

February Safe Place E-Newsletter:

When researching topics and subjects for this newsletter I stumbled upon PFLAG's (Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays) Top 10 Ways to Make Schools Safer and have expanded on these tips with a Higher Education and Michigan Tech perspective.

Learn the Facts:

Tech students may miss class, drop out of certain classes or drop out of college completely because they feel unsafe in the environment.

"I have felt very unsafe in my classes. And in the classes I'm not safe in, I tend not to go. This then affects my learning and my grades. This is not a safe learning environment."
-a gay student

(Quote taken from Safe Place Manual – linked below)

Understand the Language:

We may feel we need to use the politically correct words, but students may use words based on feelings or use personal slang, the key is to be respectful and speak without showing judgment.

(Glossary found on page 16 of Safe Place Manual – linked below)

Stop Bad Behavior:

Don't ignore, excuse or be fearful. If you as a Safe Place member do not take action, the environment can become malicious. We should use those moments as educational opportunities and make known that such behavior will not be tolerated.

(More information can be found at "Ways to Foster an Inclusive Environment" on page 6 of Safe Place Manual – linked below)

Set the Policy:

The Michigan Tech Board of Control policy on Equal Opportunity 3.7 states:

In keeping with its responsibilities as an educational institution, Michigan Technological University is committed to a policy of affording equal opportunity to all of its employees, students, applicants for employment and applicants for admission without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, height, weight, or marital status.

The Safe Place Mission Statement

The GLBT Safe Place Program strives to reduce homophobia and heterosexism on Michigan Tech's campus. Through education, advocacy, and awareness, the program contributes to an open campus climate that is safe and accepting of all members of the University community.

Plan School-Wide Activities:

Pride Week (April 6-11, 2009) is the best example of GLBT activities, but we need to have more events throughout the year. Sharing books, movies, news articles, as well as recognizing national days related to GLBT issues is a step in the right direction.

Be Public:

Display your Safe Place sticker! Let students know that you are their advocate and ally.

Overall, ask yourself if your office or work environment is inviting to a GLBT student? Do your wall hangings or screensaver offend anyone?

The first person to respond to this email newsletter will receive a FREE “gay? fine by me.” t-shirt.

Cyber Bullying:

With Facebook, MySpace, chat rooms and a plethora of newer social outlets on-line, students have personal information posted for anyone to see. There are multiple medias for GLBT students to feel bullied.

If a GLBT student is bullied here are some actions to take: strongly encourage them not to respond, save pictures & messages as evidence, and please contact authorities (university and or local law enforcement) if you feel the bullying has become or is a threat of violence or warrants harm to self/others.

Train and Educate Everyone:

I highly recommend the Ouch! workshop as a great educational training tool. This workshop will show vignettes focusing on understanding the impact of stereotypes & biased statements, identifying common reasons people do not address them and enhancing skills to speak out without blame or guilt. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.ouchthatstereotypehurts.com/> or contact Jill Hodges at jhodges@mtu.edu

Work for Comprehensive Health Education:

The Michigan Tech Campus can be comprehensive with overall education and messages about marriage, sex education, religious views, and parental influence. Gay marriages should be celebrated; sex education programs should include notes for same sex partners; religion can take so many approaches including: affirming churches, religious oppression, what the bible says. Parents of GLBT students are just as influential, whether positively or negatively. *(More health information can be found at “Potential Problems Facing GLBT Individuals” on page 11 of Safe Place Manual – linked below)*

Resources, Resources, Resources: Where to go for help, support and more information.

Safe Place Manual: http://www.safeplace.mtu.edu/safeplace_10.25.2006.pdf

<http://www.admin.mtu.edu/aa0/homophobia06.pdf>

Again, the Safe Place Program website at: <http://www.safeplace.mtu.edu/> and is an amazing resource with links, downloads, membership lists as well as connection to Keweenaw Pride, the Michigan Tech GLBT Student Organization with membership from the local community.

Thank you for reading these ten ways to make Michigan Tech safer for our GLBT students.

RW

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