

THE SOUTH END

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GLBT organizations push for greater acceptance at WSU

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Alonso del Arte/The South End

From left to right, WSU photography professor Marilyn Zimmerman, WSU psychologist Steve Schoeberlein and AAUP-AFT executive director Janis Thompson, at the LGBT caucus picnic last Thursday.

By Adam Steinberg
Managing Editor

Gay students are more accepted in and around the WSU campus nowadays, according to Steve Schoeberlein, a WSU psychologist. He noted, though, "It's still tolerated to express negative views towards homosexuals."

Schoeberlein is the co-chair of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) Concerns Caucus of the American Association of University Professors-American Federation of Teachers, the union representing WSU faculty and academic staff.

Schoeberlein, who is gay, was originally hired by WSU to be a full-time counselor, fielding the LGBT concerns of students. Now, however, that position no longer exists at WSU.

Many gay rights student organizations base a university's acceptance level on a number of criterion including: Does the university have a full-time GLBT professional who addresses student concerns; does the university have an active GLBT students group, and so forth.

Executive director Janis A. Thompson of the AAUP-AFT said that GLBT relations at WSU have soured in the past few years. She said that there are still a lot of people that feel that revealing their sexual orientation would threaten their career. "There is less support for GLBT issues at Wayne now than in the past. The support has dwindled piece by piece since Irvin Reid became president," Thompson said.

WSU President Irvin D. Reid could not be reached for comment.

Thompson said someone in the library system supposedly got fired for being gay, but did not seek recourse.

Schoeberlein explains, "Often people who are victimized [for being gay] may not respond because it would 'out' them further."

The GLBT Student Union is a student organization of WSU dedicated to gay student issues. The group is dormant during the summer; officers are to be picked before the beginning of fall term.

Tyler Hampton, who was the group's treasurer last year, said the group has never received any funding from Student Council or from the university. He said the former Student Council president, Mohammed Luwemba, vowed to do everything in his power to prevent the group from receiving funding. The group has survived so far from a \$7,500 grant it received from outside funding, but the money was funneled through the university and never given to the group directly. He said WSU has not given the group adequate support.

Hampton is excited about the upcoming year, though, because Student Council has new leadership and the Dean of Students, David Strauss "has been very supportive."

Student Council President Earl Carruthers said that each student organization will be considered for funding on an individual basis, and that the GLBT Student Union would not be excluded simply because it's a gay student group.