

2018

LGBTQ Commission 2018 Open Forum Report

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2018-04-25



PRESIDENT'S LGBTQ COMMISSION



2018 OPEN FORUM REPORT

FORUM HELD MARCH 30TH
1PM-3PM, ASC 118

ABSTRACT

The purpose of a Clemson University President's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Commission is to serve in an advisory capacity to the university administrators, faculty, staff, and students regarding matters which affect the LGBTQ people, and make recommendations based on the commission's engagement with the community and feedback from university organizations involved in LGBTQ programming and services. One forum was held in March to hear directly from the constituency the commission represents.

INTRO

Originally founded in 2013, the LGBTQ Task Force was recently reorganized into a university commission by President Jim Clements, Provost Bob Jones, and the Officer for Inclusion and Equity, Lee Gill. Under the Council on Diversity and Inclusion, the LGBTQ Commission collaborates with the other presidential commissions (Women's, Latino Affairs, BFSC, and Accessibility) to:

1. Create a welcoming environment that supports both inclusion and diversity.
2. Collect information and/or conduct research regarding climate and issues which affect the LGBTQ campus community.
3. Make recommendations regarding the policies, procedures, and practices which affect the LGBTQ campus community, with the goal of improving access and opportunities.
4. Ensure that the university appropriately addresses issues of equity, safety, and welfare of LGBTQ faculty, staff, students, and guests.
5. Advise the university administration, faculty, and staff on matters pertaining to the LGBTQ campus community.

In addition, the Commission maintains strong collaborative partnerships with organizations and entities which support the purpose, mission and vision of the Commission and the University such as Clemson LGBTQ+ Alumni Club, Clemson Sexuality and Gender Alliance (CU SAGA), and other LGBTQ student organizations.

To work toward our goals, the LGBTQ Commission held a forum on March 30, 2018. Recommendations reflected below are generated either from in person comments at the forum or from an anonymous survey available to the Clemson community for two weeks prior and two weeks following the open forum. The LGBTQ Commission will use the information gathered from the forum to direct the work of the commission and to inform our future objectives and goals.

Being the first open forum the LGBTQ Commission has ever held, commission chair, Josh Morgan, gave a brief history of LGBTQ life at Clemson University since the early 1990s to the present; an overview of the original LGBTQ task force, its recommendations and work; and goals the Commission has for the coming years. After the presentation, the Commission opened the floor to feedback from the audience.

The following themes emerged from the discussions, comments, and survey responses. Each theme is described and illustrated with one or more comments made in the open forum.

FEEDBACK

Faculty/Staff Issues

There were several issues mentioned related to access and the ability to participate in training for faculty and staff related to LGBTQ issues. One specific issue raised was training on pronoun usage and how to address pronoun issues. Other feedback received dealt with negative responses from colleagues and supervisors when staff would attend LGBTQ Commission related events, such as meetings. Recommendations and comments included:

- Training for staff and faculty on pronoun usage.
- More frequent sessions of Ally Training.
- Developing a refresher course for those with previous training, or shorter Ally training course for those with less time or centered on specific issues (e.g., brown bag lunch trainings).
- Making sure the Ally Training or other LGBTQ-specific training is inclusive of those within the LGBTQ community. Or at least communicating that the training will benefit them as well.
- Commitment from department heads, supervisors, and team leaders to support Commission members in attending and participating in the Commission (e.g., not requiring staff to take annual leave in order to attend on-campus meetings).
- Overt negative reactions to LGBTQ-related discussions in area of work.

Communication

Comments and suggestions related to awareness of events, activities, and general communication within and supporting the LGBTQ communities on campus.

- We were asked to provide more information about the Commission and how faculty and staff could get involved in the Commission.
- Comments suggested a need for easier access to a variety of resources on the Commission website (e.g., on-campus housing, off-campus housing, calendar of events, local LGBTQ resources, and scholarly resources regarding LGBTQ campus life).
- One individual commented that we should have more activities to let people get to know each other and improve the social atmosphere on campus.

Recruitment/Retention

There were comments provided related to the recruitment and retention of faculty and staff. This includes using recruiting strategies for LGBTQ candidates and providing departments with resources or support to seek diverse hires, including LGBTQ as an 'official' diversity category.

- Provide departments with list of recruitment avenues for their hires.
- Continuing to support University initiatives related to applicants' diversity statements and plans to address diversity and inclusive excellence.

Undergraduate and Graduate Students

Many issues were raised that address our students including both undergraduate and graduate students. Specifically, an issue was identified related to the student health plan no longer covering hormone replacement therapy (HRT) or other transgender services when it did in previous health insurance contracts.

- Need more support for graduate students specifically related to diversity and social-support related groups.
- Require that all new negotiated student health service plans cover transgender services (e.g., HRT).

- Require and ensure that all new and newly renovated buildings include gender neutral, single-occupancy restrooms to support transgender individuals as well as a private space for parents with children, individuals requiring ADA compliant spaces, and anyone with caretakers.
- We need to create mechanisms that make it easier for LGBTQ students to self-identify and advocate for themselves in housing, campus, and health issues.
- Explore the ability for creating Living Learning Communities that support gender inclusivity and LGBTQ students.
- A space for LGBTQ students and allies to go, which includes study and collaboration space and a resource area.

CONCLUSION

The President's LGBTQ Commission will take these comments, questions, and suggestions and use them in the formulation of our goals and tasks for the next year(s) as we work to improve the climate for LGBTQ people across all of Clemson's campuses. The Commission is very thankful for the feedback, comments, and suggestions from the Clemson community. It should be noted that many of these issues are persistent issues that have been reported previously in our reports and recommendations. We will continue to work on these issues as they are foundational for the LGBTQ community. We will also work with the Office of Inclusion and Equity, the Gantt Multicultural Center, and the Council for Diversity and Inclusion to address intersectionality issues across multiple commissions and within our community.