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## Project Pulse Survey Results

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## Student Affairs Research & Evaluation Office

### Gay/Lesbian Awareness Survey (S85-E)

On March 27, 1985, Project PULSE, in conjunction with the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, conducted a Gay/Lesbian Awareness Survey. The purpose of this survey was to measure student perceptions of anti-gay/lesbian prejudice and to measure student attitudes toward the gay and lesbian community. A total of 271 students agreed to participate.

In general, students express a high degree of awareness of anti-gay and lesbian harassment on campus and most have seen evidence of this personally. However, a good number of students indicate they either would not or did not know how to respond to such incidents. While a good number of students say they know something of gay/lesbian culture and history, few are interested in learning more about it.

Students were asked about their knowledge of the concerns, history and culture of lesbian and gay people. About two-fifths (41.0%, n=111) say they know either a lot or a moderate amount about gay/lesbian history and culture, while 45.3% (n=123) say they know very little, and 13.7% (n=37) say they know nothing at all. Also, about one-third (33.7%, n=91) of students say they are at least somewhat interested in learning more about lesbian and gay people's concerns, history and culture.

Respondents were asked to what extent and in what manner they discuss homosexuality with friends outside of class and in what fashion homosexuality was discussed in their classes.

Table 1

To what extent and in what manner is homosexuality discussed?

<u>Extent/Manner</u>	<u>Location:</u>	
	<u>In Classes</u>	<u>Outside Class w/friends</u>
Never discuss	50.2%	14.8%
Discuss positively	9.6%	9.6%
Discuss in a neutral fashion	28.0%	31.9%
Discuss negatively	1.8%	16.3%
Discuss in a combination of manners	10.3%	27.4%

As can be seen from Table 1, many students do not discuss these issues in their classes. Of those who do discuss these issues, most say they do so in a neutral manner, although students report they were more likely to discuss homosexuality in a negative manner outside of class with their friends.

Students were asked to what extent they thought anti-lesbian/gay attitudes existed at UMass. A small proportion (7.4%, n=20) think these attitudes exist only to a little extent. Over half (53.0%, n=143) say they think they exist to some extent, while an additional 35.5% (n=96) think they exist to a great or very great extent.

The respondents were then asked to what extent they had seen or heard any of three types of anti-gay/lesbian behavior. About one-fourth (24.3%, n=66) say they at least occasionally hear instructors or staff members making negative remarks or telling jokes that put down lesbians or gays. Nearly one-half (47.6%, n=129) report hearing other students occasionally make anti-gay/lesbian remarks. An additional 44.6% (n=121) report hearing such remarks frequently. Also, 46.1% (n=125) say they occasionally see anti-lesbian/gay graffiti on walls or other spots around campus. An additional 34.3% (n=93) report seeing such graffiti frequently or very frequently.

Students were asked to what extent they think gay/lesbian students at UMass experience each of 4 types of anti-gay/lesbian harassment. A majority think lesbian/gay students experience, to at least a little extent, defacement of posters or notices announcing gay/lesbian activities (75.0%, n=201), direct verbal harassment (72.2%, n=192) and the vandalization of personal property (57.1%, n=152). A smaller proportion (43.2%, n=112) think gay/lesbian students receive threatening or derogatory phone calls.

When students were asked what they would do if they saw students verbally abusing someone they assumed was gay/lesbian, the largest number of students (33.5%, n=90) say they would do nothing, while 24.5% (n=66) say they would intervene directly. Only 3.3% (n=9) say they would report the incident to authorities. When students were asked to whom they would report such an incident, the largest number (15.6%, n=42) say they would contact a lesbian/gay awareness trainer, only 11.5% (n=31) would report an incident to the Dean of Students, and 9.7% (n=26) to the UMass Department of Public Safety.

Students were also asked if they knew the term "heterosexism" and if they knew that anti-lesbian/gay harassment is prohibited by the Student Code of Conduct. Over half (54.3%, n=142) either do not know or are unsure what the term "heterosexism" meant. About three-fifths (59.3%, n=160) of the students know that anti-gay/lesbian harassment is prohibited by the Student Code of Conduct.

Students were then asked to estimate the percentage of UMass students that are lesbian or gay and the extent to which they personally knew someone who was lesbian or gay. When asked, the largest number of students (37.6%, n=99) select "10-15%" as the most accurate estimate of the gay/lesbian student population, with 16.3% (n=43) selecting "6-9%" as their estimate. Almost one-fourth (23.6%, n=62) estimate the size of the percentage to be "3-5%" of UMass students. Approximately one-third (30.6%, n=83) of the students say they do not personally know anyone who is lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Finally, students were asked about their attitudes toward gay/lesbian students since coming to UMass. While the majority (59.3%, n=159) say their attitudes have not changed, 36.9% (n=99) say they have become more accepting and only 3.7% (n=10) report being less accepting of lesbian and gay students.