

New Climate Report Seeks Further Progress

By Kimberly Fisher

In 2001, Provost Robert Shelton created the Provost's Committee on LGBTQ Climate to research the campus climate in relation to LGBTIQ-identified faculty, staff and students. In 2002, the committee released an executive report divided into six distinct categories: Academic Issues, Student Learning and Support Services, Employee and Faculty Benefits, Public Service and Training, Development Objectives and Institutional Structure & Policy.

The committee issued a series of short-term, mid-term and long-term policy goals for each subject area of the report. Some of the report's policy suggestions included adding sexual orientation to the University's non-discrimination policy creating a program in Sexuality Studies, and the creation of an Office of LGBTQ Life and Study.

The breadth and detail of the issues covered in the 2002 Climate Report is impressive and ambitious. In many ways, the release of this report marked a landmark achievement in LGBTQ advocacy at UNC. The committee's findings and policy suggestions helped lead to the founding of the LGBTQ Center and the Sexuality Studies Program, which have each become vital to maintaining and expanding the vision of diversity and vitality at UNC to sexual and gender minorities.

Despite these impressive accomplishments, though,

many of the policy suggestions made by the report have yet to be fully realized. Thus, in October 2007, another group of faculty, staff and students met once again to issue a comprehensive report on the University climate as experienced by LGBTIQ-identified members of the UNC campus community. The new LGBTQ climate report will pursue three major goals:

(1) The new report will serve to evaluate the accessibility and effectiveness of existing services, facilities and policies that address the needs of LGBTQ students, staff and faculty.

(2) The report will reflect LGBTIQ-identified and non-LGBTIQ-identified students' perception of the campus climate for sexual and gender minorities.

(3) It will serve as a tool to assess how far the University has come since the release of the first report and what steps the school should take in order to fulfill the 2002 report's original policy suggestions.

If its goals are met, the report's impact will reach far beyond LGBTIQ students. No individual can truly thrive at UNC unless all members of the campus community are afforded equal recognition, dignity and respect under official University policy and in daily campus life.

The University continuously espouses the goals of diversity and excellence. To its credit, UNC has made significant headway in realizing these twin goals over the past decade. Academic departments, University offices, student organizations and individual faculty, staff and students must become voluntarily and actively engaged in articulating and enforcing the community standards and norms that lead to the creation of a safe and welcoming environment for all at UNC.

Issuing a new climate report will not ensure that significant institutional change will take place at UNC. In order for this change to take place, the University as an institution of higher learning and as a community must be ready for that change to take place.

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This Magic Moment



Photo by Eric Velarde

Catherine Adamson and Rebecca Balter share a smooch in the Pit at the Committee for a Queerer Carolina's Kiss-In on Valentine's Day. The annual event celebrates relationship diversity and provides a safe space for people of all genders and sexual orientations to publicly express their affections.