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Chancellor's Campus-Wide Task Force on Sexual Orientation

Final Report
April 16, 1987

Submitted by:
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Not part of the Task Force report itself.

Mailed 4/27/87

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. -- Chancellor Thomas E. Everhart of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign released the following statement Monday (April 27):

"The Campuswide Task Force on Sexual Orientation, which I appointed in February 1986, has submitted its final report to me. The report includes objective and persuasive documentation about the campus climate for students, faculty and staff of minority sexual orientation.

"The Task Force conducted a survey of persons self-identified to be gay or lesbian. The results showed that a very substantial majority of such individuals believe that being open about their sexual orientation adversely affects their chances for success.

"In a separate survey conducted among a random sample of students, faculty and staff, a substantial majority of respondents report having heard anti-homosexual comments. A considerable number of incidents of harassment or verbal threats also were reported.

"Approximately three-fourths of the random sample, and all of the select sample, support grievance procedures to protect gay and lesbian individuals from harassment and discrimination.

"All individuals enrolled at or employed by this campus deserve an environment free from harassment in order to live with dignity, and to study, to learn and to work with maximum effectiveness.

The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois adopted the following resolution on Sept. 29, 1978:

"Resolved by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois that it reaffirms its commitment and policy (a) to eradicate prohibited and invidious discrimination in all its forms; (b) to foster programs within the law which will ameliorate or eliminate, where possible, the effects of historic societal discrimination; and (c) to comply fully in all university activities and programs with applicable federal and state laws relating to nondiscrimination and equal opportunity."

(MORE--Everhart Statement)

Actual report begins on next page.

Everhart Statement----2

"In the spirit of that policy, and based upon the information I have received from the Campuswide Task Force on Sexual Orientation, I am proposing the following policy for this campus:

" 'All individuals enrolled at or employed by this campus shall be entitled to freedom from invidious discrimination and harassment, whether or not prohibited by law, regardless of their race, color, sex, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, age, or handicap, except as specifically exempted by law. It is University policy to comply fully with all state and federal laws. Existing campus complaint and grievance procedures may be used when discrimination or harassment in any of these categories is perceived to have occurred.'

"I have consulted with the Chancellor's Cabinet and the Senate Council, which have endorsed this policy in principle. The Student Government Association and the Conference on Conduct Governance are on record as supporting such a policy. I shall ask that the policy be incorporated in the Code on Campus Affairs, the Academic Staff Handbook, the Campus Administrative Manual and other appropriate campus codes and guidelines.

"The Task Force also recommended steps to be taken for the education of the campus community on this issue. I agree that such steps should be taken. I believe, however, that sexual orientation is only one aspect of the problems of harassment and discrimination we face as a campus and as a society. Recent evidence of the breadth of this problem includes racial incidents on other campuses, as well as the results of the sexual harassment survey conducted here. Before the end of the semester, I will name and provide support for a Chancellor's Council to Combat Discrimination, to counter invidious discrimination in all its forms."

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Appendix IV: Letter from Don Dripps of the College of Law

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Campus-Wide Task Force on Sexual Orientation was charged by the Chancellor to "investigate and document" the campus climate as it exists for gays and lesbians, and recommend "a process of social education to improve conditions on this campus for members of the gay and lesbian community." To fulfill this charge two separate surveys were developed to measure the perception of discrimination as well as actual knowledge of harassment and discrimination against gays and lesbians. One survey was distributed randomly to 5% of the following groups; sophomores, juniors, seniors, faculty/academic staff and nonacademic staff. Another survey was distributed to gay and lesbian individuals who requested one.

The existence of discrimination against gays and lesbians was documented in the data from both surveys. In addition, it is evident from the data collected that the UIUC campus climate is one in which both fear and ignorance exist.

The task force also did an assessment of current educational programs and services available on this campus to address sexual orientation issues. Units within the Student Affairs Division were contacted for input as well as Gay and Lesbian Illini which has a directory of services and programs available. It was concluded that, although efforts are being made there exists no systematic, comprehensive organization of these programs to educate the community about gay and lesbian issues and that the services to gays and lesbians also need coordination.

Additionally, thirteen universities were surveyed to gather information on policy options barring discrimination based on sexual orientation. Eight of the thirteen institutions have operational policies; two have Presidential Statements. The California system, the New York system, and five of the Big Ten schools have institutional policies barring discrimination based on sexual orientation. Harvard also has a formal institutional policy enacted in November 1986. The University of Michigan and Cornell have Presidential Statements that have the force of institutional policy. Only these schools, Purdue, Indiana and Northwestern do not have policies covering discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Legal opinion was sought on a local level to investigate any potential problem with enacting a policy. There appears to be nothing to preclude this institution from enacting a policy, and little evidence exists to support the contention that such a policy would put the university at a high risk for law suits.

Based on all the evidence collected, the Campus-Wide Task Force on Sexual Orientation recommends:

EDUCATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1) That a full-time permanent academic professional be hired within the Office of Academic Affirmative Action to coordinate programs and strategies for making the campus

community aware of and accepting of the broad range of diversity within this community. The three specific areas of concern where efforts would be directed are sexual orientation, sexism and racism.

- 2) That a committee be appointed to advise this individual as well as to continually monitor the development of programs.
- 3) That efforts be made to hire an openly lesbian or gay individual to fill this position.

Policy Recommendations

- 1) That a policy be enacted at the UIUC campus that prohibits discrimination based on "sexual orientation."
- 2) That this policy be comprehensive, covering faculty, staff and students.
- 3) That this policy must be specific and include the words "sexual orientation."
- 4) That grievance procedures be specified in consultation with Campus Legal Counsel, Academic Affirmative Action and Nonacademic Affirmative Action.

- 5) That this policy be consistently and accurately publicized within the university community.

The majority of task force members support Board of Trustees action addressing this issue.