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Reasons we need a GLBT Center

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Reasons we need a GLBT Center

- **Visibility:** having a place where a new student, or any student, knows exactly where to go to: feel safe, seek resources and information, support, how to find student groups and outside groups, any information they need. . problems with housing (if a glbt student is having a problem with their roommate, they may not feel comfortable going to housing because they are not sure about who they should talk to and if that person will understand and be open to them) Invisibility: where we are now, we DO NOT want to be here anymore, it's invalidating, it's like we don't exist. It's like taking every single fraternity and sorority house away and saying that the Greek system is "visible" because we have Tom Doughan. Having a full-time staff person will NOT make glbt issues or the glbt community on campus visible. Settling for a staff person will satisfy the president's office and administration and fool them into thinking "they have done something for glbt issues at URI" GlaSS started running late this year, it made things confusing for incoming students to find glbt resources, and it's not fair to put this burden on students. Sometimes G L a S S members are unable to keep the office open, need a place that is guaranteed to be open
- **Staff** ... not students!! One or two, maybe a director and a coordinator, student secretary to save funds. Most glbt centers have a director, assistant director and an office manager. We need a place to put these people. If they are placed in other departments, the sense of community is not the same. An actual center is going to provide a strong sense of community and will be more glbt team oriented
- **Resources** . Budget, information (all kinds, contacting groups from all over the world and receiving packets, flyers, books, films, teaching tools, materials for classes, workshops, how to deal with certain situations). Organization of a webpage providing the URI community, and the world, with information about glbt issues. UCLA's center's website provides information and definitions of transgender people; most members of G L a S S don't even know the proper definition of "transgender". It would be extremely beneficial for a website like this to exist to make students more comfortable about seeking information about glbt people. Schedules of events can also be posted
- **Consistency** ... student organizations are unable to provide this because they are run by students who have to deal with school, work, and their own issues. What happens if there is a low number of students in the group but there are a large number of glbt students at URI, the center still needs to be present to offer educational resources for heterosexual students, faculty. Different students are involved every year. Activity in groups is a result of motivation, energy, numbers of students, resources, time, budget etc
- **Safe Space**. The G L a S S office IS a safe space, but it is in the basement of another building that isn't necessarily a safe space. It is hard to find the office if you don't already know where it is. There are some buildings that are supposed to be "safe spaces", like the multicultural center, but every person that walks into that building may or may not be homophobic. A glbt person who goes into the MCC feels semi-safe depending on the situation, but still feels like an outsider. A minority in a different Minority. No sense of "I belong here", even though it's a great place and mostly supportive.
- **Sends a positive "Message"** URI does support the glbt community. glbt kids will see the center on tours. sends a powerful message, when there is no center it sends a negative message, especially if all of the other schools they have looked at have a center. Some glbt students may automatically take URI off their list because of this. Non-glbt students will become more aware of the glbt population and know right off the bat that this is something that is accepted and supported at URI. In this day and age, not having a center at a major school like URI sends a negative message that we are not inclusive and don't recognize these issues as important, do we want to be seen in this way?
- **Decrease accounts of Homophobia** ... immediate action will be taken because there will be specific procedures and people to make sure they are followed, acted on, a sense of "zero tolerance"
- **Support**. From Staff, students, interns, information, the building itself, the feeling that you know there is always a place that will be open during certain hours where people are going to accept who you are. URI needs a place for students to go and get support, not the counseling center, a place where students can go where they won't be treated like they have an emotional/mental problem. Saying "we have a counseling center" is one of the problems. There are people who are stable and secure with who they are that just need a sense of "support"

- **Mentors** Creating a “mentoring” program where incoming freshmen can be assigned a glbt student to help them, provide support with adjusting to college/URI, just for them to have someone on hand to discuss issues, concerns... may be an internship possibility
- **Training RA’s, Staff, faculty** RA’s are required to attend the glbt symposium as a part of training What if the symposium doesn’t occur? There needs to be something in place to ensure competent training mechanisms for these groups.
- **Effective programming** ... Glass does not have the resources to provide programming, events, education for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender people UMASS’s center provides a “weekly lecture series”; we are lucky that G L a S S. can bring in a speaker a year, which is what usually happens because of the time, energy and budget constraints involved. Programs like “Reel Talk” need to run consistently. This is a program that was run by a counselor in the counseling center, she had to give it up because she has no time. This is an important program that a center would be able to keep running and advertise better, have access to more films because of larger budget, as well as having a definite place to show films. Events like the glbt symposium need to occur every year, it’s consistency runs on “luck” that there will be one or two people that actually have the time and energy to coordinate and run it every year. Organizations like “G.L. a S S.”, “H &H committee” do not have the resources to provide this campus with events, speakers, outreach, support, education and training that is needed. Hiring one staff person is not going to be enough either, unless they are given a budget. Staff people aren’t given budgets
- **Media center** ... person/ office that would deal with the media about glbt issues, speak to glbt newspapers and magazines like the advocate, out, options, bay windows, provide a glbt newspaper for the campus to keep people informed. If a male is raped on campus, who is going to talk to the media for a reaction from the glbt community? There is hardly a reaction when incidents of any nature happen because it is hard to locate the proper people An intern or student could also run this
- **Library** ... books about “coming out”, family, parents, all aspects of life for glbt people, good resources for research for papers and on a personal level. Other centers carry books on: lesbian, bisexuality, gay, transgender, Arts, autobiographies, biographies, coming out, education, health, herstory, history, feminism, humor, legal, religion & spirituality, social sciences, youth, parenting, politics, glbt people of color, and prejudice and violence Faculty can examine books to use in classes, get ideas for books.
- **Meeting rooms** For glbt student organizations, support groups, faculty groups, staff groups, any group on campus (in an attempt to welcome all groups to use the center to increase support and visibility)
- **Function rooms.** Smaller than a forum but bigger than a meeting room. For bigger meetings, classes
- **Forum room** Auditorium, to host forums, panels, show films, speakers, symposiums from outside URI ... bringing community to us
- **Credibility.** Other universities who have glbt centers do not take us seriously, as told by Andrew Winters, it’s hard to work with outside groups unless we have the credibility and resources
- **Budget** that will allow staff to travel to outside conferences to be able to know what and how to provide URI with resources better.
- **Create jobs, internships for students**
- **Career center/information** Different from the information provided by the career center in Roosevelt More information about glbt jobs, activist groups looking for employees or interns, places hiring that have a good reputation with glbt people for their policies and treatment People can inquire about companies and view policies and histories
- **Creation of new Student groups** Because a center will have adequate resources, pressure will be alleviated from groups like “glass” to supply all glbt resources for URI. This will allow the formation of new student groups that can focus on “social”, “political”, “support” and “outreach” aspects of glbt issues Organizations like G L a S S. always run into problems because members are involved for different reasons, to meet people, to be political, to hold social events, to create a sense of community, to educate others, for support. There is always group conflict because it is never possible to address all of these issues. There are so many students who are motivated to work on certain issues but are unable to realize them because of budget, time and resource constraints Having a center and a coordinator would allow for: support groups (separate ones for gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender people if needed), coordination A LOT of social events (dances, retreats, movie nights, pizza parties, game nights “gay bingo”, field trips to Provincetown, providence, Boston, glbt film festivals, conferences etc) G L a S S gets mail all the time about conferences, by the time it’s received it’s

usually either too late to organize people to go or there is not enough funds to allow people to travel out-of-state. G.L. a S.S. rarely gets to talk about experiences of glbt students at URI because the agenda is usually too large and clogged by "business". Or maybe entirely different groups can be created that address completely new needs. Maybe this is why on a campus where there are supposedly 1,000 glbt students, only 30 join groups like G.L. a S.S., maybe a variety of groups will draw more students to participate and join.

- **Creation of Faculty groups.** The H&H committee is the only faculty group on campus that deals with glbt issues, but there is no group on campus that is a "support" group for glbt staff and faculty. Most Staff and faculty are unable to attend H&H meetings because they are usually at times when most faculty is teaching, and most staff is working. Staff in a glbt center will be able to organize a few meetings during the week to be more flexible.
- **Law resource.** numbers, contact info of ACLU, GLAD type people, laws on sexual orientation at URI, and the State of Rhode island. maybe a person on hand specifically working with the Affirmative action office that focuses on GLBT issues/cases. Another internship possibility for students, especially students interested in law school.
- **Lounge with couches, t.v.,** allowing students, anyone to get away and relax in a safe place. Events and movie showings for classes and student groups.
- **Offices for staff**
- **Computer room.** For student organizations, students, faculty, staff, research
- **Community.** There is no sense of community at URI, or in South County for glbt people. GLBT people have to go to providence or out-of-state to find this. If URI is truly interested in a diverse population of students, they will realize that a glbt center will provide for a sense of community for glbt people at URI and in the surrounding areas. This will attract more glbt people to apply to URI. Some students do leave URI because there is no center.
- **We are the only major university in New England that doesn't have one...doesn't that say anything? Why are we so behind?**
- **URI has centers for all other cultural minorities except glbt people.** Multicultural Center, Women's Center, Hillel etc.
- **regular stats.** gay teen suicide rate. "you can't tell me it doesn't hit Rhode island. every student has the right to feel safe at URI and if they don't feel safe because they have nowhere to go, URI is at fault" -URI student.
- **Scholarship fund.** The creation of scholarships for glbt students, or students that have done extensive work toward the progress of glbt issues and people, in or out of the URI campus. UMASS Amherst's Stonewall center has a program like this.
- **Bottom Line:** A GLBT Center at URI will be beneficial for URI as a whole. It will benefit glbt students, non-glb students, faculty, staff, and outside communities.

Quotes from Students

"we need a permanent place for support, programming, and outreach that is visible, permanent and accessible to all students whenever they may need it"- Lesbian, URI student, sophomore

"we need a place where we can feel totally safe"- Bisexual, female, URI student, sophomore

"Though there are many GLBT students, faculty, and staff on this campus, their presence is not known nor acknowledged by the general community. having a center is one more step closer to winning the fight against ignorance and homophobia"- Bisexual, female, former URI student, sophomore at CCRI

"we need to be more visible"- Lesbian, URI student, sophomore

"because the atmosphere of the general URI community is one of consensual apathy or ignorant stereotyping, and a queer student who isn't necessarily able to join GLaSS for any number of reasons, then, is very limited in support"- Bisexual, female, former URI student

“that as incoming freshmen, every student feels alone and wishes to become part of a community here on campus. Currently for GLBT students there is no real concrete place for them to do that, and a center would be a wonderful place for that to happen” --Lesbian, former URI student, former G L a S S member

“ i can't walk down campus and hold my girlfriend's hand and hear someone runnin and think i'm gonna get hate crimed. a center that's established there would make the atmosphere SO MUCH MORE WELCOMING ...” Lesbian, URI student

“i think that it's really hard being gay in a community that isn't open about it. if URI had a center, then other students would probaby feel a little more comfortable” --heterosexual, URI student, member of student senate

“you guys have a lot of problems with group dynamics. maybe a place of your own would put you less on edge and more at ease”, student senator referring to problems organizations like glass usually experience

“seems to me like there are no reasons not to have it.”- former lesbian, URI student

“the only established official 'safe zone' is an 8x10 room that holds what, 11 people max????” --Lesbian, URI student, member G L a S S

“personal interaction is harder for a person (if we only had a staff person) because the people who don't or can't quite deal with a group like GL aSS probably are the ones scared of their own sexuality for many reasons. plus, the "counselor" aspect of it draws people away”- Lesbian, former URI student

“and how about spreading awareness and acceptance not just for gay youth but straight people as well, where they know such a place exists and are welcome to come in and look around to see that individuals in there as just like everyone else”-bisexual, female former URI student

“giving glbt people a place to call home and make their own will give them something to identify with: kinda like how hillel has a house. it's just somewhere for me to go and feel like i belong, i'm never a minority in there” – heterosexual, jewish, female URI student

“why are we the only major university in New England that doesn't have a glbt center?”- Lesbian, URI student