



Office of Opportunities

The LGBTQ Office serves as everything from welcome wagon to resource guide



Office Coordinator Stephanie Chang works to create a safe space for LGBTIQ students on campus.

Photo by Michael Jerch

By Win Chesson

Since officially “coming out” in the spring 2003, the UNC LGBTQ Office has actively worked to support students of all sexual and gender identities. Located in the basement of Steele Building, the LGBTQ Office, a division of Student Affairs, provides a range of services including Safe Zone Training, the Rap Group, a weekly Social Hour and A Half, one-on-one advice, discussion, and counseling. Safe Zone is a program that teaches UNC students and staff to become effective LGBTQ allies. The Rap Group, for which usually 10 to 20 students meet weekly, provides space for confidential discussion and dialogue on coming out and being LGBTQ on campus. In addition to individual and group discussion services, the office works with Counseling and Psychological Services to provide walk-in office hours with counselors.

Full-time coordinator Stephanie Chang runs the LGBTQ Office along with graduate intern Avery Cook, who also facilitates the Rap Group. Chang describes her dedication to her work, saying, “I personally care about LGBT issues on campus. A service was definitely needed, so if I could help out, I would definitely do my part. The most rewarding part of my job here has been getting to know the students personally and getting to know how they each work to change the campus climate individually.”

Currently, 12 undergraduates volunteer to support the UNC LGBTQ Office’s

programs by providing publicity, organizing events, collaborating with student groups, and more. Speaking on what draws the volunteers to the work with the office, Chang explains, “We all care about LGBTQ issues and are passionate about changing the climate on campus because we are invested both personally and as a community.”

One of the Office’s best resources is its lending library. This library contains more than 1,000 LGBTIQ-themed books, videos, DVDs, pamphlets and magazines on issues ranging from queer theory to advice on how to come out.


“The library served as an invaluable resource when I was planning how best to come out to my family,” commented one student who asked to remain unidentified. “I came into the Office one day, explained to Avery my plans and a bit about my family and she helped me to find books that might relate more specifically to my particular situation and my parents. I remember being surprised at the amount of writing that had been done on LGBTQ issues. The Office had books that specifically addressed how to reconcile sexuality with religion, which I foresaw as being a particular obstacle for my family.”

The Office has also reached out locally to youth in the community. After being honorably discharged from the U.S. Navy for “homosexual admission,” Caleb

McDaniel found himself looking for work in Chapel Hill. “I found out about SHAH on the Internet and decided to go. That was where I heard about the Unity Conference and have met lots of friendly people,” he said.

After coming out to his family in January and being promptly kicked out of his home, McDaniel said, “The Office really helped me to find friends, find a cause. I think it is so important to fight for our constitutional rights – all the ones straight people have. It’s not right to discriminate against anybody. The Office has helped me to act out a part of what I believe in, to fight for human rights and gay rights.” McDaniel has come to volunteer in the office every day since his first visit.

McDaniel’s experience represents what makes Chang so proud to work at the office. “It’s the little things that all add up. I feel like when I was in school here, people didn’t discuss sexual minorities as a minority group,” she said. “Now they do.”

For more information about the LGBTQ Office and LGBTQ-related campus events, check out the Office website at <http://lgbtq.unc.edu>, or drop by Steele Building, rooms 011 and 012, Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. 

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