, I have the opportunity to lead programs with this critical lens and empower students to begin those same analytical conversations amongst themselves and within their organizations.

The final aspect of the transition that I have noticed is that I am truly “gay for pay” (okay, I had to throw that in here). I get to wake up every morning and go to a job that I love. Being the LGBTQI Program Coordinator allows me to do work and be surrounded by colleagues that completely affirms who I am personally and professionally. This job allows me to engage in conversation about LGBTQI topics, empower a campus community to become better allies, and help foster stronger LGBTQI student leaders.

The transition from graduate school to full time professional work is something that does not come easy, no matter how prepared you might be. Yet, it is an experience to embrace as it allows for such growth. I am still learning and being challenged everyday, but at the same time, everyday, I feel that I am growing into a better and more prepared student affairs professional.

Bidding Our Agenda a Fond Farewell

Ryan Darling, University of California, Los Angeles, & Mina Utt,
Florida State University

The 1989 ACPA Convention in Washington, D.C., featured something new: the first AIDS Memorial, sponsored by the Standing Committee for LGB Awareness. Born out of the AIDS Crisis of the 1980s, the Memorial sought to bring people together to acknowledge the struggle against HIV/AIDS, remember those who had been lost, and call attention to the growing epidemic. Over the years, the AIDS Memorial featured panels from the Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, performances by the AIDS Memorial choir, and many personal stories and moments of remembrance. In 2010, the AIDS Memorial became Our Agenda: Educate, Advocate, Eliminate AIDS. Our Agenda continued the work of AIDS Memorial, fostering spaces to continue to remember, learn, and connect.



This year the time has come to bid a fond farewell to Our Agenda. This decision was not reached lightly, as there is a great deal of history and emotion connected to the program. However, many factors have come together to demonstrate that the time has

come. Attendance at Our Agenda has fallen sharply, and it has become increasingly difficult to organize the event without increased assistance from other commissions and standing committees, as well as the greater association. And just as the AIDS Crisis has changed over the years, so have the needs of our members and programs. With this in mind, we believe the time is right to move forward.

However, our work is not done. While the conditions for those living with HIV/AIDS in America have vastly improved, there are still many challenges to be faced in the long fight against the disease, and many, many members of our community are still touched by HIV/AIDS. We acknowledge these realities and will continue to engage in this vital conversation. The SCLGBTA remains dedicated to collaborating with other areas to promote awareness and action and looks forward to these efforts. Our committee will also continue to provide opportunities to engage, from red ribbons to collecting for the Paul Hart Fund, helping ACPA members affected by HIV/AIDS afford convention each year. While Our Agenda may be departing, we know that our agenda will remain focused on creating positive, inclusive change, no matter what programs come and go.

Identity Dialogues: Your Identity, Your Space

Sean Pepin, University of Maryland-College Park

For many of us, ACPA'S Annual Convention is a rejuvenating time to re-connect with colleagues, share ideas, and to find re-affirming and supportive spaces. In an effort to sustain these connections, the Standing Committee for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Awareness (SCLGBTA) has created a forum for these discussions called: Identity Dialogues.

The purpose of these Identity Dialogues is to provide you, our members, with regularly scheduled conference calls that create an open and safe space to talk about personal development, professional and campus climate, and hot topics or current events around one of our highlighted social identities. Facilitators guide the conversation and host the call. Calls typically last 50 minutes to an hour.

This fall, we have scheduled the following calls:

For those who identify as: Bisexual
Wednesday, 10/3, 12pPST/3pEST
Hosted by: V. Dean

For those who identify as: Trans*
Thursday, 10/11, 11aPST/2pEST
Hosted by: Z. Nicolazzo

For those who identify as: Fluid
Wednesday, 10/24, 11aPST/2pEST
Hosted by: Rita Zhang and Jamie Adasi

If you identify with one of the above communities and wish to participate, use the following information:

Conference Dial-in Number: [\(530\) 881-1000](tel:5308811000)

Participant Access Code: 182995#

These dialogues give you an opportunity to connect, share, and learn from other individuals who share one of your identities. This is your space, your identity, and your time.

We recognize that this is just the start of this program, and we are seeking for additional facilitators for other identity groups. If you would like more information about this program, if you are interested in being a facilitator, or you would like to see a dialogue for a particular identity group, please contact Sean Pepin at pepin101@gmail.com.



New sletter Submissions

Interested in submitting an article to our newsletter? We are always seeking content and authors! Articles can highlight LGBT events on campus, national or international LGBT news, professional experiences as an LGBT individual and more! If interested, please e-mail sclgbtnews@gmail.com to get more information.

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