

# UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO

Chancellor's Committee on the Status of  
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues

## **Annual Report for 2008-2009** **Francesca Gaiba and Bernard Santarsiero, Co-Chairs**

During the 2008-2009 academic year, the CCSLGBTI continued to follow elements of a Strategic Plan that was generated in 2006 by the CCSLGBTI and other LGBT entities on- and off-campus. Implemented during the fall semester of 2006, the Strategic Plan dictated a new committee substructure with five active members serving as chairs of five sub-committees. We continued to work on the committee as a whole, but discussions were focused around the tasks of the designated sub-committees, to more efficiently achieve our goals. Dr. Bernie Santarsiero continued as co-chair during the 2008-09 year, and Dr. Francesca Gaiba joined him as the new co-chair.

The Finance sub-committee continued the work they began last year, and once again distributed employee payroll deduction cards to encourage donations to the CCSLGBTI scholarship fund. The CCSLGBTI hosted the annual scholarship competition through the Scholarship Association at UIC, and awarded one scholarship to undergraduate student James Wronski and a second to graduate student Amy Brainer. Liz Thomson, Interim Director of the Gender and Sexuality Center, and Dr. Santarsiero continued to represent UIC in the formation of a Chicago area College/University GLBT Alumni organization, "Out Alumni in Chicago."

The CCSLGBTI co-sponsored the Lavender Lunch series organized by Dr. John D'Emilio, Department of Gender and Women's Studies. The previous year we co-sponsored a one-day Lavender Research Forum, and the CCSLGBTI is considering alternating between the Lavender Lunch series and the Lavender Research Forum in subsequent years. Both events are intended for faculty, postdoctoral fellows, and undergraduate and graduate students conducting LGBT research to present their research, exchange ideas and information, and receive feedback from peers.

Through the work of the Research & Scholarship sub-committee, three applications were submitted last year for supporting an LGBT research seed fund: one is pending, one was declined, and one was funded. The one that was funded was by the David Bohnett Foundation, in the amount of \$20,000. This has led to the creation of an LGBT Seed Fund, to be awarded to faculty and graduate students conducting LGBT research. During the academic year there were two rounds of competition, one in the fall semester and one in the spring. During the fall competition, just over \$6,000 was awarded to the three recipients; PhD candidates Jessica Salerno and Zachary Blair, and faculty member Dr. Stacey Horn. With the help of Anthony Halford and the Office for the Vice Chancellor for Research, the second round was held in the spring semester. This second round of seed grants funded six projects, using the rest of the \$20,000 grant for the year. This round saw twice as many applicants as the first round, and the applications were stronger in this round. The spring seed grant recipients were Ph.D. candidates Christine Holland and Mona Noriega, and faculty members Dr. Colleen Corte, Dr. Peter Ji, Dr. Brian Mustanski, and Dr. James Swartz. Our next step is to collect reports from the funded investigators, and resubmit to the David Bohnett Foundation to request additional

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funding. This has the possibility of being funded for up to three years, and Dr Brian Mustanski is leading these efforts.

Last year, the CCSLGBTI focused its attention on issues concerning LGBT research and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process for review and approval of research protocols. Based on a meeting with campus LGBT researchers and several salient incidents, it was increasingly evident to our committee that there were conflicts and misunderstanding by the IRB that may have been delaying the approval of research needed to improve the health of the LGBT population (e.g. misunderstanding the difference between populations that are vulnerable to health issues relative to the IRB sense of “vulnerable” due to diminished autonomy, or concerns about how research on LGBT people might be perceived by non-research participants). This year, Drs. Gaiba, Mustanski, and Santarsiero met with representatives from the Office for the Protection of Human Subjects to discuss some of the issues related to IRB review of LGBT research protocols. CCSLGBTI members Dr. Brian Mustanski and Dr. Stacey Horn were appointed to one of the IRB review committees, and having them on the IRB has helped in solving some of the previous problems.

The CCSLGBTI had appointed Dr. Stacey Horn as our representative to the campus-wide Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC), acting as a liaison between the CCSLGBTI and the DAC. This is a natural extension of one of our goals to increase the number of LGBT individuals on campus in faculty and staff positions, promote greater awareness of LGBT issues on campus, and to foster a more tolerant, cohesive, and diverse campus climate in all aspects of race, gender, ethnicity, disability, etc. One of the benefits of the DAC is the opportunity to have all the different Chancellor’s Committees and layers of diversity working and collaborating together. Dr. Horn brought the CCSLGBTI Strategic Plan to one of the DAC meetings and reported to us that everyone at the meeting was very impressed by it. The DAC is continuing to discuss the idea of organizing more/bigger/combined diversity events.

The CCSLGBTI was visited from a subcommittee from the Master Plan Advisory Committee, as well as members from the Diversity Strategic Thinking and Planning Committee, both of whom solicited our feedback on their mission and our input as to this university needs to be more inclusive and friendly towards issues of diversity.

This year members of the CCSLGBTI worked towards creating a mission and a vision for the new director of the Gender and Sexuality Center. While the search is still pending, our committee continues to stay involved in the discussions related to the director search, and possibly a new vision for the Gender and Sexuality Center.

Throughout the academic year, CCSLGBTI co-sponsored several events: October Heritage month, organized by the Gender and Sexuality Center; the event “AIDS Activism Before HIV & Understanding the FDA Policy;” an event showcasing the truth of mental illness called “Erasing the Distance: The People I Know” organized by the Disability Resource Center; the annual Council on Contemporary Families Conference; “Visibility Matters,” an event showcasing UIC as the only institution in the state of Illinois to receive a grade of A on the report evaluating the presence and inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in Illinois institutions of higher education accredited to prepare teachers; and the Office of Women’s Affairs annual “Women’s Leadership Symposium.”

The funding of student group events was again a high priority for the Chancellor’s Committee. We encourage them to organize their own events to learn leadership skills, and foster personal growth and individual pride. We co-sponsored four undergraduate student leaders from the undergraduate LGBT student organization UIC Pride to attend the Midwest Bisexual, Lesbian,

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Gay, Transgender and Ally Collegiate Conference, and we were able to support UIC Pride in our co-sponsorship of their first solo big event organized at UIC, entitled “Eat it All: A Queer Feast of Diversity.” We also co-sponsored a trip of students through the student organization Alternative Spring Break, to travel to Philadelphia and work for a week to prepare and deliver meals to residents of the city living with HIV/AIDS, the registration and costs of having a float in this summer’s Chicago Pride Parade for a group of individuals representing UIC. And for the second year, we agreed to co-sponsor various events during the summer as outreach to Chicago LGBT youth.

Teri Blain, a Human Resource Specialist from the Vice Chancellor for Human Resources office, has been attending our meetings as a Special Liaison from HR. Teri has been organizing a diversity conference. The proposed diversity conference is being planned for next fall or early next spring, and will include a full day agenda with the goal of making it an annual event, with hopes of it growing each consecutive year. The conference hopes to incorporate presentations from the Office of Access and Equity and Human Resources that could be geared to LGBT faculty and staff (for example “Understanding Domestic Partnership Benefits”), as well as sessions for non-LGBT staff on campus to train them on LGBT issues (as they related to Human Resources, for example). The conference could then become a model for other UIC diversity groups to create better training and more awareness on campus about issues that relate to the populations they serve. Eventually, a common diversity conference could be organized, with common panels and break-out session. The CCSLGBTI looks forward to continuing to plan this conference and working to see its execution next year.

The CCSLGBTI issued a statement of support and endorsement for a proposal presented by Dr. Philip Royster, Director of the African-American Cultural Center, and Professor in the English and African-American Studies departments. His proposal, entitled “Faculty Institute: Preparing Instructors for Educating in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” would be a series of continuing education sessions for faculty at UIC to increase their awareness of diversity inside and outside the classroom.

The third annual Rainbow Banquet and Lavender Graduation Ceremony, organized by the Gender and Sexuality Center, was again co-sponsored by the CCSLGBTI this year. We were able to help subsidize the cost of the banquet. The event included both the CCSLGBTI annual scholarship award ceremony and the graduation ceremony for LGBTQ graduates. The keynote speaker at the graduation ceremony was author Dorothy Allison. The ceremony was held in the Illinois Room in the Student Center East, with the reception following at Jak’s Tap. The CCSLGBTI scholarship recipients were recognized, and each of the graduates received a “Rainbow Diploma,” rainbow tassel, and other gifts. Each year this event continues to grow and become more visible, with more LGBT graduates walking, more people attending the event, and more prestigious keynote speakers. The Rainbow Banquet and Lavender Graduation was, once again, a wonderful way to close out a very busy and successful year, and we will continue with the tradition again next year.

The year closed with the nomination for new co-chair Dr. Patrick Robinson, to replace outgoing co-chair Dr. Santarsiero. Dr. Robinson was a valuable member to the CCSLGBTI this year and we look forward to him and Dr. Gaiba heading up the CCSLGBTI in the 2009-10 year.

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