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# =RAINBOW SIG NEWSLETTER=

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## Feature: Meeting our new SIG Co-Chair 2004

Submitted by: Jan Kieling, University of California-Berkeley



I was born in Minneapolis, MN and lived all over the U.S. growing up because my father was in the Navy. I have lived in the Bay Area since 1969 when I came to Berkeley to attend college. I graduated from Cal with a degree in Journalism in 1973 and have worked at UC Berkeley for thirty years -- all in the study abroad office. I studied abroad in Italy during my junior year of college, and just sort of fell into the profession. I wanted to help other students have the experience of overseas study, and since there were no journalism jobs during the recession of 1973-74, I thought I would do this for a couple of years. I started out as the counselor, and then worked my way up through the office. I am now the Administrative Director for Berkeley Programs for Study Abroad, overseeing the UC Education Abroad Program, and supervising a staff of 7 advisers and 2 assistants. For the past 14 years, I have lived with my partner, Victoria (we met in 1985), in our condominium in North Oakland. We have two dog-like cats: Jasper, a 9 year old Ocicat (think small ocelot) and Leonardo, a 10 year old Abyssinian.

I considered myself out for more than 25 years, but I began questioning just how out I was in my professional life when I attended my first SIG meeting in 1997. However, the murder of Matthew Shepard in 1998 pushed me back into activism. I volunteered and spoke at a session at the NAFSA National Conference in San Diego on being an "out" international educator. Since Matthew Shepard's death, I decided

that I owed it to myself and others to be more proactive in my support of GLBT issues. My office now incorporates discussion about GLBT issues into our 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. I am looking forward to working with Co-Chair Terry Crouch this year, and with the Advisory Board and SIG members for the next two years.

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## Student Testimonial: On Being Gay in Madrid

Submitted by: Daniel Brown, Grinnell College

Daniel Brown is a senior from Grinnell College, Iowa, who is spending fall 2004 on the IES Madrid program at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Daniel gave permission to print his thoughts about the study abroad experience.

**ON SELF-IDENTITY:** Although the order is not all that important to me, I self-identify as a white gay American male.

**ON CHOOSING SPAIN:** To be honest, Madrid was my second choice. I had originally planned on studying abroad in Havana. However, Bush changed the regulations that govern studying abroad in Cuba at the last minute, so I chose Madrid as an alternative. I found Madrid to be an attractive study location because I wanted to be in a large metropolitan area in a Spanish-speaking country. I narrowed it down to either Buenos Aires or Madrid, and chose Madrid based on my previous course of study (I had studied Spanish literature

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and theatre) and an opportunity to travel in to various other places in Europe during my time here.

SAFETY: I had no safety concerns related to sexual orientation upon arriving in Madrid (neither from Spanish nor American peers). I assumed that Madrid was a safe place for gays and lesbians firstly because gay marriage is pretty much about to be made legal in a couple of months. In addition, Madrid has the country's largest gay population in addition to probably being the most progressive Spanish city. I felt it would be just as safe as New York City or Chicago could be in comparison. Also, I have a few friends who have travelled and studied in Spain, and they gave me the impression that I had nothing to really worry about being publicly "out" as a gay student.

ON BEING AN "OUT" STUDY ABROAD STUDENT: Clearly, it is much easier to be an "out" homosexual in Madrid than it would have been in Cuba. In Havana, I suspect I would have had to stay in the closet if I did not want to worry about my personal safety all the time. At least that is the impression that I received after doing a little bit of research and talking to people who have visited Cuba. Overall, I was not considering my sexuality as a variable in choosing study location. However, if sexuality and being "out" would have been a major concern, Madrid would have been a more attractive choice. In comparison to my home campus, located in Iowa, Madrid was appealing from the perspective of sexual orientation. Although my home institution is very gay friendly and has a culture and environment that provides a lot of support for gay and lesbian students, it is still in the middle of Iowa. Madrid is a big European city with entertainment venues and a bustling gay population. It was a far more striking location for the semester than my home campus to learn about myself and others.

ON LIFE VALUES: Some of the life values I have learned are not related to sexual orientation. However, from an American

overseas perspective, I have come to learn that energy and water are valuable resources and should not be carelessly wasted. Spaniards seem to have a stronger sentiment for this idea. Secondly, there is much more respect for elders. The elderly have a place in this city. In the States we seem to cast them aside. Politically, I have learned that I should not judge someone on the actions of their home country's government or what you think you know about their culture. It is an easy thing to say and hard to do, but it is important to keep in mind when living in a different country. Mostly, you will appreciate it when others do it for you.

ADVISING STUDENTS: Go out and enjoy this city. There is something for everyone in Madrid, and a lot of things that you will not find in the United States. Spaniards have been friendly and do not care if you cannot speak perfect Spanish. Do not just hang out with all the other Americans on your program like so many students end up doing. Get out, be adventurous and meet the people you came to meet.

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## **Conference Workshop Theme on Advising GLBT Students**

Submitted by: J. Scott Van Der Meid,  
Brandeis University

At the CIEE annual conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico, attendees had an opportunity to participate in a four-hour workshop on "Advising Study Abroad Students on Culture and Sexual Orientation." This interactive session primarily focused on how to advise students on sexual orientation. The session was structured around topics such as cultural terms of sexual orientation, trends and characteristics of various world regions as well as safety and legal issues.

One of the main challenges is how to advise students accordingly regarding sexual orientation and sexuality. In some cultures, sexual orientation can be discussed openly in a public forum, but in other places this may be a difficult topic that is considered a highly private matter. This creates a unique challenge for an American study abroad student who wants to discuss his or her sexual orientation in a public manner – should one declare that one wants to be "out" or not? Can a student be "out" in the classroom, their home stay, in social situations of the host culture or even among their American peer group on the program, etc.? Presenters emphasized the need for support at the home campus as well as on-site. Even if a student goes to a country where sexual orientation has to be handled discreetly, a student should still be able to have the resources and know what kind of support system is available (for example, a local contact person if there is no local GLBT support group).

Another challenge for advisors is how to talk with students about sexual orientation and sexuality. One comment was the generational question between advisors and students when it comes to using appropriate (or inoffensive) language to address sexual orientation.

For example, referring to a student as a homosexual may be considered as a very technical (if not medical) term. In some cases, students may prefer to use the terms gay or queer to self-identify as a more encompassing and contemporary definition. In addition, participants discussed ways to make students feel comfortable to address these complex issues. For instance, case studies focused on topics such as coming out overseas, psychological assistance, problems in a home stay, police attitudes towards gays and lesbians, disagreements between American peers if one of them is gay and others raise moral issues, etc.

There were 29 participants in this session with advisors, researchers and professors from U.S. sending institutions as well as coordinators and program staff based overseas at program sites in Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia and Latin America. Workshop organizers and presenters included Paige Weting (Indiana University), J. Scott Van Der Meid (Brandeis University) and Bradley Rink (CIEE-USA), Loren Ringer (CIEE-France) and Eero Jesurun (CIEE-Spain).

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## **Regional NAFSA Session on Same Sex Marriage Issues and International Students and Scholars**

Submitted by: Kenjiro Tsuji, Northeastern University

The recent NAFSA Region XI conference in Boston included a session on same-sex marriage, entitled "Does Love Conquer All? Same-Sex Marriage and LGBT International Students." The session was co-chaired by Kenjiro Tsuji (Northeastern University) and Michael Welch (Harvard University). Presenters included Sheila Amirinazari (University of Massachusetts – Boston), Richard Iandoli (Law Office of Iandoli & Associates) and Michael Mahan (University of Massachusetts – Boston) and J. Scott Van Der Meid (Brandeis University).

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The session dealt with a hot button issue in American politics – same sex marriage laws. Specifically, the discussion was intended for school officials who advise LGBT international students and scholars who may be engaged in a bi-national relationship and potentially planning to get married in Massachusetts. The panel discussed how same-sex marriage applications may bring forward possible complications in the immigration status of students and scholars. On a practical level, advisors must be apprised of possible risks and strategies when this issue emerges. Other topics included: an overview of possible risks of same-sex marriage application for LGBT international students and scholars, introduction of alternative measures to keep a proper immigration status in the U.S. Some of the panellists also shared personal stories of the complexities on a more intimate level of being in a bi-national relationship.

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### **Update on SIG Meeting NAFSA Baltimore**

Submitted by: Jacqueline Bedard,  
Camosun College - British Columbia

The Rainbow SIG meeting in May at the NAFSA National Conference in Baltimore was well attended, including a heartfelt farewell presentation to Bo Keppel, an active member of the SIG for many years. Many of the SIG members wore uniquely created signature hat to honor Bo's tremendous support to the SIG and NAFSA over many young years. After last year's successful Rainbow SIG tenth anniversary reception, there was some concern among the SIG leadership on how we to repeat such a successful reception in Baltimore. The reception is a great networking and social event for NAFSA members who want to be more involved with current trends about sexual orientation in international relations. One such example is the upkeep of the SIG website for many resources and the biannual newsletter. Next year, at the

NAFSA annual conference in Seattle, SIG leadership is planning events to remember as well since we have our wonderful social coordinator located there, Peter Voeller.

### **ELECTIONS**

The meeting held leadership elections and here are the results for the newly elected (or re-elected) member:

Co-Chair: Jan Kieling  
Treasurer: Rick Russo  
Membership Coordinator: Susan Carty  
Newsletter Editor: Eero Jesurun  
Newsletter Co-Editor: Scott Van der Meid  
Listserv Manager: Daniel Soto  
Web Content Manager: James Daniel

### **NON ELECTED POSITIONS**

Web Manager: Kathleen Sideli

The SIG is a membership driven group and depends on volunteers to get active within the SIG! Please contact one of the two co-chairs if you would like to contribute or be more involved via their electronic addresses:

Terry Crouch  
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[kieling@berkeley.edu](mailto:kieling@berkeley.edu)

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*The Rainbow Special Interest Group of NAFSA Association of International Educators publishes the Rainbow Newsletter periodically.*