



President's Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Equity

Meeting with President Barron

October 14, 2021

Topic: Updates and Recommendations based upon the Community Survey and Ongoing initiatives

Commission members:

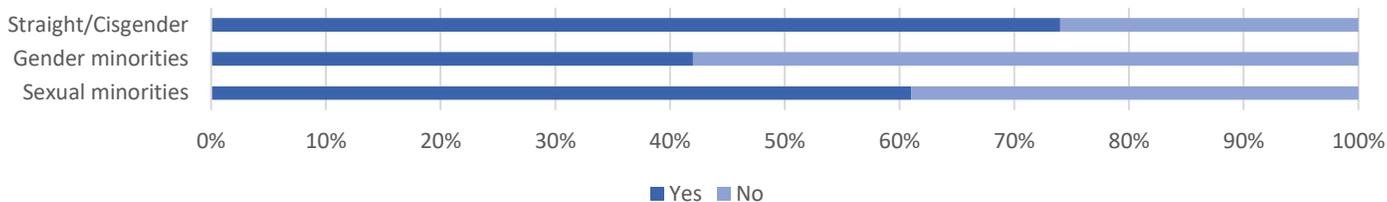
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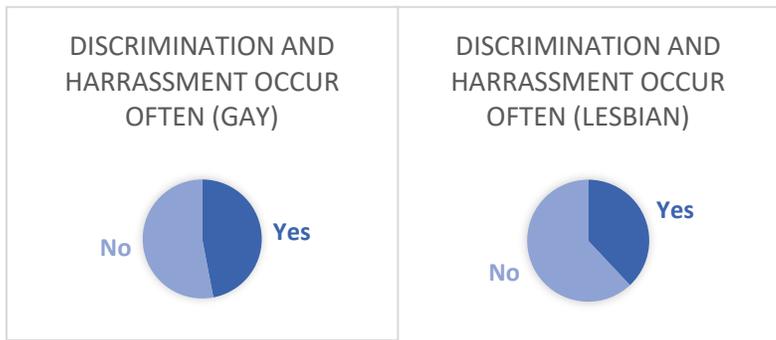
Methods: Our team looked at the results of the survey to explore the experiences of sexual and gender minority (SGM) Penn State students, faculty, and staff. Using the dashboard, we compared the results of SGM participants to straight and cisgender participants and looked *within* the SGM sample at within-group differences.

Belonging and inclusion: Do you feel a sense of belonging and community on campus? (Students)



Engagement across difference: While SGM individuals are more open to diversity, the results indicate that some within this community are still not as exposed to this diversity. However, across the board, in comparison to straight/cisgender participants, SGM participants were more likely to engage with diversity across multiple identities (e.g., racial diversity).

Experiences with stereotyping, microaggressions, and harassment: Fewer participants reported feeling discriminated against or harassed as compared to those who reported hearing insensitive or disparaging remarks.

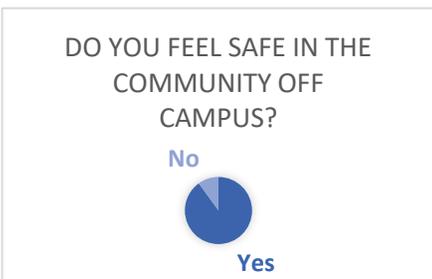


*However, only 18% of questioning participants, 19% of lesbian participants, and 19% of those with a non-listed sexual orientation reported the incident. More should be done to reduce the stigma associated with reporting within these communities.

Gender and racial identities impacted reporting likelihood. We need to think intersectionally to explore the experiences of SGM individuals of color.

Cultural competence and knowledge: Eighty-four percent of respondents value events to explore different perspectives. Engagement in discussion, training, activities, or community service leads to increased support for diversity and equity.

Institutional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion: SGM individuals have higher levels of disagreement in relation to the institution’s commitment to DEI work. Specifically, 30% of gender minority respondents and 8–33% of sexual minority respondents noted that they did not agree that *recruitment of historically marginalized students, faculty, and staff is an institutional priority*.



Off-campus community contexts: SGM students, faculty, and staff experience significantly higher rates of discrimination and harassment off-campus than straight/cisgender Penn Staters with 10% saying that they do not feel safe. When *over half* of SGM students, faculty, and staff have experienced harassment or discrimination when stepping foot off-campus, we can surmise that Penn State may need to increase efforts to create safe and welcoming environments on-campus.

Next Steps: The Commission discussed the results from the survey and determined our recommended next steps. These are presented below with accompanying justification and data to support our recommendations. Data are taken from the recent Penn State Community Survey and the highlighted areas follow the framework fostered by the Select Penn State Presidential Commission on Racism, Bias, and Community Safety.

Advancing our Educational and Research Mission

Create and fund an LGBTQIA Scholarly Research Center or Consortium linking the 24 campuses with a unified fellowship program as a primary focus.



Justification: An LGBTQIA Scholarly Research Center or Consortium would support LGBTQIA scholarship (teaching, research, extension, creative activity, programming) across the University, as well as robust mentoring, faculty release time, and support for collaborative initiatives. A fellowship program linked to this Center or Consortium would promote and shepherd research fueled by intersectional, evidence-based, social justice-oriented, and humanity-centered approaches to the study of LGBTQIA knowledges and experiences. To be selected, fellows would be expected to demonstrate research, teaching, and/or extension excellence in LGBTQIA studies, such as expertise in trans studies, queer theory, critical gender and sexuality studies, and related fields.



Data: Thirty percent of gender minority respondents and 8–33% of sexual minority respondents noted that they did not agree that recruitment of historically marginalized students, faculty, and staff is an institutional priority.



University Partners: The Office of the President; the Academic Leadership Council (ALC); Educational Equity; the Select Penn State Presidential Commission on Racism, Bias, and Community Safety; the Commission on Racial/Ethnic Diversity; and the Commission for Women.

Interim Step 1: Expand on networks such as the Penn State SGM health special interest group, a group of dedicated faculty supporting sexual and gender minority research pre-and-post COVID 19.



Justification: There is a dearth of research faculty conducting this research on SGM populations across the University. However, due to the size of the University, these faculty are often working in solitude. The faculty already exist across the 24 campuses. However, further work is necessary to organize the logistics related to connecting them.



Data: Sexual minority faculty are less likely to feel as though they belong at their campus with 45% reporting they are very dissatisfied, generally dissatisfied, or neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. This is in comparison to 34% of straight faculty. Networks such as this are positive for group identification. Additionally, 43% of sexual minority participants do not feel as though their campus or college supports equity-minded research. Further research like this is needed.

Interim Step 2: Urge new anti-racism center to consider the intersections of communities and interdisciplinary hiring



Justification: Diversity is not a single-identity issue and involves acknowledging the multiple minority statuses that make up individuals. Aligning with other diversity-focused centers at Penn State helps to bridge communities to work together. Furthermore, many of our students, staff, and faculty identify with multiple minority identities.



Data: In the workplace, 28% of sexual minority participants of color do not feel as though their supervisor takes responsibility for creating an inclusive environment. Issues of retention appear to be of slightly higher concern than issues of recruitment for gender/sexually diverse respondents. Aggregates reporting disagreement (among gender/sexually diverse respondents) for retention/recruitment are higher when intersected with race/ethnicity.

Interim Step 3: Cluster hiring for Transgender and Gender Diverse faculty



Justification: Recognizing the significant absence of tenure-stream transgender faculty and the dearth of trans studies research at Penn State, this initiative would also partner with the College of the Liberal Arts and relevant departments in the humanities and social sciences to support an interdisciplinary cluster hire in the field of trans studies at University Park and elsewhere.



Data: Thirty percent of gender minority respondents and 8–33% of sexual minority respondents noted that they did not agree that *recruitment of historically marginalized students, faculty, and staff is an institutional priority*. Thirty-six percent of gender minority respondents and 7–46% of sexual minority respondents noted they did not believe that *retention of historically marginalized students, faculty, and staff is an institutional priority*.

Enterprise and Structural Approach to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Investing in Our Structure: Advocate, support, and protect regional DEI infrastructure for campuses in cooperation with Dr. Kelly Austin, Interim Senior Vice President for Commonwealth Campuses, and the broader Office of Commonwealth Campuses.



Justification: There is significant gap and variation in professionally paid positions responsible for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work across our campuses. Many of those doing this work have taken it on as additional responsibilities and/or because they are passionate about institutional change. As we determine what an enterprise approach to this work might look like across the Commonwealth, it will be critical to create synergistic and supportive networks for institutional change. CLGBTQE supports the advancement, creation, and protection of regional and campus positions that are charged to support our Penn State communities across the Commonwealth.



Data: Most (84%) respondents value events to explore different perspectives (only 2% disagree). Many people who are most aware of cultural competence concepts (microaggressions, implicit bias, etc.) do not know where to go for help facilitating difficult conversations. Additionally, 46% of sexual minority respondents do not feel as though the communities surrounding their campuses welcome people of diverse backgrounds.



University Partners: The Office of the President; the Office of Commonwealth Campuses; Educational Equity; the Coalition on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CoDEI); the Select Penn State Presidential Commission on Racism, Bias, and Community Safety; the Commission on Racial/Ethnic Diversity; the Commission for Women; Human Resources; and Student Affairs.

Investing in Our Students: Support the hiring of a new position housed within the Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity supporting gender diverse, transgender, and non-binary education and support while also assisting in the direct buildout of services for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).



Justification: Gender diverse, transgender, and non-binary students face unique challenges navigating life at Penn State. Whereas Penn State’s Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity supports these students while at Penn State (e.g., through providing information regarding name changes in Penn State’s system, emergency funding, educational engagement, etc.), a full-time staff member devoted to this gender diverse education and support is necessary. Racial justice and gender justice cannot be separated as the experiences of those holding diverse identities at both intersections are presenting the most need in terms of support.



Data: Thirty-nine percent of gender minority respondents noted that they did not believe that *senior leaders will take appropriate action based on the survey*. Sexual minorities responded similarly, ranging from 19–58% in disagreement that *senior leaders will take appropriate action based on the survey*. Eighteen percent of respondents identifying as straight/heterosexual also disagreed, while 19% of sexual minority students and 31% of gender minorities are *dissatisfied with Penn State’s campus experience/environment regarding diversity*, with queer students reporting the highest levels of dissatisfaction. These results echo data from the [2018 Sexual Misconduct Survey](#).



University Partners: The Office of the President, Educational Equity, Student Affairs, and the Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity.

Investing in Our Systems: Support and implement information technology system and analytic updates



Justification: The Commission is grateful for the continued implementation of the new AD 84 Preferred Name and Gender Identity policy. We continue to advocate for the addition of sexual orientation/identity to accounts.psu.edu and/or other systems of records to increase visibility of these communities that currently are invisible in our data sets.



Data: A group’s visibility and representation can help create a climate that fosters engagement across difference. Only 37–43% of straight and cisgender participants claimed to *interact with people outside their sexual orientation*. Sexual and gender minorities feel less satisfaction (42–61%) with the *overall campus climate* related to their experiences of diversity as compared to cisheteronormative students (75%).



University Partners: Office of Information Security; WorkLion Management Office (WMO); LionPATH Development and Maintenance Organization (LDMO); the Office of Planning, Assessment, and Institutional Research; Human Resources; and the Affirmative Action Office.

Investing in Our Response: Support and implement further updates to the Bias Response Network



Justification: While we are excited to hear about various updates related to the Penn State Report Bias system, we recommend allocating additional institutional support to the current system. Our review of peer institutions showed that several of them provide centralized and coordinated systems staffed by 1–2 FTEs dedicated to the reporting process, case coordination, and response processes. As LGBTQ+ communities and

others navigating marginalized narratives continue to experience bias and discrimination, we advocate for a financial and structural change to this system.



Data: Pansexual (39%) and queer (32%) participants were most likely to report incidents of stereotyping, microaggressions, and harassment to campus officials. Of concern, only 18% of questioning participants, 19% of lesbian participants, and 19% of those with a non-listed sexual orientation reported the incident.



University Partners: Educational Equity, Human Resources, Affirmative Action Office, Undergraduate Education, Office of the Provost, and Student Affairs.

Investing in Our Communications: Devote resources to an enhanced central equity and inclusion calendar within Educational Equity and/or collaborative offices/units, that allows for broader community engagement, communication, and connection as well as a rising up of University-related equity and inclusion events.



Justification: Supporting DEI efforts in one center or unit also involves encouraging collaboration with other efforts. Collaboration in this way encourages understanding that *We Are ALL Penn State* and discourages centers and units from staying siloed.



Data: Seventy-four percent of cisheteronormative students report feeling a *sense of belonging or community on campus*, compared to 61% of sexual minority students and only 42% of gender minorities. Sixty-three percent of gender and sexual minority students, faculty, and staff at Commonwealth campuses and 40–56% at the University Park campus have *experienced discrimination off campus*. Nearly one third (30%) of gender minorities and 11% of sexual minorities at the University Park campus and 13–17% at the Commonwealth campuses report *feeling unsafe* in the communities surrounding campus.



University Partners: Educational Equity; various diversity, equity, and inclusion administrative units (Finance and Business, World Campus and Outreach, Student Affairs, etc.); and Strategic Communications.

Committed to Our Future: Engagement and involvement with Penn State President Search



Justification: The SGM community at Penn State makes up a sizeable number of stakeholders at the University. Additionally, this community has a shared experience that provides a unique perspective in the conversation surrounding the needs of the University. Furthermore, as noted within the survey data, there is a disconnect in the perception of support from upper administration held by our various marginalized communities. Engaging the leadership of the President's Commissions for Equity should be considered moving forward.



Data: Thirty-nine percent of gender minority respondents noted that they did not believe that *senior leaders will take appropriate action based on the survey*. Sexual minorities responded similarly, ranging from 19–58% in disagreement that *senior leaders will take appropriate action based on the survey*. Eighteen percent of respondents identifying as straight/heterosexual also disagreed.

Commitment to Recruitment, Onboarding, Mentoring, and Building Community

Investing in Our Students: Support for the growth of student-led affinity/identity space outside of administrative spaces allowing students to foster their advocacy, activism, and collective community organizing. Support the connection of campus LGBTQ student leader engagement and communications.



Justification: Feeling connected to one's minority group is associated with higher levels of psychological well-being. For many SGM students, SGM-specific organizations and spaces on campus are the only connection to the community they have.



Data: Nineteen percent of sexual minority students and 31% of gender minorities are *dissatisfied with Penn State's campus experience/environment regarding diversity*, with queer students reporting the highest levels of dissatisfaction. As noted earlier, 84% of survey respondents indicated the *value of events/activities to explore different (identity) perspectives*. Student-led engagements in discussion, training, activities, art, or community service can lead to an increased support for diversity and equity, and a greater sense of belonging.



University Partners: The Office of the President, Student Affairs, various equity and inclusion units, and the Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity.

Investing in Our Colleague Community: Advocate and support the on-going work being led by Dr. Lisette Garcia, Assistant Vice President of Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging in Human Resources, in the creation of Employee Resource Groups and/or Communities of Belonging—and more specifically a community honoring sexual and gender diversity.



Justification: SGM staff and faculty may feel isolated as the lone SGM individual in their department, unit, college, or campus. The sense of connection to a minority group extends into adulthood for individuals in their workplaces. Research has indicated the positive implications of feeling connected to others who share one's minority identity.



Data: Sexual minority faculty are less likely to feel as though they belong at their campus with 45% reporting they are very dissatisfied, generally dissatisfied, or neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. This is in comparison to 34% of straight faculty.



University Partners: Human Resources, Educational Equity, Affirmative Action Office, various diversity, equity, and inclusion administrative units (Finance and Business, World Campus and Outreach, Student Affairs, etc.); the Commission on Racial/Ethnic Diversity; and the Commission for Women.