

# Learning from LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force Report: Key Findings & Recommendations

University Life Symposium  
January, 2013



Where Innovation Is Tradition

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force - Charge

- 1) Collect data on George Mason University's current policies, programs, procedures and practices related to all aspects of Mason LGBTQ student life
- 2) Conduct focus groups and/or public hearings with students, staff and faculty as well as explore ideas from "experts" in the field or from other university programs.

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force - Charge

3) Submit report: overview of the campus climate in terms of Mason's programs, policies and practices as well as students' experiences in their classrooms, residences, co-curricular activity, common areas of campus, athletic facilities, and other relevant aspects of student life.

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force - Charge

- 4) Present short-term and long-term recommendations, along with estimates of the fiscal and human resources required for implementation and the anticipated impact on the LGBTQ student population.

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force - Members

Lynne Constantine	Assistant Professor, School of Art
Em Eichelberger	Student (stand OUT student group)
Andrea Fraser	Student (stand OUT student group)
LuLu Geza	Graduate Assistant, LGBTQ Resources
Dennis Hicks	Associate Director, Student Involvement
Mark Hopson	Assistant Professor, Communication
Eden King	Assistant Professor, Psychology
Carrie Klein	Executive Assistant, University Life
Lisa Lindley	Associate Professor, Global and Community Health
Lauren Mauriello	Resident Program Coordinator, Housing and Res Life
Rose Pascarell	Associate Vice President, University Life
Caroline Pendry	Graduate Assistant, Women and Gender Studies
Blake Silver	Student
A-Jay Sorrell	Student (Pride Alliance & TQ Mason student groups)
Jason Von Kundra	Student
Dan Waxman	Grad Student and Sustainability Manager, Auxiliary Enterprises

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force - Co-Chairs

**Ric Chollar**

Associate Director of LGBTQ Resources

**Suzanne Scott**

Director of Women and Gender Studies

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force - Scope

## 6 Working Groups:

Faculty & Classroom

Gender ID/Expression

Housing/Residence Life

Specific Populations

Student Services

Visibility & Presence

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force - Methods

Analysis of Already-Existing Research  
Studies

Focus Groups

LGBTQ PhotoVoice

Interviews

Mapping of Bathrooms



# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force - Existing Guidelines, Tools, & Research

2010 State of Higher Education for LGBT People  
Campus Pride Campus Climate Assessment Index  
Promising Practices for the Inclusion of Gender Identity &  
Expression in Higher Education (2012)  
CAS Standards for LGBT Programs & Services  
2008/9 NASPA Diversity, Inclusion, Campus Climate  
Survey  
Themes of Experience for LGBTQ Students at George  
Mason University – B Silver Thesis (2011)

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force - Focus Groups

Faculty (2)

OHRL: Student Residents (2)

Professional Staff (1)

Students: Trans\*/Gender Variant (1)

LGBTQ (2)

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force - OUTLook on Mason: LGBTQ PhotoVoice

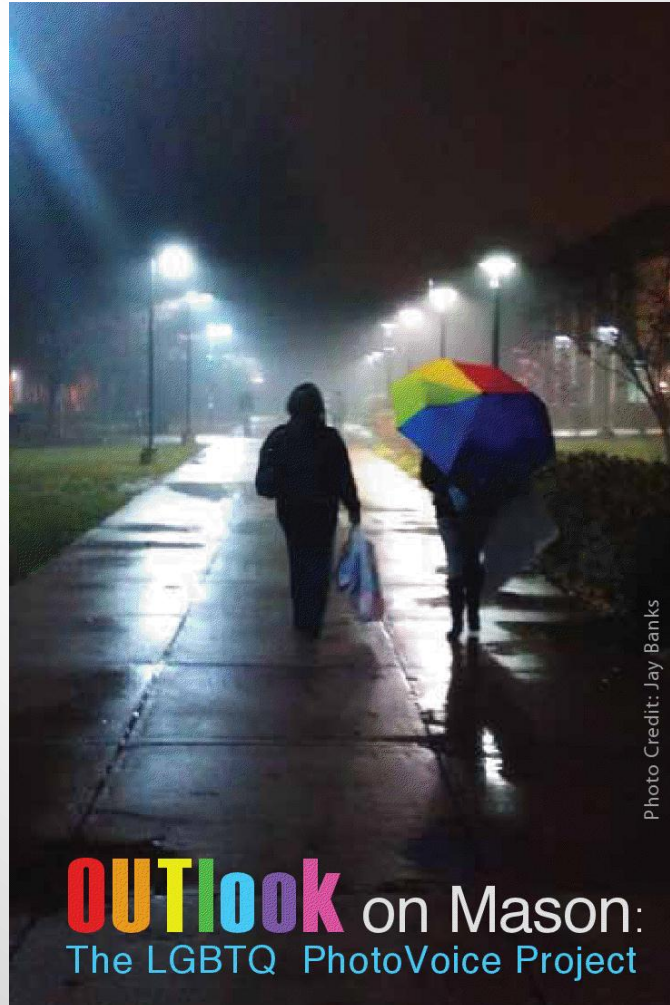
Participants take photographs, write summaries, in response to “How do you experience Mason’s Campus Climate for LGBTQ Students?”

10 (at end - 9) participants, meet approx bi-monthly over Spring Semester – sharing, discussing, critiquing, selecting photos

Culminated in week-long display and public forum (during Pride Week), where students shared their work, experiences, & recommendations with Mason administration, faculty, staff and other students

Lisa Lindley, Principle Investigator. Co-facilitators/instructors:  
Ric Chollar, Suzanne Scott, Lynne Constantine

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force - OUTlook on Mason: LGBTQ PhotoVoice



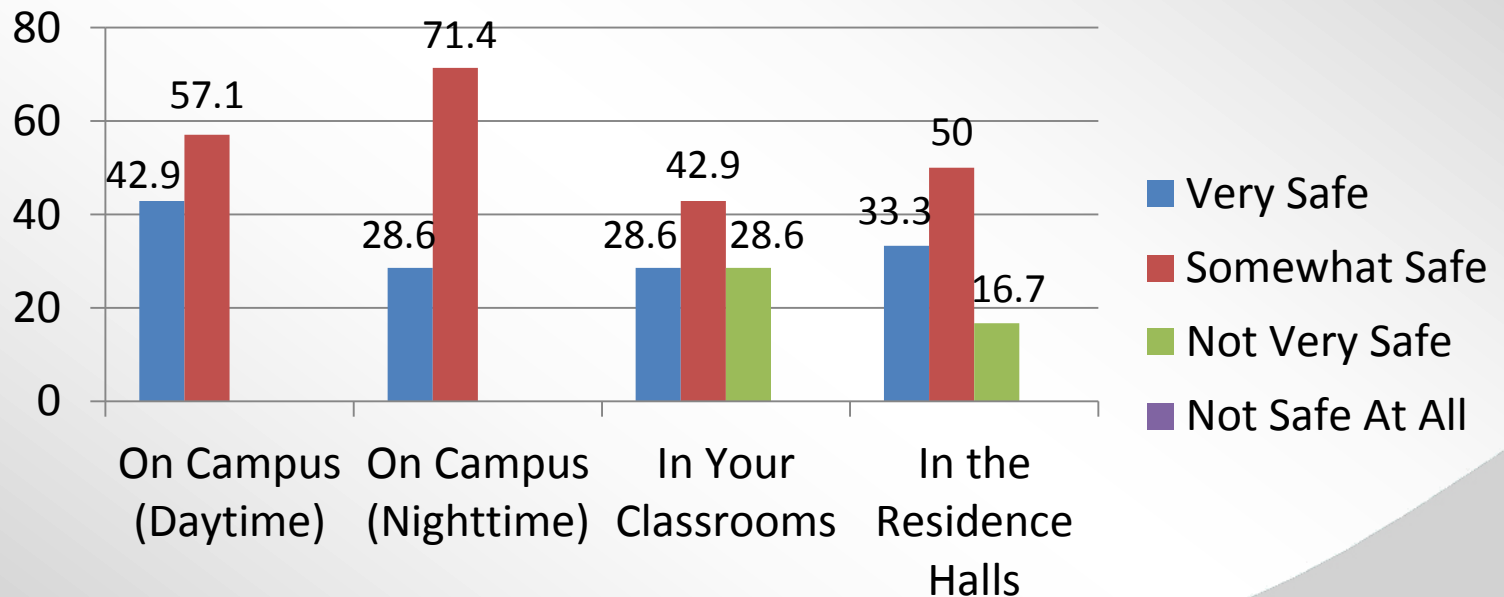
**Where Innovation Is Tradition**

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force - OUTLook on Mason: LGBTQ PhotoVoice



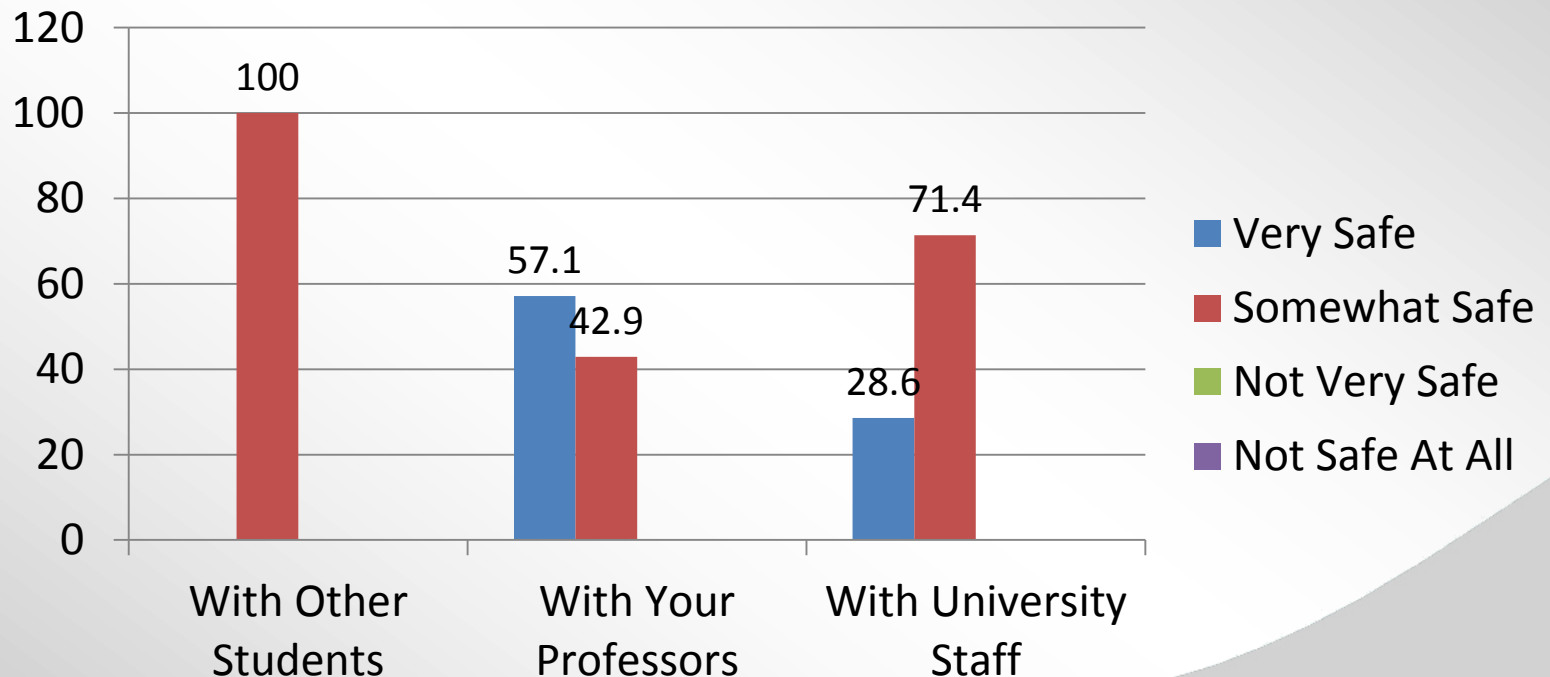
# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force - Trans\*/Gender Variant Focus Group

Transgender/Genderqueer Students at Mason:  
How Safe Do You Feel (%)



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# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force - Classroom/Faculty Focus Groups

16 faculty interviewed (CHSS, CEHD, COS, CVPA, Global and Community Health New Century College, Women and Gender Studies, Sociology/Anthropology and English)

Faculty interviewed stated they were comfortable in dealing with situations relating to LGBTQ issues and all were interested in additional training

Faculty admit that they are not as knowledgeable about transgender issues as they could be and that when LGBTQ “issues don’t come up” it may well have something to do with their assumptions about heterosexuality as the norm.



# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force - Classroom/Faculty Focus Groups

Faculty noted that when dealing with LGBTQ content they acknowledge that LGBTQ students sometimes experience frustration when the teacher fails to provide clear and accurate information in response to the students who are not knowledgeable about LGBTQ issues. The faculty point out the necessity of various strategies for teaching these subjects without alienating the (offending) student.

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force - Classroom/Faculty (from student perspective)

“I find with teachers and inside a classroom sometimes that addressing LGBTQ issues is difficult. They just don’t know where to stand with it you know? It’s not that they don’t support...um... but it’s as if they feel that their job is in jeopardy if they decide to engage in discussion about it,” it seemed to me [researcher] that this pointed to an under-representation of LGBTQ experiences within the classroom. After all, what does it imply to students when their lives as LGBTQ individuals are excluded from the curriculum of so many departments within our university? How can students develop a positive understanding of their place within a community that does not acknowledge their presence?

If students feel that their situation as LGBTQ individuals is so taboo that even professors cannot speak of it in their own classrooms, then what does that imply for their understanding of their own identity?

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force - Interviews

## Student Services (using CAS Standards as Guide)

- Student Health Services
- Alcohol, Drug, & Health Education
- Sexual Assault Services
- Counseling & Psychological Services
- Career Services
- University Police
- Student Involvement

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force - Special Populations

- Athletes
- Fraternity/Sorority Members
- Military/ROTC/Veterans
- Off-Campus Students
- Transfer Students
- Students of Color

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force - Gender Identity & Expression

**Bathroom Project:** Comparing official Facilities/Planning maps of buildings (designated to have “unisex, private, single use” bathrooms) with students’ actual experience – team of students searched for the listed facilities, documented what they found for availability, safety, accessibility

Traditionally (binary) gendered men’s and women’s public bathrooms not workable choice for transitioning and gender nonconforming students – Virginia Building Code mandates at least one accessible “unisex” bathroom in each new building

Will share results with Space Management, Campus Planning, and Student Services and Spaces Advisory Committee (SSSAC)

Will publicize (hand-outs, posting map on website)

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force: Major Findings

Of the participants in the Mason NASPA survey, Mason's LGBTQ students reported both witnessing and experiencing harassment and discrimination on campus at significantly higher rates than heterosexual students.

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force: Major Findings

From NASPA survey: When asked who was the source of the harassment and discrimination, LGBTQ students indicated the primary source to be other students (47%), faculty (33%), administrators/staff (27%), and teaching assistants and campus police (13%).

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force: Major Findings

From NASPA survey:

When asked where on campus the instances of harassment and discrimination occur, over half (53%) of Mason LGBTQ students reported the classroom as the area of greatest concern



# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force: Major Findings

Mason NASPA data also show that nearly 20% of survey respondents classified as LGBTQ indicated that they were international students.

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force: Major Findings

From focus groups: Less than half of LGBTQ Mason students felt very safe in their classrooms (48%), with other students (44%), on Mason's campus at night (27%), and in the surrounding community during the day (29%) and night (10%).

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force: Major Findings

Among the focus group of transgender/gender variant students, more than half felt not very safe in the surrounding community at night. 29% of these students reported not feeling very safe in their classrooms, 17% in their residence halls, and 14% in the surrounding community during the day.

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force: Major Findings

Approximately 60 bathrooms across Fairfax, Arlington, and Prince William campuses were identified by floor plans from Campus Planning as single-use, and available as gender-neutral restrooms. Eight of these spaces were unable to be found or were inaccessible to students; and at least 8 others had current signage prohibitive to gender inclusive usage.

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force: Major Findings

Among residential students, the room change process was of particular concern. In addition, residential students reported feeling uncertain about the attitudes by residence hall staff (both Resident Advisors and Resident Directors) toward LGBTQ students.

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force: Major Findings

Residential students also asked for gender-neutral housing, and that gender options should be added to the Housing Selection Survey.

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force: Major Findings

Generally, the LGBTQ *students' experiences* in the classroom reported through surveys and focus groups were notably different from the *perceptions of the faculty* interviewed about classroom issues and concerns.

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force: Major Findings

Faculty interviews show substantial differences between those faculty and instructors who typically teach courses with some LGBTQ and/or feminist content and those who teach courses without such content.



# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force: Recommendations

## 6 Major Areas of Focus:

### 1) Institutional Commitment:

Inclusion in University Policy and Statements

University Publications

Surveys, Forms, Records and Processes

Facilities: Gender Neutral Bathrooms and Locker Rooms

Training

Contracts

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force: Recommendations

## 2) Academic Affairs:

Issues for Faculty and Integration into  
Curricular Education

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force: Recommendations

## 3) University Life:

Student Services and Integration into  
Co-Curricular Education

Housing & Residence Life

Counseling & Health Care

LGBTQ Resources

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force: Recommendations

- 4) University Police: Campus Safety**
- 5) Admissions, Orientation and Transfer Services: Visibility & Recruitment**
- 6) Intercollegiate Athletics**

# LGBTQ Campus Climate Task Force - Next Steps

## Implemented So Far (Examples):

- Safe Zone and Social Justice Trainings for OHRL Pro Staff
- Safe Zone Trainings for Provost Team and Equity/Diversity Services
- Identification and Links with LGBTQ Liaisons in Key Depts (Police, CAPS, Career – Others?)
- Still in Progress: “It Gets Better,” Mason version
- Still in Progress: Bathroom Project
- Still in Progress: Planned Piloting Gender Neutral Housing Options