

## **Rainbow SIG Newsletter**

### **Volume 5, Number 2, Spring 1999**

These article appeared in the Spring 1999 edition of Lesbigan SIGnals.

- Different Perspectives on the Campus Environment
- Destination Denver!
- Stranger in Paradise
- NAFSA AIDS Quilt Panel at Indiana University Display
- Working with Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual International Students in the U.S.
- State of the Union
- Oregon Court Upholds Health Benefits for Partners of Gay Employees
- SIG website Usage and Proposals for Expansion

## **Different Perspectives on the Campus Environment**

*David Roseberry, Seattle Central Community College (Co-Chair, Lesbigan SIG)*

I opened our college newspaper the other day and was pleased to see two GLBT articles on the front page. The first covered a panel discussion that took place the week before, which included a transsexual lawyer who works locally and nationally with sexual minority issues; the founder of a local community housing project for gay seniors; and Colonel Grethe Camemeyer, whose story of serving in the American military is well-known by all. The next article discussed the college's GLBT student group, the Triangle Club, its new leadership and subsequent increase in membership. Both articles confirmed what I had always believed about our institution: Seattle Central invites and nurtures diversity. And not just at the college: Seattle as a whole provides an environment where GLBT students can find support and acceptance within the community.

So went my musings when two incidents jiggled the perfect rainbow image of my college. No major crises, no great confrontations, only subtle reminders of how the students I am here to serve may not feel the same way about our campus as I do.

The first happened while I was meeting friends at a bar a few weekends ago. I noticed one of our international students from Britain talking to a young woman, presumably another student. I went over to say 'hello' and realized that she was also a Seattle Central international student, from Taiwan. We talked for a while about school and other things. She finally confided in me on how relieved she was to have found another gay international student at the college that could relate to her circumstances. What an odd thing to say, I thought, considering how many gay students, staff and faculty members there are. Still, I understood. English was not her first language, and she dealt with the

same difficulties of meeting American students that most other international students do. But as the conversation ensued I was surprised to know that the British student was also very relieved to meet another gay international student he could talk to. His circumstances were quite different: his partner is a permanent resident and sponsored him to study in Seattle. Through him the student was connected to many different parts of the GLBT community. And despite that extra support, he still felt adrift in the college. My assumption that GLBT international students would easily find connections at the college proved untrue.

In the second situation, an instructor at our college came to me about a student, a man from Taiwan, whom he suspected was gay. He related this story: The instructor was facilitating a discussion in an ESL class – of which the Taiwanese student was a member—which gradually drifted to the topic of homosexual life. One of his student very fervently argued that the homosexual lifestyle was disgusting. He referred to gays as "sick", "in need of help" and "unnatural". The teacher came forward and said "I'm sorry, we do not speak that way in the classroom. I am a gay man and I do not consider that appropriate." The student recanted a bit and the discussion moved to other issues. Later, the instructor was riding the bus with the Taiwanese student. As he was getting off the bus, the student told the instructor that it was a very brave thing he did to confront the student in that way. The instructor explained that it was his obligation to speak out and try to change those attitudes. The student said, "I hope I will have that same courage myself someday."

I began to realize how mixed a message our international students were receiving at the college. On one side is an expanding GLBT student group and panels with prominent members of the GLBT community; on the other are fellow students firing angry homophobic epithets in class. Even the British student who has a personal network of his own was uncertain enough about the attitudes of his peers, advisors and instructors to disclose his sexuality.

And yet there was reason to hope. The Taiwanese woman was very encouraged to hear about the GLBT group on campus, and to learn that I was available to help her if she needed it. The ESL instructor, by deflecting the negative comments of one student, had likely allowed another student to feel more secure in his surroundings.

As luck would have it, I read Nadine Kato's excellent article in the *International Educator* "[Working with Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual International Students](#)", which outlines the most prominent issues confronting GLBT international students studying in the United States. She discusses their special needs, cultural and family issues, and the networks of support that most students rely on. Most importantly, though, she discusses how we as advisors can begin to create a supportive environment for our GLBT international students.

These two incidents and the information in Nadine's article made me realize that the mere fact of studying at a liberal campus may not put a GLBT international student at ease. I have begun to reexamine what role I as an advisor can play in bridging the gap

between the resources available in the college community and the GLBT international students we serve. The Denver conference ought to provide several opportunities for all of us to share information and ideas. Three GLBT sessions are planned (some of them Best of Region, I have heard), in addition to our annual meeting and a reception (location to be announced). Peter Voeller, SIG member and former chair, also suggested that we try a State of the Union address for the newsletter, but this could be a good subject for our meeting or informally at the reception, or even on the Rainbow list serve, where we share what GLBT special achievements, events or programs are going on at our campuses, particularly those which relate to our international students. By learning from each other, we can go far to enrich the experiences of our GLBT students in the United States.

For those of you interested in reading Nadine's article, it is connected to both the NAFSA homepage and the Lesbian SIG's web site. Click [here](#) to read it.

## **Destination Denver!**

*Susan Carty*

As you know, NAFSA is planning its 51st annual conference for May 23 to 28, 1999 in Denver. The conference will take place at the Colorado Convention Center and the Adam's Mark will serve as the headquarters hotel.

### **Accommodation**

A few SIG members will be staying at a B&B called Merritt House (phone 303-861-5230). Another place that has been recommended is the Queen Anne Inn (phone 303-296-6666).

### **SIG Business Meeting**

Please plan to attend our annual business meeting on Wednesday, May 26th at 1:45 p.m. Location has not yet been assigned, but it will be listed in the final conference program.

### **SIG Social Event**

Please join us on Wednesday evening, May 26th, at the Merritt House Bed and Breakfast Inn, 941 East 17th Avenue, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. Cash bar with hors d'oeuvres provided by the SIG. Come and mingle, then perhaps out to dinner or the bars.

### **Conference Program**

Among the hundreds of workshops and conference sessions to be offered at the

conference are two sessions of particular interest to SIG members. Please make note of session times and try to attend.

### **Coming Out: Help and Advice for any Adviser**

Wen., May 26, 8:00 to 9:15 a.m.

Best of Region VIII. This session will introduce the issues and needs of international students who are developing a gay/lesbian identity (including both counseling and legal issues) and provide resources which advisors can use. Case studies will look at the many facets which need to be addressed when an international student comes out to an advisor. Presenters and organizers are Bo Keppel (current Lesbiganay SIG co-chair) of East Stroudsburg University and Scott King of Old Dominion University. Gisela Nansteel of Lehigh University will chair.

### **Emerging out of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Mentality in Education Abroad**

Thur., May 27, 10:30 to 11:45 a.m.

By avoiding the complexities of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues in education abroad, we miss a tremendous educational opportunity for all of our students regardless of sexual orientation. This session will cover many GLBT issues of importance from recruitment to re-entry. Participants will leave with an action plan for changes in education abroad advising for all students. The session will be chaired by Carol Lebold, University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Presenters include Bo Keppel, East Stroudsburg University, J. Scott Van Der Meid, Boston University, Julie Trimpe, IES, Teri Heimer, St. Edwards University, and Joel Gallegos, University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Also, please make time to stop into the following poster session to learn more about all of NAFSA's SIGs.

### **Poster Session: Getting to Know NAFSA's Special Interest Groups (SIGs)**

Tues., May 25, 2:15 to 3:30 p.m.

This poster session will introduce NAFSAns to the wide variety of SIGs available to them. The SIGs have this opportunity to have on hand members who can speak about their SIG and written information explaining what activities the SIG has been engaged in. Lesbiganay SIG members are welcome to drop in. Also, check with Bo Keppel who is coordinating the representatives of the Lesbiganay SIG if you wish to be of assistance. Kathleen Sideli, former co-chair of the Lesbiganay SIG, is coordinating this poster session and has been pleased with the positive response from NAFSA and the other SIGs to this first-time event.

Regretfully, Nadine Kato, who was to have offered a session entitled 'Working with Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual International Students in the United States,' will not be able to attend the conference and the session has been canceled.

## General Denver

Check out live camera shots of Denver and the surrounding area on Channel 9's web site at <http://www.9news.com> or visit Denver's Convention & Visitors web site at <http://www.denver.org>.

## Stranger in Paradise

Anonymous

I often dreamed of going to study abroad and becoming a part of global gay community. I wanted to experience Western gay life so badly and meet somebody who could marry me as partner. When I look back now, however, the whole picture seems to be pretty pathetic. Recently I had a chance to talk about this particular topic with other Asian and Asian-American gay men. Why are there so many young gay Asians out there dating old White men? I don't know the answer yet, but, in my case, perhaps I was hungry for something different. Given the fact that the society I grew up is not tolerant of homosexuality, I was craving for liberty and self-affirmation. For me, those Western gay men were symbolizing freedom. I was desperate to get myself validated.

Around the time I finished undergraduate course, I was dating with an American man (he is still a good friend of mine) who has been working for a Japanese company as an intercultural trainer. At that time I was fascinated by encounters with diverse cultures through the volunteer work I did for international students. As the graduation drew near, I started to think about seriously working in the field of international education. I began participating in seminars about intercultural communication and reading related books and literatures. He was very encouraging me to pursue my personal goal. I still appreciate the fact that I had a chance to meet him in that crucial time of my life. He told me about the field, his job and his opinion about the field. Also around the same time, I met a Japanese woman who had graduated from Lesley College at one of the seminars I attended in Japan. When she told me about the Lesley program, I became very much interested and two weeks later, she sent me the information about the college. I applied for it and luckily got accepted to the program. I came to Boston in January 1998.

I felt very lonely at the beginning. To be honest, I was so disappointed with what I came to see. As almost everyone agrees, Boston is not known for friendliness. I was tired of going out and feeling even more miserable. I was picked up sometimes by old White guys at bars and went back to their apartments not being sure I was enjoying it or not. They make ignorant comments about my country, "Where is capital of Japan?", "Are there any gay people in Japan?", "Are there any gay bars in Japan?" and so on. They don't know and they don't care. Sure, the United States is the best country in the world, so why should they know about tiny island country in Far East? Their ignorance hurt and infuriated me at times. One time, when I was talking with a man at a bar. He seemed to be somewhat well educated (later he told me he was a graduate of Harvard Business School), pretty handsome, thirtysomething – I enjoyed talking with him and

everything was fine. Then he asked me about gays in Japan and I was explaining it to him. After listening to me, he said, "Oh, I'm glad I'm not Japanese! Sounds like pretty shitty place to live, doesn't it? No wonder you came to the US for study." I could not understand what he meant – what did he mean by "I'm glad I'm not Japanese"? His words echoed as if there is something wrong with being gay Japanese. His comment devastated me and I went home and cried in my room.

The landmark event for me was to participate in Boston Gay Pride Parade in July. I joined the team of Asian gay group. That was the first time to try to contact local Asian gay organization. That was really positive experience for me. Though the majority of Boston gay community is predominantly White, our team was marching on the street of Boston with a float decorated by all the flags of Asian nations, throwing packets of condoms at people. It was the first time for me to appear in public as a whole gay existence. I sensed enormous amount of freedom and validity. I danced with other Asians on the street. I walked on the street doing silly movements and that was fine. I remember I laughed so much. Even after that I went back to my everyday life and I have been dealing with my life as before, I was fortunate to have that one particular day.

Currently I have been conducting the research about gay Asians in Boston. This is the project for class, but I'm hoping to expand it into my thesis later. Through interviews and participant observations, I have just started to move toward what I call myself. My informants have told me their experience here in the US and some of the stories sounded painful – and I could relate to it. I'm hoping that this project would help me to look back where I come from, to sit through my anxiety and diffuse my rage against the mainstream society as well as the mainstream gay community. I feel that I have come long way so far and I still have been trying to find out myself. I don't know when this would end and when I become more comfortable with me. Sometimes I wonder I could be happier if I did not take the racial and cultural issues seriously. Some people called me agitated, too political, paranoid and taking everything too personally. I no longer care what they may think. What I know is that this is necessary process and I can do this only at this crucial moment in my life.

I have become able to get in touch with myself better largely due to the generous support from my current boyfriend Brian. He is one of my classmates and we began dating the last August. We have had many difficult moments and the experience we shared brought us much closer now. He has seen my struggles and understood my issues. For the first time in my life, I feel myself so accepted and incorporated into someone's life. I do not foresee the future of our relationship, but we both hope that someday we can get over all the obstacles lying ahead and have a meaningful life together. Ever since I came here, I have gone through many changes both externally and internally. It is still going to be challenging and I will continue to feel vulnerable, but I have become more aware and a little more tougher than I used to be. My experience in the US has taught me a lot and I wish more people, either straight or gay or whatever they may be, would find the value of transcultural learning experience.

# NAFSA AIDS Quilt Panel at Indiana University Display

*Kathleen Sideli*

On February 14, SIG members Susan Carty and Tony Ogden, who was visiting from Japan, and I attended the opening ceremony of a display of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt on the Indiana University campus. We were taken by surprise to hear the name of Paul Krueger, a former SIG member, followed by the names of other NAFSAns, such as Kevin Schieffer and Robert Mashburn, and friends of NAFSAns.



It turned out that the NAFSA panel was part of the 400-panel display so the names on it formed part of the list of those remembered throughout the three-day display in Bloomington attended by 4,500 people. I had requested the panels I had made for two friends, Gregg Hay and Scott Davidson, but since their names were also on the NAFSA panel which the SIG submitted to the NAMES Project after the 1996 NAFSA conference in Phoenix, the NAFSA panel was automatically included in the Bloomington display.

The three of us were honored to be in the presence of the NAFSA panel and to bear witness to the names placed there by the many NAFSAns who attended the 1996 Phoenix display. Our colleagues, friends and loved ones were remembered together, once again.

The Quilt continues to serve as the most successful device for AIDS education on college campuses where many, unfortunately, feel some of the pressure off now that new medications are prolonging the lives of individuals with HIV. The distinctive and celebratory panels silently convey the richness of each life lost in the ongoing epidemic and the tremendous love which endures among those they left behind.



Jeff Hoffman, co-chair of the host committee, commented during the closing ceremony that the display "helped us capture and renew memories of friends, loved ones and strangers. For those who have stitched and pieced these panels together, this is not a final parting but a recognition that there's a lot of love in these panels."

To see an image of the NAFSA

panel, go to the [NAMES Project web site](http://www.aidsquilt.org) (www.aidsquilt.org) and search the 'List of Names Searchable Image Database' using the key word 'NAFSA'.

## **Working with Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual International Students in the U.S.**

*Nadine Kato*

Many of us have been socialized to be uncomfortable with homosexuality and, by extension, with gay, lesbian, and bisexual people. The first step towards recognizing our own discomfort is to assess our attitudes towards homosexuality. It is important to know how willing we are to deal with gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues, and at what level we are willing to get involved with our GLB students. Are we best able to present a booklet of GLB resource information in orientation packets and refer students to those resources, or are we willing to work with the GLB resource center and with students to create educational programs and international GLB support groups?

After getting a sense of your attitudes, evaluate the university's commitment to support GLB people, including students, faculty and staff. As a whole, does the university acknowledge and support the existence of GLB people on campus? The following questions, adapted from a list prepared by Evans and Wall (1991), will help.

- Does the campus have GLB student organizations supported by student government funds?
- Does the campus counseling center have GLB support groups?
- Does the campus have a GLB faculty/staff association?
- Does the curriculum include courses on GLB history and culture?
- Does the institution's affirmative action statement include sexual orientation?
- Does the campus minority affairs office deal with sexual orientation issues?
- Does the student handbook or conduct code include a clear statement prohibiting harassment and discrimination of minorities and GLB people?
- Does the housing office grant room changes on the basis of sexual orientation or must danger to the resident be demonstrated?
- Does my professional or student staff include openly GLB people?
- Does our office have a strong commitment to treat all people equally? Is this as evident with our GLB populations as it is with other minorities?
- Are GLB colleagues encouraged to bring their significant others or partners to office or campus social events?

If you do not know the answers to some of these questions, do some investigation. If the answers are negative, explore the idea of making a few changes on campus.

After assessing yourself and your institution, the next step is to learn about GLB issues, both in the United States and around the world. GLB sensitivity training, GLB resource centers, conferences, books and some websites are excellent sources of information. A

book, video, and web resource list devoted to international GLB information is available from the author.

Student respondents offer a variety of ideas for how ISAs can be more supportive.

- At orientation, provide all new students with a campus GLB resource guide and announce that the ISA office is open to discussion of GLB issues.
- Create a "safe" environment by displaying GLB resource materials, books, posters, and pink triangles or "safe space" signs.
- Do not assume heterosexuality in conversations with students.
- Offer sensitivity training on GLB issues for ISA staff.
- Offer support and advice on immigration for GLB people whose partners are U.S. citizens. Provide support and referrals to students from home countries where homosexuality is illegal or the environment is dangerous for GLB people. Political asylum is sometimes granted by the United States, Canada, and some European countries on this basis.
- Sponsor educational opportunities, such as international GLB discussion groups, forums, seminars, and films.

How should you respond to a student who approaches you to discuss sexual identity? Besner and Spungin (1995) offer the following guidelines:

- Do not act surprised when someone comes out to you. They have decided that you can be trusted.
- Deal with students' feelings first. Most gay and lesbian people who are just coming out feel alone, afraid, and guilty. You can help by listening and allowing them to unburden themselves.
- Be supportive. Explain that many people have struggled with homosexuality. Acknowledge that dealing with one's sexuality is difficult. Keep the door open for further conversations and assistance.
- Assess the student's knowledge of homosexuality. Replace misinformation with knowledge. Don't assume that gays and lesbians who are just coming out know a lot about homosexuality. We have all been exposed to myths and stereotypes, so it is helpful to provide clarification.
- Use nonjudgmental, all-inclusive language in your discussion. Pay attention to verbal and nonverbal cues from the students. Do not label or categorize.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Reexamine your own biases so as to remain a neutral source of information and support.
- Know when and where to seek help. Know the referral agencies and counselors on campus and in your area.

Besner and Spungin add that the most important thing to remember is to "accept the individual as a total human being – do not limit your interest to his or her sexual orientation."

International students who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual have a number of unique issues that may surface during their time in the United States. Informed international student advisers are in an excellent position to support these students and help them deal with their concerns. Let students know they are welcome to discuss personal issues with you, and refer them to other resources when appropriate. Finally, a reentry program can help students make a smooth transition back to the home country.

*Editor's Note: Complete article, including references, can be found on NAFSA's web site at <http://www.nafsa.org> under Publications, International Educator, Fall/Winter 1999 Issue.)*

## **State of the Union**

*Editor's Note: On the suggestion of Peter Voeller, SIG members were invited to send summaries of what's going on concerning glbt issues around the country.*

### **Ohio University**

*Kyle McKenzie*

In 1997-98, Ohio University created the GLBT Task Force to study the needs of GLBT students. At the time the task force began its work, there were no services on campus for GLBT students. As a result of the Report of the Task Force, a part-time "Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender Program Coordinator" position has been created, and the coordinator, Laura Harrison, has been given an office in the student center. Some of the projects which she has set into motion include the formation of the "GLBT Advisory Committee" and the "Residence Life Ally Group", both of which were recommended by the Task Force Report. In addition, a GLBT Resource Library has been started. I represented the Office of International Student & Faculty Services on the GLBT Task Force, and I am now a member of the GLBT Advisory Committee.

### **The University of Washington**

*Peter Voeller*

There was a statement from the president of the University acknowledging and supporting the Lesbigan student organization. The current president is very supportive of gay and lesbian rights, but the other university administrators are not, sort of like Clinton and the Republicans...

Anti-gay vandalism in the dormitories prompted a forum and discussion of whether or not there should be a 'Gay Bisexual Lesbian Transgendered-friendly floor'. Some felt this was separatist thinking and others thought it was timely.

State Representative Ed Murray, the Legislature's only openly gay representative, came to the UW to talk about the new domestic partnership bill that he's trying to introduce. The bill would extend bereavement and sick leave to state employees who are

registered domestic partners. Locally, Microsoft and the city of Seattle already recognize domestic partners and extends them the same benefits as it does for employee spouses. There was an issue about whether partners could get spouse passes at the campus gym and it was decided that they could.

I talked to a local gay Activist who's on the Seattle Police Commission's Sexual Minorities Advisory Council with me. Our Police Chief meets monthly with an advisory council representing different community groups, and 'sexual minorities' is one of them, along with African American, Filipino, Hispanic, homeless and disenfranchised communities among others. He has been around since Stonewall times and is a wealth of history and information of the old days. "I remember when I knew all the gay folk in the Pacific Northwest and when the Dorian Club was the only support group." I asked him about the 'name' issue and it's his opinion that we should just use one word, 'gay' for everyone...so the beat goes on...

## **Oregon Court Upholds Health Benefits for Partners of Gay Employees**

*Courtney Leatherman*

A state appeals court last month ruled that three lesbian workers at Oregon Health Sciences University were entitled to health benefits for their partners. The ruling is being described as a "milestone" that may give more rights to gay employees.

The decision stemmed from a 1992 lawsuit filed by Christine A. Tanner, Barbara J. Limandri, and Regenia M. Phillips. Ms. Tanner and Ms. Limandri are faculty members in nursing and Ms. Phillips is a supervisor in pharmacy services.

The three women were each involved in long-term relationships, owning homes with their partners and, in the case of Ms. Tanner and her partner, rearing children together. Still, the university had said that the women's partners were not eligible for coverage under the state health plan because it excluded benefits for unmarried domestic partners.

The decision by a unanimous three-judge panel upheld a 1996 lower-court ruling that found that while the university had not intended to discriminate against homosexuals, its policies had that "undeniable effect."

Writing for the panel, Judge Jack L. Landau said that the university's argument – that its health plan was the same for all married couples, regardless of their sexuality – "misses the point." He explained, "Homosexual couples may not marry. Accordingly, the benefits are not made available on equal terms." The court's decision said that gays and lesbians are entitled to constitutional protection from discrimination on the basis of their

sexual orientation. The court further held that the state statute prohibiting sex discrimination covers sexual orientation – the first appellate court in the country to make such a ruling, said Carl G. Kiss, the lawyer for the plaintiffs.

Kristen Grainger, executive assistant to Oregon's Attorney General, Hardy Myers, noted that even before the appellate court had ruled, Oregon had voluntarily begun providing health benefits to the domestic partners of public employees. In 1995, the university became a private entity, and it now also provides health coverage to employees' domestic partners. The university has said it will not appeal.

*Copyright 1999, The Chronicle of Higher Education. Reprinted with permission. This article may not be posted, published, or distributed without permission from The Chronicle.*

## **SIG Website Usage & Proposals for Expansion**

*Susan Carty*

Colleagues around the globe continue to tell us that the SIG's web site is an excellent resource. The numbers of 'hits' on the site indicate that the most accessed materials are the bibliography and several of the advising resources.

While we are pleased that this is the case, there have been several suggestions regarding expansion. You may have other ideas as well.

1. A colleague working for a study abroad program overseas contacted us expressing an interest in improving the resources and content of their on-site orientation program to include information for gay, lesbian, and bisexual students. Of particular interest would be information on cultural adjustment, advice for finding, relating to, and learning about gay, lesbian, or bisexual communities in a different country, and ways to deal with challenges and frustrations of being homosexual or bisexual in a culture that is socially conservative about sexual orientation.
2. Another colleague suggests that we create a student-focused link on the site, with a section for international student information and resources and a section for study abroad students. For the study abroad page we might include bibliographical resources for students to access before and after study abroad, as well as a page with student quotes and experiences. Study abroad offices could include this website in their materials for students to directly access information that is student-focused.

So, your assignment (and you had better accept it!) is to help us to identify materials to be added to the site. We'd also like to hear your ideas. My contact information is as follows:

Susan Carty, Newsletter Editor  
Office of International Programs  
Franklin Hall, Room 311  
Indiana University  
Bloomington, Indiana 47405  
phone: (812) 855-7557  
fax: (812) 855-6452  
e-mail: [scarty@indiana.edu](mailto:scarty@indiana.edu)