



July 24, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

Faculty, staff, and students from the University of Montana are pleased to announce the development of **“The University of Montana Allies Program”**. The Allies Program has been designed to promote a more welcoming, safe, and inclusive campus for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals and their heterosexual supporters. We are requesting administrative and financial support from the University in order to implement the program on the Missoula campus; please see the attached itemized budget and list of pledged contributions to date. The estimated total cost is \$9,300.

LGBT students often find campus environments to be unwelcoming and even hostile. Students whose emotional and physical safety is at-risk can experience fear and anxiety, isolation and invisibility, fear of disclosure, and high levels of stress. In turn, these experiences can interfere with academic achievement and personal development. Inhospitable campus settings may also contribute to attrition and turnover among promising LGBT students and staff who fear an oppressive environment.

Several high-profile incidents in recent years (the burning of a lesbian UM professor’s home, brutal attacks toward LGBT and perceived-to-be-LGBT students and individuals in the community) have demonstrated that homophobia remains alive and well in Missoula. Despite efforts by the University to support and protect its LGBT community members, LGBT UM students continue to experience threats and insults daily because of their sexual minority status. Such experiences and the campus climate that they engender undoubtedly interfere with LGBT individuals’ ability to enjoy the equal opportunities for “education, employment, and participation in University activities” guaranteed by the University’s Non-Discrimination Policy.

Please see the appendix to this document for further information about this proposed program and its benefits to the university community, along with an itemized budget. Thank you for your consideration and your support. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact Jen Robohm at (406) 243-6890 or James Randall at (406) 243-6892.

Sincerely,

Members of the Allies Program Committee

Casey Charles (English Dept.)
Charles Couture (Dean of Students)
Kelly Magnuson (Residence Life)
Kate Pruitt-Chapin (SARC, Curry Health Center)
Jennifer Robohm (Clinical Psychology Center)
Kaycee Schilke (NCBI-campus)
Fanchon Stearns (UM student)
Ken Welt (CAPS, Curry Health Center)

Bryan Cochran (Dept. of Psychology)
Steven Hesla (Music Department)
Josh Peters-McBride (University Center)
James Randall (Music Dept.)
Liz Roosa-Millar (University Center)
Erin Scott (SARC, Curry Health Center)
Cheryl Van Denburg (CAPS, Curry Health Center)

Background and Development of the UM Allies Program

The UM Allies Program is modeled after “Safe Zone” programs, which exist in many college campuses throughout the US. In this appendix, we describe “Safe Zone” programs, the current resources available for LGBT individuals at the UM campus, and how the UM Allies program can meet existing needs in our community.

“Safe Zone” Programs

Dozens of universities across the country have implemented “Safe Zone” programs to improve the campus climate for LGBT students by increasing awareness, enhancing conversations around LGBT issues, providing safe space, and educating and providing skills to confront homophobia and heterosexism (Poynter & Tubbs, 2007). Through these programs, heterosexual allies are publicly identified as safe people to whom LGBT students can go for support, resources, and referrals, with the goals of alleviating previously held misperceptions, encouraging affirming group identification, and encouraging others to participate (Poynter & Tubbs, 2007).

Do “Safe Zone” Programs Work?

Anecdotal evidence has indicated that such programs raise awareness of LGBT issues and encourage allies to become more supportive of LGBT students (Hothem & Keene, 1998). More recently, a qualitative, ethnographic evaluation demonstrated that such a program on the campus of a large Midwestern university had a positive impact on the visibility of LGBT individuals and issues, increased support for LGBT people, and made LGBT staff and students feel welcome, safe, and valued on campus, thereby promoting their recruitment and retention. These impacts were both symbolic and tangible (Evans, 2002).

What Current Support Exists for LGBT Individuals on The Missoula Campus?

The Missoula campus of the University of Montana is home to two groups that explicitly support LGBT students and staff. The **Lambda Alliance** is a student group committed to “increas(ing) the visibility and acceptance of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered community through education, information, socialization, and support”. The **Outfield Alliance** is a group of LGBT UM faculty, staff, and graduate students and their supporters that “functions as a support network, works on gay-related issues at the University, sponsors educational events on campus, and provides support to victims of discrimination”. Both groups consist predominately of LGBT individuals, and they believe that a campus-wide program that involves and nurtures heterosexual allies is essential if the UM campus is to become truly affirmative toward and inclusive of its LGBT community members.

Members of both the Lambda and Outfield Alliances have been instrumental in the development of the Allies Program. Because the existing LGBT organizations on campus have few ties to each other, the Allies Program will help to fill in the gaps between these groups in serving the UM community. In addition, the Allies Program has been the product of a University-wide collaboration across many divisions and departments across campus, including: academic units (English, Music, Psychology), the Outfield Alliance, Lambda Alliance, Curry Health Center, Student Assault Resource Center (SARC), Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Clinical Psychology Center (CPC), Multicultural Alliance, Residence Life, Dean of Students, National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI), Human Resources, ASUM, the Psychology Department, and the Women and Gender Studies Program.

What is an “Ally”?

Washington and Evans (1991) used the term “ally” to denote “a person who is a member of the dominant or majority group who works to end oppression in his or her personal and professional life through support of, and as an advocate with and for, the oppressed population” (p. 195). Allies are able to use the privileges or advantages that they enjoy based on their majority status to advocate for members of the minority who do not possess access to those rights and privileges. (Note: LGBT individuals can also be “allies” if they are in a position to provide support, advocacy, and guidance, but heterosexual allies have a special role to play in effecting positive change in the dominant culture.)

How the UM Allies Program Would Enhance the UM Campus**What is the Purpose of an Allies Program on Campus?**

The University of Montana Allies Program plans to develop and nurture heterosexual allies for its LGBT students and staff. These individuals will be given opportunities to engage in self-reflection, commit to addressing intolerance and prejudice, and advocate on behalf of their LGBT community members. Because providing a safe campus is really a human rights issue, such a program is consistent with The University of Montana-Missoula’s mission to “educate competent and humane professionals and informed, ethical, and engaged citizens of local and global communities.”

The Allies Program: Mission

The goal of the University of Montana Allies Program is to actively promote a campus environment that is inclusive and supportive of all individuals, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. In addition to designing activities that foster a campus climate of inclusivity and awareness, the UM Allies Program also seeks to establish safe spaces for individuals who experience isolation, discrimination, threats, or intimidation in the campus community. These goals will be accomplished through high visibility of the program, a training component that provides staff, faculty, students, and the administration with tools to support and respond to the needs of LGBT individuals, and the commitment of LGBT allies to the project.

The Allies Program: Target Audience, Participants, and Promoters

The Allies Program is intended to benefit directly those sexual minority students and staff who may be experiencing discrimination, feeling afraid or isolated, needing emotional support, and/or needing information (e.g., where to find resources, how to report a ‘hate crime’). Program participants will be primarily heterosexual university administrators, faculty, staff, and students who are committed to improving the campus climate with regards to LGBT issues and concerns by supporting, assisting, and advocating on behalf of LGBT community members. (These individuals are in a position to demonstrate that LGBT people are not alone, and they can take a stand in places where it may not feel safe for LGBT people to do so.) Program “personnel” will be LGBT and ally Committee members who have committed to developing, implementing, and sustaining the program over time. We will be responsible for educating the larger campus community about the meaning of the program logo and the importance of building a more supportive, safe, and inclusive community for LGBT (and indeed all) students and staff.

The Allies Program: Training

The Allies Program will advertise and recruit individuals interested in enhancing the sensitivity and inclusiveness of the campus with regards to LGBT issues and concerns. Program participants will undergo training to enhance their awareness of and sensitivity to the needs of sexual minority

individuals. When they have completed the training, they will be given the opportunity to sign an allies “pledge” that demonstrates their commitment to making the campus a safer place for LGBT students and staff. (If they so desire, they can also be publicly identified on the program webpage as an ally.) Those who successfully complete the training and sign the pledge will be given a sticker, button, or magnet with the program’s logo to display on their door, backpack, or person. The Allies Program will thus visibly mark people and places that are “safe” for LGBT students and staff, and LGBT individuals will be able to identify their allies on the University of Montana campus from these program symbols. The sensitivity and awareness of other heterosexual individuals will also be enhanced by the program, through dialogue and engagement with those displaying the program logo.

The Allies Program will provide two 2-hour trainings per year, at the beginning of the Fall and Winter semesters. (If there is interest, we will offer web-based training and/or provide additional in-person training.) The training sessions will include a panel discussion of LGBT individuals talking about their experience as sexual minority persons and a half-hour small group discussion. The other hour will include additional training on privilege and oppression, heterosexism and homophobia, the “coming out” process, local and national resources, what it means to be an effective ally, etc. Everyone who participates in the training will also receive a training manual that includes definitions, resource materials, and referral information for programs and services in the community. (Allies will not be expected to provide counseling, for example, but they will thus be able to refer LGBT individuals to those who can.)

The Allies Program: Other Programming

In addition to training, the Allies Program Committee will work to promote the inclusion of LGBT curricula and content in classes, develop a web-based presence to break silence and the sense of invisibility on campus, create spaces to hear the voices of sexual minorities on campus (e.g., through campus events), and make it clear that the University of Montana does not tolerate physical or emotional violence against minority students. The Allies Program will serve as a unifying program that brings together other, previously disconnected, LGBT-focused groups on the UM campus.

The Allies Program: Evaluation

To evaluate the effectiveness of the Allies Program, we will track both the number of program materials (i.e., stickers, buttons, or magnets) that are distributed and the number that are displayed on campus. We will also track the number of individuals who complete the Allies training. In addition, we will conduct surveys and interviews to assess the attitudes and experiences of students, faculty, and staff on campus (both LGBT and heterosexual) before and after program implementation. Lastly, we will track the number of bias-related incidents reported on campus before and after program implementation.

The Allies Program: Benefits

We believe that the Allies Program will provide affirmation and support, enhance visibility, promote communication and networking, increase awareness, and therefore enhance the sense of safety and inclusion on campus for LGBT students and staff. Evans (2002) noted that heterosexual allies who participate in such programs report increased personal awareness, a desire to further educate themselves, and appreciation for the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others. It is our hope that LGBT staff and students, their heterosexual allies, and indeed the entire community will benefit from a campus that is more tolerant, inclusive, supportive, and celebratory of its LGBT community members.

References

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UM Allies 2008-2009 Budget

**after this initial funding request, we will establish an annual budget based on the biennial cycle*

EXPENSES			Notes/Comments
<i>personnel</i>			
Campus Corps Volunteers	\$ 100.00		1 student volunteer per year
subtotal personnel	\$ 100.00		
<i>supplies</i>			
misc. office supplies	\$ 100.00		
table banner	\$ 250.00		
Lambda resource library	\$ 200.00		assist in updating resource library
subtotal supplies	\$ 550.00		
<i>marketing</i>			
printing/copying	\$ 1,200.00		training materials, etc.
advertising/promo items	\$ 2,000.00		press kit, stickers (\$550 for 4000), buttons (\$135 for 2000), etc.
web design services	\$ 750.00		
subtotal marketing	\$ 3,950.00		
<i>other</i>			
consultant services	\$ 2,000.00		guest speaker/lecturer
professional development	\$ 1,200.00		send student to conference
misc. program expenses	\$ 1,500.00		program kick-off, trainings, etc.
subtotal other	\$ 4,700.00		
Total budget request	\$ 9,300.00		

Pledged contributions as of 7/24/08:

Residence Life, \$500

Charles Couture, Dean of Students, \$100

Clinical Psychology Center, \$100

Student Assault Resource Center, \$100

Counseling and Psychological Services, \$100