

Rainbow SIG Newsletter

Volume 7, Number 1, Fall 2000

These articles appeared in the Fall 2000 edition of Lesbigan SIGnals.

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The San Diego Conference in Retrospect

By Joe Murnan, SIG Co-Chair

A few years back, Kathy Sideli pointed out to me that our Lesbigan SIG grows better and stronger every year. The conference in San Diego this year was definite proof of this. It also seemed to me that the SIG is more active and definitely very visible. The conference this year was a very busy one for the SIG and its members. The officers and Board of Advisors met the night before our general business meeting to discuss and outline the general theme of the general business meeting. The main topic of discussion was the NAFSA conference site resolution and site selection and the SIG's response.

On May 31st the SIG held its general business meeting. We counted almost 100 people in attendance, one of the largest ever SIG meetings. When attendees who were attending their first Lesbigan SIG meeting were asked to raise their hands about 30 people held up their hands. The new members were welcomed with loud applause. Thanks to Scott King of Old Dominion University we had copies of a New Member's Guide for them. The guide provides information about our mission, our working guidelines, instructions on how to access our web site and the Rainbow listserve, a bibliography of gay and lesbian resources, a listing of the officers and Board of Advisors, and numerous articles from past SIGnals newsletters. The guide, as well as the brochure, will be updated regularly and made available for the annual conference and for people to take to the Regional conferences.

During the regular business meeting, an election of a new co-chair was held. Julie Trimpe of the Institute for the International Education of Students was elected to the two-year post. The other officers are: Joe Murnan, Co-chair 1999-2001; Susan Cart y and Peter Kerrigan, Co-editors; Rick Russo, Treasurer; Kathleen Sideli, Web Site

Manager; and Daniel DeSoto, Listserve Manager. In addition to elections, volunteers for the Board of Advisor were sought. This year, the number of advisors grew from 8 to 12. In addition to its growth in number, the board continued to diversify. The SIG is very proud of the diversity that our board represents. We now have new members on the board from Japan and Mexico, joining our members from the United Kingdom, Canada and the U.S.

The meeting then centered on NAFSA's conference resolution and site selection. Because of a major break down in communications, the officers felt that it was necessary to meet the next morning and prepare a statement to be read at the NAFSA business meeting. The statement was written by Bo Keppel, Immediate Past Co-chair, and read by Joe Murnan and Julie Trimpe during the business meeting. Since then, the NAFSA Board of Directors has implemented a routing process which will bring all site proposals to the Diversity Committee and require that all proposals include evidence of non-discriminatory practice within the Request for Proposal. Julie and I have since sent a letter to the Board of Directors recommending that they highlight the evidence of non-discriminatory practice in the conference materials to demonstrate NAFSA's respect for its diversity. We have also recommended that the Diversity Committee be expanded and that its work be well publicized to the NAFSA membership.

We have also collected proposals from members on ways to raise the consciousness of the NAFSA membership to GLBT issues. Some of the proposals are:

- Encourage Human Rights Group or Amnesty International's OUTfront Program to have a booth at the conference exhibition. We might propose to co-host the booth with them.
- Staff a SIG information table near the conference registration area.
- Reach out to GLBT students, advisors and educators in all conference host cities. Invite them to attend the SIG business meeting and have them give our members an update on their activities and the environment.
- Suggest plenary speakers to NAFSA. We would suggest speakers who are active in education and GLBT issues. Possible speakers suggested so far are Judy Shepard and Congressman Gerrold Nadler of NY, sponsor of the Partner Immigration Act of 2000 legislation.
- Have more outreach at Regionals. The SIG would identify one or two SIG members for each region to be Regional Representatives. We could consider changing our Working Guidelines to make the Regional Representatives a permanent group within the SIG. They could schedule and conduct SIG meetings at regional conferences and/or distribute SIG brochures and SIG New Member's Guides.

(If you should have other suggestions for raising the consciousness of the NAFSA membership to GLBT issues, please send them to Julie Trimpe or Joe Murnan.) After the SIG business meeting, we held our annual social event. Many, many thanks go to Peter Voeller, who organized and hosted our SIG Social at Top of the Park Penthouse at the Park Manor Suites. A very large number of SIG members and friends attended

the event. The food was great and the event gave many people the opportunity to meet others and have fun. One guest upon entering asked where Bo was. "Just look for the hat and you'll find her," was the response. Bo, you have to admit the hat is a great signature for you. (A small side note: For those of you who might be interested there is a gay owned and operated hotel four blocks from the convention center in Philadelphia. You can check it out at [Alexander Inn](#) or contact them toll free at 877-ALEX-INN.)

In addition to the meetings and social event, SIG members also presented a panel discussion and a Region VIII Highlight Session. At the Just How Multicultural Are We? GLBT International Educators Speak Out panel discussion four gay, lesbian and transgendered educators shared their experiences and offered suggestions for making international education more inclusive. The discussion drew a standing room only crowd and offered attendees the opportunity to share their experiences and suggestions, as well.

Following the panel discussion Julie Trimpe and Ted Burnes presented their Region VIII Highlight: Education Abroad and Reentry-LGBT Issues session. The large number of attendees learned important GLBT issues related to study abroad reentry issues. Julie and Ted presented information from research that investigated reentry experiences of returned students. The attendees then had the opportunity to discuss issues relevant to GLBT students studying abroad and ways in which to address these issues in their study abroad offices.

San Diego was a good opportunity for the Lesbigan SIG. We were much more visible to the NAFSA membership and our issues were well-publicized. From one regional session description I have seen and a proposed session on the environment for GLBT study abroad students in their host countries, I think that the SIG will grow even better and stronger in the next year.

New SIG Web Site Introduced

Kathleen Sideli, Indiana University

The SIG Web site has a brand new look so be sure to visit it soon, if you haven't already done so: NAFSA: Lesbigan SIG. The SIG's presence on the Web became a reality five years ago without anyone realizing that it would soon become a significant resource across the field of international education. Our intention at first was to create a resource for SIG members and for international educators who wanted information about how to address glbt issues with students. Before long, our colleagues worldwide not only began to access the material but also to direct their students to the site, even though it wasn't aimed at a student audience. Consequently, in the past year, SIG members Julie Trimpe and Scott Van Der Meid decided to expand our information so that students would feel welcome at our site. We now have information for study abroad students and soon will also have information aimed at international students.

The new design of our site recognizes that there are three different groups of people who are accessing our homepage: SIG members, students and international educators. Each group now has a pathway from the homepage to the information which is the most relevant to its needs. You will notice that we have also reorganized the resources themselves so that the three groups can access the information which is most pertinent to that group. This should make the site more user-friendly.

In the coming months we will be further improving the site (i.e. dating the individual articles in the various newsletters, adding resources, etc.). Please contact us if you have comments or, more importantly, additions or links for our site. Let's continue to expand this resource so that it serves our constituency on as many levels as possible.

Special thanks to Cynthia Ramlo at Indiana University, who created our new and colorful look, to Julie Trimpe and Scott Van Der Meid who conceptualized the way information should flow and to Susan Carty for helping Cynthia make a smooth transition from our previous site.

NAFSA Regionals

Susan Carty, Indiana University

NAFSA regional conferences will be held around in November in locations all over North America. Should you attend sessions of relevance or potential interest to the Lesbian and Gay SIG's mission, please send me a note describing the session and its significance. (Note: Contact information for me can be found at right.)

2000 NAFSA Regional Conferences Sites and Dates

- I. Victoria, BC, Nov 1-4
- II. Santa Fe, NM, Nov 1-4
- III. Monterrey, Mex, Nov 2-4
- IV. Iowa City, IA, Nov 16-18
- V. Lacrosse, WI, Nov 4-6
- VI. Sandusky, OH, Nov 5-7
- VII. Savannah, GA, Nov 17-21
- VIII. Richmond, VA, Nov 16-18
- IX. Montreal, Quebec, Nov 12-14
- X. Montreal, Quebec, Nov 12-14
- XI. Tahoe, CA Nov 6-10

More information about the regional meetings can be found on [NAFSA's Web site](#).

Educators Speak Out

Bo Keppel, East Stroudsburg University

On Thursday, June 1, 2000 a wonderful event took place: a panel of four courageous individuals discussed their lives, their careers, their joys and their fears. For two, the experience marked the first discussion of their sexuality before a large audience of people they did not know. For another, it was an opportunity to share the realities of life for one of that still most feared and oppressed group, transsexuals. For the fourth, it was another opportunity to reaffirm a professional life long lived out of the closet. All those who attended the session, **Just How Multicultural Are We: GLBT International Educators Speak Out!** were moved by the honesty and passion with which the panelists shared their "stories." Their contributions opened the way for an audience members share their diverse experiences in international education.

The panelists were Jan Kieling, Jennifer Lynn Martin, Kevin Morrison and Joe Murnan. Jan is a lesbian who has been working in study abroad for many years at Berkeley in California. Jennifer Martin, a transsexual who works with people from all over the world in her role as conductor, is a Professor and Chairperson of the Music Department at Truckee Meadows Community College in Reno, Nevada. Kevin Morrison is a gay man who works at a small private college in Indiana. Joe Murnan, a gay man and Co-chairperson of the Lesbigan SIG, works for the Hariri Foundation in Washington, DC. Bo Keppel, Immediate Past Co-chair of the Lesbigan SIG served as panel facilitator.

Jennifer spoke first, describing with sensitivity and humor, her journey from a man to a woman. She talked of getting back into education after her surgery, telling of her decision to include information on her sex change in the application process. Much to her amazement and delight, Truckee Meadows responded with an offer for an interview and subsequently, a job. Jennifer accepted the job, without telling them she was a lesbian in a committed relationship and would be bringing her partner with her! She (and many in the audience) laughed at the irony of being comfortable disclosing her transsexual status, but not her sexuality! Fortunately, Jennifer's school offers partnership benefits!

Kevin talked about working at a private liberal arts college with a strong religious background. While the climate for GLBT students is quite favorable, he did not find the same applied to faculty and administration, and was originally afraid to be open with colleagues and students. Ultimately, he found a network of supportive colleagues and the courage to be more open about his sexuality. He revealed that he does not come out to students he advises because he fears it might jeopardize his effectiveness with them. He has bonded with another gay person on staff and is finding that her support as well as that of straight allies has made working at his institution more rewarding. As Kevin related a few days following the panel, the experience of coming out to a large group of unknown people and the reception he received from so many of them made him realize he wants to actively work to improve the climate for GLBT people in

international education. Kevin, therefore, joined the Advisory Board of the Lesbian and Gay SIG.

Joe Murnan shared the humorous story of being found out by the Chairman of the Board of his organization, a former US Senator, who was incredibly supportive, but still thinks Joe's sexuality is their little secret - Joe doesn't have the heart to tell him that he has been out at the office almost from day one. He has found those in his office to be supportive, including the wife of his direct supervisor, who has offered to play matchmaker for him! Joe shared that his openness has offered him the opportunity to provide support and guidance to international students in need. His experiences as a gay man working in international education have been overwhelmingly positive.

Jan Kieling, who had considered herself out for more than 25 years, began questioning just how out she was in her professional life when she attended her first SIG meeting in 1997. However, the event that pushed her into activism was the murder of Matthew Shepard in 1998. Last year, when volunteers were sought to serve on this panel, Jan raised her hand and has since recognized that she owes it to herself and others to be more proactive in her support of GLBT issues. Her office now incorporates discussion about GLBT issues into their outgoing student orientation sessions for study abroad students. GLBT Safe Zone stickers and rainbow flags are displayed prominently, offering gay students a haven, if they need one. Jan, too, has accepted a place on the Lesbian and Gay SIG Advisory Board.

Audience members responding to the invitation to share their own experiences, talked about situations in which being out to students had been an asset; others spoke of environments where only limited openness was possible. A self-identified straight male affirmed that allies were an essential ingredient to improving the climate for gay students, as they could often be open about their gay-friendly status when gays could not. Another audience member, a lesbian working abroad, shared her concerns for gay students who were totally out while studying in the US, returned, expecting the same acceptance, and faced rejection or worse. Another educator told of a young gay Pakistani man who was outed to the campus community and, she feared, also to his community back home. The facilitator talked of having met two bi-sexual women who attended the Lesbian and Gay SIG's social, saying it was the first place they had ever felt safe enough to be public about their relationship.

Also presented were the results of an informal survey conducted over Inter-L during the months of April and May 2000. The purpose of the survey was to assess the acceptance of GLBT people working in the field of international education. A summary of the survey results and selected comments from respondents appears on page 6.

Overall, audience members and panelists alike found the session to be affirming. Offers were made to propose sessions on GLBT issues for NAFSA conferences, both regional and national.

SIG Survey Results

Bo Keppel, East Stroudsburg University

In preparation for a presentation to be given at the 2000 Annual NAFSA Conference in San Diego, the following survey was developed and distributed via the Lesbian SIG's listserve, as well as via the general NAFSA listserve, Inter-L. Some listserve members shared it with other international educators not affiliated with NAFSA. While only 26 people responded, a number much too small to draw any conclusions about the overall population of GLBT international educators, the results seem to reinforce information received in the earlier survey of SIG members. Fully half (13) of the respondents reported not being closeted in any way, and an additional 31% (8 respondents) reported being closeted only to students. Only 12% (3 respondents) felt their jobs were at risk if their sexuality were revealed. Nineteen or 73% indicated their institutions included sexual orientation in their non-discrimination clauses.

An interesting result, if again, not significant, was that more females (7) were closeted to more groups of people at work than were males, all 6 of whom were closeted only to students. In addition all three of the respondents who felt their jobs were at risk if their sexuality were known were women.

Neither the size of the school, its location or its public/private status seemed to have much impact on responses. The complete [survey](#) is available in the Lesbian Professional's section of the SIG's Web site . Be sure to read the written responses, many of which are quite poignant.

Bits of Internet News of Interest

Dutch Gays Hail Ground-breaking Legislation

New legislation is to be introduced by the Netherlands allowing same-sex couples to officially marry and adopt Dutch children. They will also be able to divorce through the court system, like heterosexual couples. [Note: Complete article appeared on 9/12/2000 and can be found on [CNN's Web site](#).]

Utah Student Group Ban Rescinded: Salt Lake City School Board Enacts New Policy on Non-academic Clubs

The Salt Lake City School District board voted 6 to 1 Tuesday to end its four-year-old policy of banning non-academic student clubs from meeting on high school campuses. A new policy replaces the ban enacted to block a Gay-related organization from forming and which twice forced school officials to defend the board's action in federal court. [Note: Complete article appeared on 9/8/2000 and can be found on the the [Washington Blade's Web site](#).]

National Conference Reminder

NAFSA: ASSOCIATION OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATORS
53rd Annual Conference
"Advancing Global Diplomacy Through International Education"
May 27 - June 1, 2001
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania