

Breaking The Silence and Creating Safe Space: The Organizing of the Lesbian and Gay Faculty, Staff and Administrators Association at Boston College (LGFSAA)

**2005 OUT THERE CONFERENCE
Santa Clara University October 28, 2005**

History and Background

In the fall of 2004 something rather unprecedented in the 142 year history of Boston College occurred. A group of faculty and staff, that included both gay and lesbian employees and straight allies on the faculty and staff, announced the formation of an organization with the rather ungainly name of “The Lesbian and Gay Faculty, Staff and Administrators Association at Boston College. The group was launched with a mission statement that reads as follows:

We aspire by our presence and visibility to help create a safe and supportive professional environment for all lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-gendered employees of Boston College. The LGFSAA is a professional organization that serves as a resource and advocacy group for these employees and their families.

Remarkably, this statement plus a list of more specified aims and goals, and the names and contact information for members of an executive committee that includes representation from every school of the university, is available on an LGFSAA website that is part of Boston College’s official internet site. <http://www.bc.edu/offices/lgfsaa/> Furthermore, as if to ensure that interested visitors to the BC website find the group, it is accessible on the university alphabetical index under either “G” for “gay” or “L” for lesbian ! [See Appendix One]

All this at a school that only a year before had been ranked by *The Princeton Review* as more “gay unfriendly” than Brigham Young University. How this organization came about, what are we learning about its essential and potential role on our Catholic and Jesuit campus, and what problems we face moving forward are part of what I would like to share with you this afternoon. This account is offered in hope of learning about similar or parallel efforts on other Catholic college campus. It is, after all, the conversations and the networking that this OUT THERE conference will spin off that we suspect will be its greatest value. For all I know, what we find so unprecedented in

our own school history is rather old news elsewhere. Perhaps the question that some of you will ask is not “how did you do it ? ” , but “why did it take us so long to even try?”

So, first some history. The story of the formation of the LGFSSA is one of courage, resilience and dogged persistence – but NOT , in the first place, the courage, resilience and persistence of those of who are full time adult employees (the “plank owners” as we used to say in the Coast Guard referring to the long term crew of a ship). Rather , as I look back over my own twenty five years on faculty, a period which pretty much coincides with the first emergence of an identified gay and lesbian student movement at Boston College, I have to acknowledge in all honesty that it has been our gay and sympathetic straight undergraduate students who for over a quarter century have worked bravely and tirelessly to win their right to have a recognized gay and lesbian student organization on the BC campus, or to have an organization of straight and gay Allies, One student generation after another has labored to make the BC campus a more welcoming and tolerant place for all students. It is the students who simply have refused to accept that “BC” should stand for “Big Closet” , as some locals used to joke. I think many of my colleagues would agree with me that in significant ways down through the years it has been the students who have led and the faculty and staff who have followed. It has been their example that has inspired and sometimes shamed us into asking the questions: “Shouldn’t *we* be advocating for our own interests” Shouldn’t *we* be more proactively concerned about the quality of the work place environment for our colleagues and ourselves? And. “ what about *our own* needs for friendship, social affiliation, and safety?”

It is probably worth analyzing what it is about the institutional culture of BC or its location in Boston that has made the adults so often the caboose and the students the engine. But that is the way it frequently has been. From my own perspective, the dots to connect that lead to the LGFSSA start in the Spring of 1986. There had been in some form or another an “unofficial” lesbian and gay student group meeting that called itself LGBC (Lesbian and Gays at Boston College) for nearly seven years, and in the years leading up to 1986 they had found a particularly warm welcome at Haley House, a university sponsored intentional social justice community . That Spring however the

LGBC made its first high profile effort in the Undergraduate Student Government to gain official recognition of the LGBC as an undergraduate student group. The students were asking for little more (and nothing less) than to be listed alphabetically as a student group in the undergraduate handbook - somewhere between the Lacrosse Club and the Mendel Society - and to be held to the same rules and given the same rights as any other chartered undergraduate organization. There was that Spring, however, a particularly nasty and, as always, anonymous backlash against those members of the group that were publicly known. One student, David Brennan (now back at BC completing a doctorate in social work) had death threats recorded on his answering machine. Vicious anti-gay graffiti appeared on the main walkway across campus, and a brick was thrown through the window of the apartment of another student that could have seriously injured him. Several of us on the faculty who knew the students being harassed, formed an unofficial delegation to go the Vice President for Student Affairs and demand that the university act to ensure the students' safety. I recall that when we briefly considered how to refer to ourselves the first name we came up with was "Faculty Advisors (to) Gay Students" until someone pointed out that the acronym probably wouldn't work!

By whatever name we called ourselves, in my memory the response of the Vice President could not have been more empathic or pro-active – though our delegation did enter that first meeting prepared to play both "good cop" (myself) and "bad cop" (Professor Paul Breines) if it were necessary. Here we can start spreading the credit for courage. I want to acknowledge those administrators who from that Spring forwards have been persistent and tireless advocates for the well being of gay and lesbian students: then Vice President for Student Affairs, Dr. Kevin Duffy, and his successor, Dr. Cheryl Presley (who is here at this conference this weekend) and working with them both our remarkable Dean of Student Development, Bob Sherwood, From that Spring till now Student Affairs has developed a range of gay-supportive policies and practices. From one perspective (left or right) these may be critiqued as contradictory, but from another they can be appreciated as pragmatic and responsible ways of navigating the conflicting currents that the issue of homosexuality generates on a Catholic college campus such as Boston College. . Thus, for example, down to the present the Office of

the University President has declined to “officially” recognize the LGBC as an authorized student group. Yet on the other hand for these last twenty years Student Affairs’ honest concern for the well being of gay and lesbian students has meant that this student group has always been assured of safe meeting space on campus. It has been supported in maintaining a public presence by way of an official bulletin board in the student union and advertising in campus publications. Finally it has been allowed to maintain a web site under the auspices of the Undergraduate Student Government (UGBC). <http://www.bcglbt.org/>. You just won’t find the LGBC between the Latin Society and the Marketing Club in the student catalogue..

But this is the story of the organizing of the adult sector of the BC community, and my point is that over these twenty five years faculty and staff, both gay and straight, have found their connection with one another first in their common commitment to the cause of our undergraduates. Along that way we have found one another as friends and partners in struggle. Gradually we have looked into the mirror that our students have held up to us and reflected on the cost of the invisibility and silence with which we have come to become accustomed to function. Over time we have begun to identify our unique stake in the effort to open space for gay and lesbian reality on our campus.

The next milestone was the academic year 1993-94. Under some exceptionally creative leadership the LGBC (Irish philosophy graduate student David Leonard), with strong support from the undergraduate student government leadership and faculty, once more made a careful, sustained, respectful and - ultimately - unsuccessful effort to persuade our President, Fr. Monan, to give the group official status as a student organization. Though this failure was discouraging and demoralizing in the short run, as I shall comment on later, in retrospect this was also a productive process in unexpected ways .

One of the most significant conversations around that effort involved a meeting between the president and a group of gay and lesbian faculty and straight allies about our shared concerns for our lesbian and gay students. As the conversation unfolded however,

we began for the first time to talk publicly about our own experience of working in the university, our own sense of isolation and fear that touched all of us some of the time and some of us, particularly contract staff and untenured faculty, all of the time. President Monan listened seriously. A memorable moment of insight - for him but also I think for us as well - occurred when Professor Theresa Hammond in the school of management described how in her first years as a junior faculty member she felt so alone on the faculty that if she spotted a car parked on campus with a rainbow flag bumper sticker she would leave a note on the windshield beseeching the owner to contact her so that she could be assured she wasn't the only gay or lesbian person on campus. We were progressively understanding that it wasn't *just* our students who needed the support of a community of like minded persons in order to flourish.

Out of those negotiations the president authorized the founding of a university committee to be headed up by two senior administrators, Dean of Student Development, Bob Sherwood and Barbara Munroe, Dean of the School of Nursing. It was given the really laborious title - the Committee on Sexual Diversity and Personal and Community Development - CSD-PCD. The undergraduates, with a humorous poke at the torturous constructions administrators come up with to avoid saying the word "gay", promptly named CSD-PCD, "The Cassandra Packard Committee". Awkward acronyms notwithstanding, this committee that included students and representatives from student affairs, campus ministry, counseling and faculty across the university was for the two to three years of its life, a vital and productive group. It sponsored programming on campus that ranged from workshops by Sister Jeannine Gramick and Fr. Bob Nugent, to talks by Andrew Sullivan and a range of other speakers and presenters.

The period of the flourishing of this committee also coincided, not accidentally, with an upturn of energy and hopefulness among BC gay and lesbian alumni. Encouraged by Judge David Mills and other distinguished gay and lesbian alumni/ae, BC alums were invited to see the increased visibility of gay and lesbian issues and the dynamic activities of the student group as an invitation to come in from their spiritual exile and reconnect with Boston College. They formed the "Lambda Alumni Association", worked closely

with out faculty and students, and for four years held a celebrative end of the year banquet on campus at which graduating gay and lesbian students were welcomed into the company of the alumni association and awards. At this event , attended by members of the BC alumni association , members of the Jesuit community and sometimes prominent area political leaders, two awards were given out. The LGBC students chose to call an award that recognized courageous service to the BC gay and lesbian community “The Cassandra Packard Award” and Dean Sherwood , appropriately, was its first honored recipient. The Lambda Alumni called theirs the “Magis Award” and gave it one year, for example, in recognition of alumni such as the straight father of a gay son who founded the Boston chapter of PFLAG. (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays).

There are a number of interlocking reasons why this so promising a start did not continue. Certainly one factor was the demoralizing failure of the university at its highest level to move any further than it did in publicly embracing its gay and lesbian undergraduates and alums. The CSD-PCD committee also did not survive the retirement of President Monan. Nevertheless its energies continued on in a broad based collection of faculty and staff who meet several times a year with the Dean of Students and with the student leaders of all the organizations that address gay and lesbian issues on campus. At these meetings participants debrief one another on the conditions on campus effecting glbt students, network and discuss how we can support one another. Though this committee is not set up to do sustained programming, for the purpose of this narrative the significance of “Cassandra Packard” and its successor group has been the creation of a network of common concern that has allowed gay and lesbian faculty and staff and the many straight allies across the university to identify one another. In some respects the LGFSAA is the love child of this arrangement.

Why and How: The development of the LGFSAA

Through the academic year 2003-2004 a diverse group of gay and lesbian faculty and staff would gather periodically for lunch in the faculty dining room. There seemed to

be a perfect storm of factors were converging to put the question of faculty/staff organization on the table in a particularly fresh and urgent fashion. Our shared experience included a growing awareness of the many ways in which Boston College's reputation on the academic street as hostile to gay and lesbian persons effected us both professionally and personally. That reputation was not helped by a disputed hire (or failed hire) for the Ratigan chair in the English department that was reported in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Whatever the facts of the matter, this affair made our institution appear distinctively unwelcoming to lesbian and gay persons.¹ Over several years we also had been shaken by the loss of a number of highly valued, tenured lesbian and gay faculty members, particularly in Nursing and Arts and Sciences, who left for positions in institutions with a track record of practical support for gay and lesbian employees and their families. Anecdotal evidence was accumulating about prospective hires that were unsuccessful because of this perception of a problematic professional environment.²

A final factor was that we were joined in recent years by new faculty and staff colleagues who came from educational or non profit institutions where they simply were accustomed to being out and unquestioningly accepted. Their general dismay at Boston College's "don't ask, don't tell" culture made us freshly aware of what can only be called "the cost of the closet". A Boston College staff member who was recruited to BC three years ago from private industry described this shock of entry into this Boston College culture as entering a kind of time warp where suddenly it is 1975 again.

The level of silence around GLBT issues was astonishing to me when I arrived here, and I quickly found it somewhat debilitating. It made me unsure about how I was received or heard as I met new colleagues. It made me reluctant to come out in settings here where ordinarily I would have done so without thought (it reminded me of 25 years ago). I realized, about 6 months into my work here, that of this was affecting both my job performance and my sense of well being. After consultation with some wise BC alums, I

¹ An unsuccessful and controversial tenure case some years earlier of a well regarded, popular lesbian scholar in the English department who did post-modern literary criticism that touched on issues of gender and sexual orientation was the deep back ground for the subsequent more publicized dispute over the filling of a named chair in that department.

² . This, it should be noted, was not limited to faculty or staff who were openly lesbian and gay. For many progressive persons, sexual minorities on our campus were the proverbial "canary in the mine", their treatment testing whether there was enough fresh air on our campus to support free and critical inquiry and genuine diversity of all kinds.

realized that I needed to begin some actions that broke the silence and built a community for me at BC.

When both “new comers” and “old timers” determined to “break the silence” and build this needed community in a formal, public fashion, the model we self-consciously adopted was that pioneered by our BC colleagues of color. In 1976 they expanded an earlier academic association to include staff members and created the Black Faculty, Staff and Administrators Association (BFSAA). That group has been singularly successful in keeping issues of race and equity squarely on the agenda of the university over the years. Like that group, we also felt that employees’ right to free association did not need to wait upon administrative authorization or initiative. The way to proceed was to organize first and then find out what level of institutional recognition might be forthcoming. Adopting this strategy, we drafted a list of goals that we hoped would speak to the different needs and interests of both faculty and staff/administrators. When we reached consensus among ourselves we sent it by way of information - not for approval - to our Academic Vice President, the Vice President for Mission and Ministry, and the Vice President for Human Resources. Arranging a series of candid and cordial consultations with these administrators in advance of any public announcement of the formation of the group was proved to be a respectful and collegial way to proceed.³ Happily our initiative was met at this level of higher administration with both moral and practical support. The website for the group that I cited earlier, was one that was approved at the level of the AVP and along with our list serve is one of the most important ways in which the group is accessible to the BC community.

. Before any of the academic and advocacy goals of the organization could be realized, however, an organization such as this on a campus such as ours has to grapple with some fundamental challenges that did not face our colleagues in the BFSAA. The first is how to communicate with very closeted colleagues who might not even feel

³ I need to emphasize that in these meetings, in the constitution of the executive committee of the LGFSAA, and indeed at many points along the way, the solidarity and support of our straight colleagues, particularly in the School of Management, Nursing and Arts and Sciences, has been invaluable. Though this afternoon I am emphasizing the risks and vulnerability of gay and lesbian employees in this process – we have learned that our straight colleagues who are prominent in their support also pay a price in the way in which they are regarded by some administrators and fellow faculty.

comfortable subscribing to the confidential list serve maintained by a faculty member in Romance Languages whose membership is known only to him as the list master.⁴ This is an on going issue for us.

The second has been how to meet in such a way that potential members would feel safe enough to even show up. Our first general organizational and social meeting on campus of a Friday afternoon right before final examinations in the Spring of 2003 taught us that some of our colleagues simply did not feel secure being seen entering the meeting space even though by design we chose a somewhat remote building on the very edge of campus. Our subsequent experience has been that off-campus events, for example Sunday brunches in the homes of LGFSAA members, are much better attended and offer the further benefit of allowing BC members to bring along their partners and in some cases even their children. One administrator responding in a survey questionnaire sent to members of the group spoke to this legitimate concern about confidentiality and attendant professional risks:

Most definitely (I have had reservations). In my role as an administrator, I was concerned that I might be jeopardizing my career at Boston College by attending what some on campus would perceive as an "activist" gay group meeting. I decided of course that I wasn't going to let that concern hold me back, which is why I attended meetings. But I recognized (believed) that me and my colleagues were taking a risk to attend a meeting on campus.

Our colleagues who took the risk to attend shared stories of their experience at BC that were sometimes quite moving. One senior colleague who has been a valued member of the BC community for over forty years attended his first meeting accompanied for moral support by a straight ally from his department. Though this very dedicated and conscientious man has been quietly and consistently responsive to the needs of gay students for a very long time, this was the first time in all of those years that he felt able to break the silence with other faculty and staff colleagues and speak about his own experience as a devoted Roman Catholic Christian who also identified as a gay man.

⁴ That list serve is now up to forty five persons and though subscribers are not required to identify themselves by sexual orientation or university status, we estimate that the majority are lgbt – identified individuals.

Response to the Formation of the LGFSAA

The formation of the LGFSAA was publicly announced at the beginning of the academic year 2004 – 2005. The only visible negative response to the announcement of the group came from *The Observer* an independent student newspaper with unknown funding that describes itself as “strongly champion(ing) the ideals of Western Civilization, the free market, limited government, personal freedom and responsibility and adherence to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church”. Presumably under this last loyalty, the news paper strongly editorialized against the group in a lengthy piece entitled “A Blow to BC’s Catholic Mission”. The editorial began, “BC students were betrayed yesterday by their own faculty in the formation of a Lesbian and Gay Faculty, Staff and Administrators Association”. (The Observer, November 8, 2004, p. 11). The article went on in fairly lurid language to claim that “BC faculty failed spectacularly in their duty to uphold the Catholic values of the university and to conduct themselves in a way that confirms those values.” The editorial went on to attack by name the faculty who had consented to be interviewed in the news story on the group that also ran in that issue. This included myself, Professor Scanlon in the Lynch School of Education and Professor Jeffrey Cohen, a straight ally in the Accounting Department who had explicitly identified himself as a Reconstructionist Jew in the news story. Professor Cohen was particularly singled out for criticism for conspiring to undermine BC’s Catholic values though he was congratulated for at least being straightforward about it. The juxtaposition of the editorial and the news story bordered on playing an anti-Jewish line familiar to our colleagues in the community relations office who have to handle vituperative alumni or Boston locals lamenting BC’s “loss of Catholic identity”. Typically there was no reaction public or private to the Observer editorial from either faculty or administrators. The general practice of adult member of the BC community has largely been to ignore this newspaper. In part this strategy of non response is motivated by the feeling that to reply dignifies and legitimates the newspaper which in its lengthy if intermittent history on our campus has been an artful in stirring up negative reactions of all sorts. At the same time of course the blank slate of adult response leaves the undergraduates in our community to imagine that these sentiments if not approved by the

faculty are at least not offensive. It is a question we would appreciate some wisdom on from persons at this Conference who may teach in similar situations.

. There was one exception to this non-response.. A rather clever, tongue in cheek letter to the editor appeared in the official student newspaper *The Heights*. Nic Albert, a sophomore wrote to “thank” the Observer for its theological clarification, “*I know I must not be alone when I say I personally felt my own sexuality threatened when I heard of this new group and am greatly relieved that good, loving Catholic folk such as yourselves shed light on the evil actions of the faculty and are doing their best to make the group feel unwelcome.*” It was just the kind of deflating satirical response that the Observer editorial deserved. Still , for many of us our gratitude was mixed with embarrassment that it took a sophomore to write it on our behalf. .

It is impossible to know what traction this kind of tirade has among the trustees and alumni who are apparently regularly sent copies of the newspaper, but if there was any more negative response it was intercepted before it hit any of us on the front lines.

LGFSAA – The First Year

At the end of Academic year 2003- 2004 after protracted and painstaking negotiations between the president of Boston College and a coalition of students , gay and straight, a new student organization called Allies was chartered. In a state where public high-school gay-straight alliances are common place and often state funded, this might seem unremarkable. but in the BC context it was a significant breakthrough.

Encouraged by that accomplishment, but still shamed that it did not do anything to change BC’s standing with the Princeton Review, in AY 2004 -2005 a group of highly motivated students that included the leadership of our University Student Government determined to address the legal welcome mat that our institution extends to its prospective employees, the University Statement of Non Discrimination. The existing statement in its qualified and equivocal treatment of sexual orientation was widely regarded as at best begrudging – particularly compared with non-discrimination statements at a number of other Catholic and Jesuit institutions. So this past year was

one in which a coalition of leaders of student government and passionate gay and lesbian undergraduates took up a fight that from one perspective should have belonged to a faculty senate or to an employees union. We have neither at Boston College though serious efforts also began last year to reconstruct a university faculty senate that has been missing since the late 60's. . The energies of many members of the LGFSAA went supporting this initiative. Some of that support involved the quiet and exhausting behind the scenes counseling of the students involved in this very complex negotiation with the president and university attorney; Some of it required the more public mobilizing of the faculty and staff to sign a statement of support that ran in the student newspaper and included hundreds of names including our Academic Vice President and substantial representation from the Jesuit community and departments across the university. . The Rally for Equality and the subsequent ballot initiative that put the question before the undergraduate student body was an overwhelming statement of support for a version of the Non Discrimination Statement that would be more genuinely inclusive. The negotiated version that was finally agreed upon, if not the straightforward statement one finds in many major universities– was nevertheless a clear advance. Our president , Fr. William Leahy deserves great credit for hanging in with a process of conversation and negotiation with students that some persons both within and without the university likely would have wanted to see him walk away from. [See Appendix Two] For the members of the LGFSAA the year long process was an occasion to extend the network of connection and collaboration with our colleagues across the university , and to learn something more about what it might mean to work as genuine partners with students.

Moving Forward

What lies ahead for the group? The elaboration of the group's mission statement divides itself into concerns that are more particular to the academic sector of the university and those that are broadly relevant to all members in so far as they employees of the university.

The two that are germane to the academic constituency are

To encourage and promote scholarship, research and teaching that addresses questions relevant to gay and lesbian persons and to all members of the academy across disciplines concerned with understanding the role of sexual orientation in culture and society.

To help faculty across the university to develop pedagogical approaches that are sensitive to the sexual diversity present both in our classrooms and in the larger community that will be served by the undergraduates and graduates we are preparing for professional service.

The three that are more generally relevant to the entire university are these:

To provide a safe and confidential forum for the discussion of issues important to the LGBT community at Boston College.

To help faculty and staff across the university understand and model behaviors that contribute to making Boston College a productive learning and working environment for gay and lesbian employees and students.

In the spirit of Boston College's tradition of "the faith that does justice", to provide support for the University regarding issues that affect the well being of LGBT employees of the University.

When we return to the Second National OUT THERE conference I hope to have something creative to report on the academic, professional development front. In the survey I did of LGFSAA membership there was strong support for initiating more high profile intellectual programming on campus. A gesture in that direction this semester will be our signing on the sponsorship of a program initiated by the BC Allies Group and Boston College Hillel - the showing of the award winning documentary "Trembling Before G-D: The Hidden Lives of Gay and Lesbian Orthodox and Hasidic Jews" and an evening conversation with its director, Sandi Dubowski.

For the moment let me just say something about the last matter, our function as an advocacy group around working conditions, specifically domestic partnership benefits. Even as the group was becoming officially formed, representative glb faculty were beginning conversations with the Office of Human Resources and the Office of the Academic Vice President on the matter of domestic partnership benefits. We were all well aware that among the non-Catholic schools with which Boston College competes for faculty and high level staffing Boston College is almost alone in not having any

provision for domestic partnership benefits. Our administrative colleagues were painfully aware of this , but not optimistic about changing the situation.. Then on May 16, 2004 history out ran us in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. For or the first time anywhere in the country our Supreme Judicial court held that same sex couples could be civilly married. Suddenly providing same sex married couples the same partnership benefits as their straight married colleagues enjoyed was not defying religious tradition but simply complying with the law of the state. Quietly and competently the Office of Human Resources put in place a set of procedures to cover such employees though there has been to date no formal public announcement of this policy change.⁵ To this month the Benefits Office in Human Resources, I am told , has registered ten university employee couples as civilly married .

Lest you think that settles the matter and we all will live happily ever after, there is more on the horizon. There is a currently a constitutional amendment being strongly pushed by a coalition that includes the Archbishop of Boston and the Mormon governor of the Commonwealth that would not only eliminate civil marriage for same sex couples but would bar any other forms of legal recognition such as Vermont’s civil union provision. What would Boston College do if that should come to pass. Would we lose our benefits? Would we be grandfathered in? What about couples who are advised not to be civilly married because it would compromise their ability to do a foreign adoption – is the question of domestic partnerships wholly moot even if the Massachusetts civil marriage statute should survive the assault of the religious right?

Let me conclude with a story that perhaps underscores that there is much more at stake here than just securing the benefits that might make BC competitive on the academic job market. The question of the status of gay and lesbian covenants on a Catholic campus goes to the heart of the question of how the visibility and valuing of gay and lesbian faculty and staff effects our over all capacity to do the jobs we are committed to do within our institutions

⁵ One of our staff colleagues in the survey noted “During orientation there was really no mention about same-sex benefits (something I had done research on before hand). Perhaps the group should advocate for inclusion in the human resources orientation especially because the benefits formula and subtractions can be confusing.”

Tim, my own partner of 25 years, and I took advantage of this opportunity and a year ago this past June were civilly married at the little Episcopal parish church where we worship. In accordance with the wishes of our bishop the civil solemnizing was done by a lay man in the congregation who had a one day justice of the peace license, but that ceremony was followed immediately by a blessing and Eucharist conducted by our rector. Our then thirteen year old son was our best man. Applying for our faculty spouse benefits at BC at first seemed like simply a legal after-thought, though an important one as it made very good sense financially to carry my partner on our better BC health plan. What we did not realize however until attaining this status how profoundly, symbolically important that application was. We had not consciously recognized how subtly marginalized we had felt as a family in the BC community to which we had thought we were otherwise quite devoted..

One of the perks of being a faculty spouse is getting a Boston College ID which among other benefits permits the bearer to use the athletic complex without being signed in as the unrelated guest of a member. For twenty five years every time my partner wanted to swim or work out I had to meet him at the gym and sign him in as a guest, while the wives or husbands of newly hired departmental secretaries would flash their ID's and stroll right in. When our son was adopted nine years ago this second class status was not lost on him as I sometimes had to make elaborate arrangements if he wanted to swim of a summer afternoon. , "I'm sorry Sasha, Dad can't take you swimming by himself, you have to wait till I can get down to the pool to sign you both in as outside guests." "But why, Papa, I don't understand, Professor William's kids can go in with their mom?." How could I explain? Outside Guests ??!! After twenty five years? That day two summers ago when Tim got his faculty spouse ID and presented it at the Plex desk for admissions, much to his surprise, he burst into tears.

I tell this story not to draw attention to my own circumstances, but to make a more general final point, one that was made more eloquently by one of my colleagues at our last LGFSAA meeting – a pot luck Sunday brunch at his South End apartment. When gay and lesbian faculty or staff members of our universities experience themselves as essentially invisible; when they are made to feel that they are merely tolerated and not

cherished ; when they are reminded in countless subtle ways that their defining covenants are less valued than those of others, their loyalty, moral and commitment is bound to be compromised and inflected. Still, year after year we commit ourselves to the educational mission of our institutions and for many of us its essentially spiritual dimension remains central to that mission .. and yet, what greater energy for service is released if we can believe that our institutions genuinely see us, cherish us and are committed to us?

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The Lesbian and Gay Faculty, Staff and Administrators Association at Boston College (LGFSAA)

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Our Mission Statement

We aspire by our presence and visibility to help create a safe and supportive professional environment for all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered employees of Boston College. The LGFSAA is a professional organization that serves as a resource and advocacy group for these employees and their families.

Among the particular functions of the LGFSAA are the following:

- To provide a safe and confidential forum for the discussion of issues important to the LGBT community at Boston College.
- To encourage and promote scholarship, research and teaching that addresses questions relevant to gay and lesbian persons and to all members of the academy across disciplines concerned with understanding the role of sexual orientation in culture and society.
- To help faculty across the university to develop pedagogical approaches that are sensitive to the sexual diversity present both in our classrooms and in the larger community that will be served by the undergraduates and graduates we are preparing for professional service.
- To help faculty and staff across the university understand and model behaviors that contribute to making Boston College a productive learning and working environment for gay and lesbian employees

and students.

- In the spirit of Boston College's tradition of "the faith that does justice", to provide support for the University regarding issues that affect the well being of LGBT employees of the University.

Membership

All lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans-gendered faculty, staff and administrators are invited to be members of the LGFSAA. We also welcome the membership and active involvement of heterosexual allies among our colleagues in the Boston College community. To become a member and be added to our Listserv, please contact Franco Mormando (mormando@bc.edu).

Steering Committee

It is the function of the steering committee to call and facilitate meetings and communication among the membership and to help organize the programming and planning functions of the LGFSAA by means of ad-hoc subcommittees. The steering committee should include representation from all schools of the university as well as representative members of the staff and administration wherever possible.

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APPENDIX TWO :

“Non-Discrimination Statement” (2004)

Founded by the Society of Jesus in 1863, Boston College is dedicated to intellectual excellence and to its Jesuit, Catholic heritage. Committed to maintaining a welcoming environment for all people the University recognizes the important contributions a diverse community of students, faculty and administrators make to the advancement of its goals and ideals.

Boston College rejects and condemns all forms of harassment, and it has developed procedures to redress incidents of harassment against any members of its community, whatever the basis or circumstances. Moreover, in accordance with all applicable state and federal laws, Boston College does not discriminate in employment, housing, or education on the basis of a person's race, religion, color, national origin, age, sex, marital or parental status, veteran status, or disabilities. In addition, in a manner faithful to the Jesuit, Catholic principles and values that sustain its mission and heritage, Boston College is in compliance with applicable state laws providing equal opportunity without regard to **sexual orientation**.

Notice of Nondiscrimination (Oct 2005)

Founded by the Society of Jesus in 1863, Boston College is dedicated to intellectual excellence and to its Jesuit, Catholic heritage. Boston College recognizes the essential contribution a diverse community of students, faculty and staff makes to the advancement of its goals and ideals in an atmosphere of respect for one another and for the University's mission and heritage. Accordingly, Boston College commits itself to maintaining a welcoming environment for all people and extends its welcome in particular to those who may be vulnerable to discrimination, on the basis of their race, ethnic or national origin, religion, color, age, gender, marital or parental status, veteran status, disabilities or **sexual orientation**.

Boston College rejects and condemns all forms of harassment, wrongful discrimination and disrespect. It has developed procedures to respond to incidents of harassment whatever the basis or circumstance. Moreover it is the policy of Boston College, while reserving its lawful rights where appropriate to take actions designed to promote the Jesuit, Catholic principles that sustain its mission and heritage, to comply with all state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination in employment and in its educational programs on the basis of a person's race, religion, color, national origin, age, sex, marital or parental status, veteran status, or disability, and to comply with state law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of a person's **sexual orientation**.

To this end, Boston College has designated its Executive Director for Institutional Diversity to coordinate its effort to comply with and carry out its responsibilities to prevent discrimination in accordance with state and federal laws.

