

Chancellor's Committee on the Status of LGBT Issues

Minutes from August 25, 2009

In attendance: Scott Boots, Amy Brainer, Brent Braveman, Tina Copeland, Melanie D'Andrilli, Francesca Gaiba, Trevor Gates, Jacqueline Leskovec, Lisl Heymans Paul, Bernie Santarsiero, Matt Slomka, Liz Thomson, Nick Webster, David Weible, James Young, and Lauren Yurman.

I. Welcome and Introductions

1. All CCSLGBTI meeting attendees were welcomed by co-chairs Francesca Gaiba and Scott Boots to the first meeting of the academic year, and all attendees introduced themselves.

II. Budget Update

1. We have not yet received the official budget for the year, but based on previous years we have estimated it to be approximately \$19,000, with approximately \$8,200 being used as a payment for the Graduate Assistant (salary for academic year and for half of 2009 summer). The rest of the budget will be spent on co-sponsorships and any supplies for the committee. If any new members are curious as to how the budget was spent in previous year, they can let one of the co-chairs or the GA know, and be provided with previous budgets.

III. New Business

1. All CCSLGBTI official members as well as regularly attending non-official members will receive a binder at the September meeting, which will include a contact list for members, the committee by-laws, and other important CCSLGBTI documents.

Co-chair Francesca explained the distinction of official members and non-official members. She explained that official members are those chosen from a nomination list we submit every year to the Chancellor. Anyone who is not officially part of the committee is still welcome to attend and participate.

2. Chancellor Paula Allen-Meares plans to attend a CCSLGBTI meeting in September or October and the committee needs to prepare for that meeting. We need to make a list of previous committee accomplishments as well as future goals for the committee.

During the conversation, Francesca clarified the difference between the CCSLGBTI and the GSC: the CCSLGBTI is about policy and advocacy, and bringing issues to the attention of the university and the Chancellor, and the GSC works more directly with students and outreach, programs and activities.

It was decided to look at our past annual reports, which are available on the CCSLGBTI website (<http://www.uic.edu/depts/quic/ccslgbi/>), in order to create a highlight list of past accomplishments. Some members in attendance brought up what they believed to be the most important CCSLGBTI accomplishments: education to members of the UIC IRB about LGBTQ issues and terminology, and

the eventual appointment of CCSLGBTI members Brian Mustanski and Stacey Horn to the IRB; being awarded research grants from the David Bohnett Foundation; previous Domestic Partner Benefits advocacy work by past Gender and Sexuality Center Director, Dr. Patrick Finnessy.

Bernie Santarsiero, previous CCSLGBTI co-chair, mentioned the previous Lavender Research Forum as an accomplishment, and its continuation as a goal for this year.

When the Domestic Partner Benefits were discussed, new member Matt Slomka talked about his personal struggle with the strict and somewhat unfair rules, which do not allow him to add his partner on his university insurance plan. There is a rule in place that a couple has to be together for one year in order to both qualify for benefits, and this rule is not in place for heterosexual couples.

GSC interim director Liz Thomson discussed the Domestic Partner benefits available to UIC students through Campus Care, which were created last year. In order to apply for this, students have to go through an application with Liz. There were five students last year, and three last summer, who participated in these benefits. When Liz followed up with the students, the response was positive about their experience with Campus Care Domestic Partner benefits.

New member James Hual Young also spoke about his personal experience with having his partner on his insurance. He is angry that he is being taxed more than heterosexual people are, and was not told before he enrolled about the high amount of taxes that would be taken out of his monthly paychecks.

Through this passionate discussion, members realized it was a clear problem that this information is not being disseminated well enough, and that the domestic partner benefit system is not equal. Matt Slomka spoke of the importance of getting this information out to individual departments, and trying to find an HR contact in each department to get this information to.

3. The conversation shifted to issues the committee wanted to focus on this upcoming year, and transgender issues were one of the main issues. While the word transgender is included in the acronym LGBT, trans people's experiences and levels of discrimination and oppression may be different from LGB people, and the Committee feels it's necessary to learn more and act accordingly.

One topic to work on would be gender-neutral bathrooms on the UIC campus. This would also be of benefit to people with children, and those who are disabled. Former CCSLGBTI member Jacob Mueller has been working on this issue and has said he is willing to write up a document updating on the actions and progress that has been made in regards to this issue. It was suggested we also try to collaborate with other Chancellor's Committees on this issue.

Liz Thomson spoke about the GSC hiring a few student workers in the near future, whose work will be focused on transgender issues. Liz agreed to ask the few transgender students that she knows, to come and share their suggestions and ideas with our committee, to help give us an idea of what is important to them and what areas we can help. Amy Brainer also suggested a few other transgender issues we could take on: education of healthcare providers; medical needs and advocating for transitioning needs paid for through insurance; finding out what the campus housing policy is.

4. The issue of gay men not being able to donate blood was brought up and Bernie explained the CCSLGBTI previous fight with the university on this issue. Matt suggested this issue be taken further up, but Bernie said that he believed this university would not ever officially make that kind of stand, even though they have said they do not agree with the federal regulation. Maybe the issue needs to be addressed by partnering with a national organization outside of UIC that can lobby for policy change.
5. The CCSLGBTI has five sub-committees, and some time was spent reviewing each sub-committee and their responsibilities, and talking about future issues to focus on within the sub-committees. In one to two weeks, co-chairs Scott and Francesca will contact all members either through phone or e-mail and ask which sub-committee each member is interested in joining. Ideally we would have people meet with their sub-committees monthly either through e-mail or in person, and then come to the next CCSLGBTI meeting and report back to the committee at large about what they have done. If this is not feasible, then it was also mentioned that the beginnings of each CCSLGBTI meeting be dedicated for working within the sub-committees. Members are asked to think about big goals but also to think small and come up with attainable goals that can be reasonably reached by the end of this year.

The idea of forming a sub-committee focused on working on transgender issues was discussed, and several people stated their interest.

Francesca updated on the Research and Scholarship sub-committee, which also consists of Brian Mustanski and Jennifer Brier. They recently re-applied for the seed grant through the David Bohnett Foundation and are now waiting to hear back from the foundation. If they are denied the grant, they plan to write grants and apply for other possibilities.

6. Liz Thomson presented a co-sponsorship request for \$2000 from the CCSLGBTI, for October Heritage Month, which includes the opening keynote, National Coming Out Day luncheon, LGBTQ Youth Homelessness Panel, Transgender Economics Panel Discussion, and a Queer Knowledge Bowl. Due to the time, members were given the information about the request and asked to think it over and vote via e-mail.
7. The October GSC event, Transgender Economics Panel Discussion, overlaps with the time set for the CCSLGBTI monthly October meeting. This is an important event that our members should try to attend, so it is possible that the CCSLGBTI would try to move the meeting to a different day and time so that people can attend the Transgender event. More specific details on the meeting switch will be e-mailed when further information is available.

The next CCSLGBTI meeting will be on September 22nd, from 3:30 – 4:45PM at the Agape House, 809 W. Roosevelt Road