



Diverse Learning Environments Survey: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Student Experiences

The Student Affairs Information and Research Office (SAIRO) is the research and assessment office within UCLA’s Student Affairs organization. The mission of SAIRO is to support the learning and development of the whole student by providing reliable, timely and useful information about students and their experiences; by developing the capacity of student affairs and other stakeholders to collect, interpret, and utilize data to enhance the quality of students’ educational experience and environment; and by helping Student Affairs units assess and document the effectiveness of their programs and practices.

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Executive Summary

In the winter and spring quarters of 2011, UCLA Student Affairs administered the Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) survey to better address aspects of diversity and climate on campus. The DLE captured information on a variety of student experiences and perspectives. In an effort to better address the needs of all students at UCLA, this brief highlights the experiences of LGBTQ students including their academic and social engagement, diversity-related activities, global skills, and perspectives on campus climate.

Results indicate that compared to their peers on campus:

- LBGQ and Transgender students reported a **more negative** perception of campus climate, including a greater number of experiences with harassment, discrimination, and negative cross-racial interactions.
- LBGQ and Transgender students have a **higher** rate of participation in co-curricular diversity activities.
- Transgender students reported a significantly **lower** rating of preparedness to engage in global issues (pluralistic orientation).
- LGBTQ students did not report significant differences related to their academic self-concept or validation in the classroom, perception of social agency, or cross-racial interactions in comparison to the overall campus mean.

DLE Survey & Sample	Overall DLE Sample		
<p>The Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) survey developed by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA, stems from research indicating that optimizing diversity in the learning environment can facilitate achievement of key outcomes, including improving students' motivations for lifelong learning, competencies and skills for living in a diverse society, and student retention and success. UCLA participated in this national research effort to generate greater understanding of diversity, student learning, and student success both inside and outside of the classroom.</p>	Percent	#	<p>Race (n=4,962)</p> <p>American Indian <1% 11</p> <p>African American/Black 2% 83</p> <p>Hispanic 15% 737</p> <p>Asian 46% 2,283</p> <p>White 31% 1,536</p> <p>Multiracial 6% 308</p>
<p>The DLE was administered in the winter and spring quarters of 2011 as a census survey of all enrolled undergraduate students at UCLA. In all, 7,597 students responded to the survey, representing 30% of enrolled UCLA undergraduates. Compared to the overall undergraduate population at that time, the sample slightly over-represents Asian students and students that enrolled directly from high school and slightly under-represents African American/Black students.</p>	<p>Gender (n=4,989)</p> <p>Male 37% 1,847</p> <p>Female 63% 3,142</p> <p>Transgender 1% 65</p>		
	<p>Year in School (n=7,461)</p> <p>First Year 17% 1,270</p> <p>Second Year 20% 1,551</p> <p>Third Year 31% 2,371</p> <p>Fourth Year or More 32% 2,405</p>		
	<p>Entry Status (n=7,461)</p> <p>Direct Entry 76% 5,685</p> <p>Transfer 24% 1,776</p>		
	<p>Sexual Orientation</p> <p>Heterosexual 91% 4,523</p> <p>Homosexual 3% 169</p> <p>Bisexual 3% 146</p> <p>Other 2% 76</p>		

Overall Experiences of LGBQ & Transgender Students

This brief aims to provide more information on the experiences of LGBQ & Transgender students at UCLA. The DLE offered a unique opportunity to explore the sexual orientation and gender identifications of UCLA students and their respective perceptions of and engagement with the campus environment. In this brief, LGBTQ refers to students' sexual orientation (lesbian, gay, or bisexual), gender identity (Transgender), and identities (queer) that are outside of the heterosexual and binary gender categories (see Renn, 2007, 2010). LGBTQ students represented 9% of the DLE survey respondents (n= 456). Among LGBTQ students, 3% identified as homosexual, 3% bisexual, 1% Transgender, and 2% indicated "other" sexual orientation. Students also represented a range of racial/ethnic groups: 2% Black, 18% Hispanic, 44% Asian, 27% White, and 7% Multiracial and academic class standings: 13% were first-year students, 19% second year, 37% third year, and 31% were fourth year students or more.

This analysis of LGBTQ student experiences utilized factors of items created by HERI to better understand broader themes, such as sense of belonging, validation, discrimination, etc. The reliability of these factors was confirmed with the UCLA data. The DLE Survey Factor Variable list of all 18 factors and the items that make up each factor is available on the SAIRO website at www.sairo.ucla.edu/dle. This brief reports the results of analysis comparing factor mean scores for LGBQ & Transgender students to the overall campus means. Analyses were conducted separately for each group to identify the unique experiences and services needed for each.

However, in some cases the patterns of results were similar for both groups. Both LGBQ and Transgender students reported more negative experiences of campus climate than their peers (see Table 1). LGBTQ

students also reported greater experiences with harassment, discrimination and bias, and negative cross-racial interactions. In addition, LGBTQ students reported significantly lower perceptions of sense of belonging and institutional commitment to diversity than their heterosexual peers. However, LGBTQ students also reported positive experiences at UCLA, such as greater engagement with academic and social environments and diversity-related activities and more positive perceptions of their abilities to be critical and global thinkers. These differences as well as two distinct differences for Transgender students, increased participation in co-curricular activities and lower perceptions of pluralistic orientation, are discussed in greater detail in the sections below.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Queer Student Experiences

LGBTQ students in this survey (n=407) reported higher mean scores on engagement and skills in comparison to the overall campus mean (see Table 2):

- **Higher reports of general interpersonal validation, integration of learning, habits of mind, and civic engagement.** LGBTQ students were more likely to agree that they have made positive interpersonal connections with faculty and staff on campus. Additionally, LGBTQ students reported higher frequencies of applying course materials (integration of learning) and problem-solving techniques (habits of mind), and were more likely to participate in community or global causes (civic engagement).

Table 1. Comparison of LGBT Students to Overall Campus Mean	Overall Campus (n=4,499)	LGBTQ Students (n=407)	Transgender Students (n=65)
Academic and Social Engagement			
General Interpersonal Validation	48.1	+	
Academic Validation in the Classroom	47.8		
Integration of Learning	48.7	+	
Habits of Mind	48.4	+	
Civic Engagement	50.4	+	
Diversity-related Activities			
Conversations across Differences	49.4	+	
Co-curricular Diversity Activities	49.1	+	+
Curriculum of Inclusion	47.7	+	
Global Skills and Perspectives (Agency)			
Critical Consciousness and Action	49.5	+	
Pluralistic Orientation	49.4	+	-
Social Agency	49.6		
Academic Self-Concept	50.3		
Campus Climate			
Sense of belonging	51.3	-	
Harassment	50.0	+	+
Cross Racial Interaction	50.0		
Negative Cross Racial Interaction	49.4	+	+
Institutional Commitment to Diversity	50.9	-	
Discrimination and Bias	49.9	+	+

Note: Differences are $p \leq .05$ or higher.

Table 2. Mean Differences of LGBQ Students and the Overall Campus Mean	LGBQ Students ¹ (n=407)	Overall Campus (n=4,501)	Mean Difference	Sig
Academic and Social Engagement				
General Interpersonal Validation	49.2	48.0	1.2	*
Integration of Learning	50.3	48.8	1.5	**
Habits of Mind	50.0	48.6	1.4	**
Civic Engagement	52.4	50.6	1.8	***
Diversity-related Activities				
Conversations across Differences	52.8	49.7	3.1	***
Co-curricular Diversity Activities	52.9	49.4	3.5	***
Curriculum of Inclusion	50.2	47.9	2.3	***
Global Skills and Perspectives (Agency)				
Critical Consciousness and Action	52.2	49.8	2.4	***
Pluralistic Orientation	50.9	49.5	1.4	**
Campus Climate				
Sense of belonging	49.7	50.8	-1.1	*
Harassment	52.7	50.4	2.3	***
Negative Cross Racial Interaction	52.1	51.0	1.1	*
Institutional Commitment to Diversity	49.2	50.5	-1.4	*
Discrimination and Bias	53.7	50.3	3.4	***

Note: ***p \leq .001; **p \leq .01; *p \leq .05; ¹ LGBTQ includes students that identified as homosexual, bisexual, and other.

- **Higher engagement with diversity-related activities.** LGBQ students were more likely to have conversations across difference and were more exposed to curricular experiences regarding differences in race/ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, privilege, or sexual orientation (curriculum of inclusion). LGBQ students were also more likely to participate in co-curricular diversity activities in comparison to their peers.
- **Higher perceptions of global skills.** LGBQ students were more likely to indicate engagement with social or political issues (critical consciousness and action), and feel prepared to engage in global issues (pluralistic orientation).

While in general, all students reported positive individual and interpersonal experiences, LGBQ students reported a **lower sense of belonging, perceptions of institutional commitment to diversity on campus, and higher rates of experiences of harassment, discrimination and bias, and negative cross racial interactions** (see Table 2). LGBQ students' reports of a higher

frequency of harassment and discrimination than their heterosexual peers (mean difference of 3.8; p \leq .000 and 2.8; p \leq .000) is of particular concern.

Incidences of discrimination and bias focus primarily on experiences with insensitive or disparaging remarks and exclusion. LGBQ students reported the most frequent source of discrimination was verbal comments from students (see Table 3). Harassment, on the other hand, included experiences with physical assaults or injuries, damage to personal property, and documentation of discriminatory experiences. In terms of harassment, LGBQ students were most likely to report experiences with sexual harassment and damage to personal property (see Table 3). These indicators may reflect a need to create more inclusive practices on campus that aim to reduce experiences with marginalization among students. Furthermore, strengthening opportunities for students to connect with resources and campus supports could facilitate student constructive interactions across differences.

LGBQ students reported **no differences** in cross-

Table 3. Experiences with Discrimination, Bias, and Harassment		LGBQ (n=391)		Transgender (n=65)	
		Often or Very Often	At All	Often or Very Often	At All
Discrimination and Bias					
	Discrimination from students	27%	82%	22%	86%
	Verbal comments	16%	67%	9%	69%
	Witness discrimination	15%	71%	9%	80%
	Exclusion	13%	48%	15%	49%
	Written comments	9%	42%	4%	48%
	Offensive visual images or items	8%	40%	17%	43%
	Discrimination from faculty	6%	37%	4%	48%
	Discrimination from staff	5%	35%	14%	42%
Harassment					
	Experienced sexual harassment	4%	29%	15%	29%
	Damage to personal property	4%	21%	14%	31%
	Anonymous phone calls	2%	20%	12%	29%
	Threats of physical violence	3%	21%	9%	29%
	Physical assaults or injuries	3%	16%	9%	29%

racial interactions, academic validation in the classroom, social agency and academic self-concept comparison to other students.

Transgender Student Experiences

The sample of Transgender students included students who identify with being a person who expresses a gender identity that differs from the one which corresponds to the person's sex at birth. There was sizable sample of Transgender student respondents to the DLE (n=65). As such, Transgender student experiences were disaggregated in analysis and revealed the following differences in comparison to the overall average (see Table 4):

- **Higher engagement with diversity-related co-curricular activities.**
- **Lower feelings of preparation** to engage in global issues (pluralistic orientation).
- **Higher experiences** with harassment, negative cross racial interactions, and discrimination and bias.

Similar to LGBQ student perceptions of campus climate, Transgender students reported greater

frequencies of discrimination and bias than their peers overall, particularly from other students (see Table 3). However, Transgender students also reported discrimination and bias through offensive visual images or items (17% often or very often; 43% had at least one experience). Additionally, Transgender students reported significantly greater experiences with sexual harassment ($p < .05$) and had similar rates of under-reporting of sexual harassment to campus authorities. Transgender students also experienced a significantly greater proportion of harassing anonymous phone calls than LGBQ students.

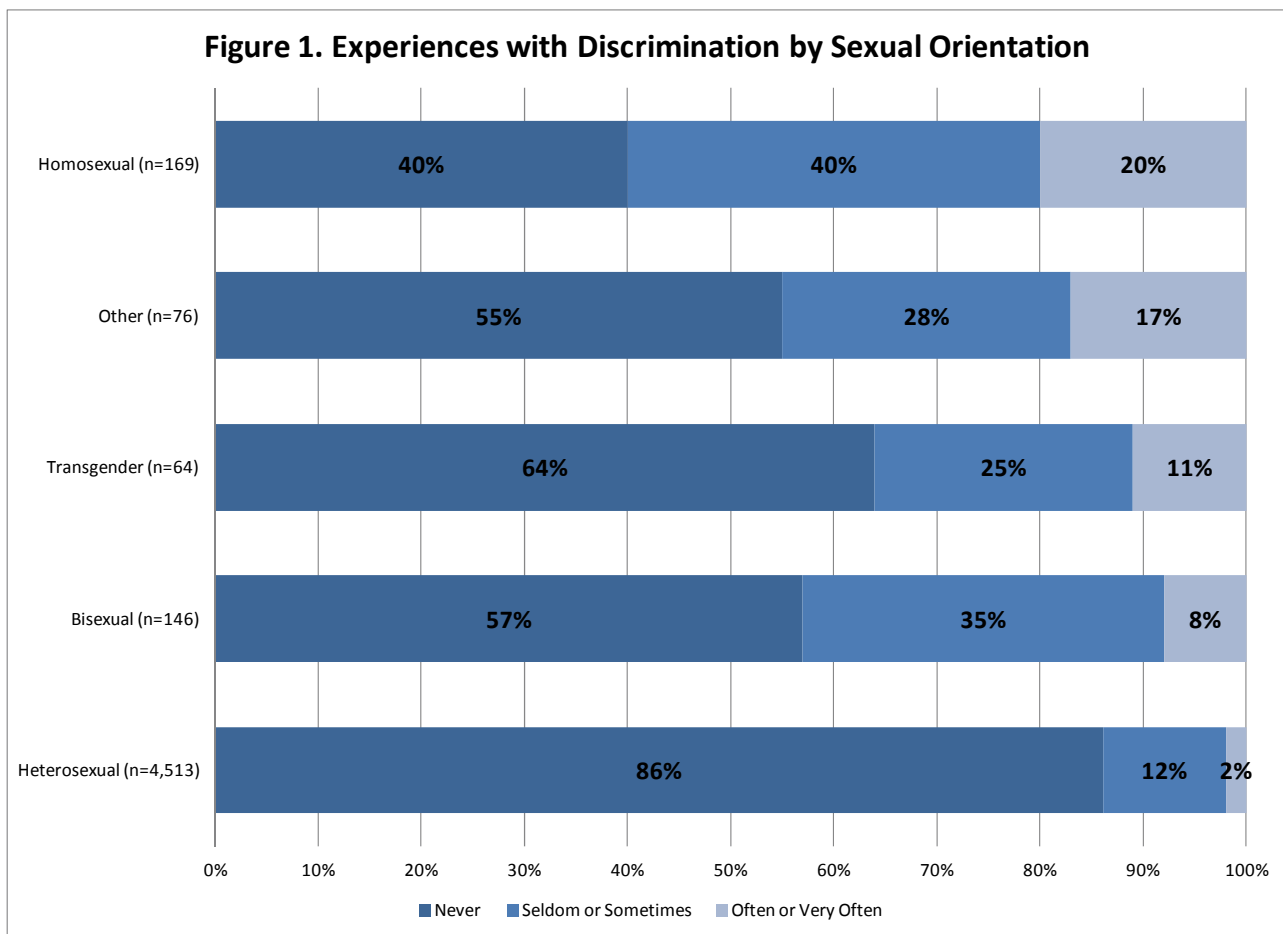
Table 4. Mean Differences of Transgender Students and the Overall Campus

	Transgender Students (n=65)	Overall Campus (n=4,908)	Mean Difference	Sig
Diversity-related Activities				
Co-curricular Diversity Activities	53.5	49.4	4.1	*
Global Skills and Perspectives (Agency)				
Pluralistic Orientation	46.5	49.5	-3.0	*
Campus Climate				
Harassment	57.2	50.2	7.0	**
Negative Cross Racial Interaction	55.4	50.8	4.6	**
Discrimination and Bias	55.6	50.2	5.4	**

Note: ***p≤.001; **p≤.01; *p≤.05

Perceptions of Discrimination Due to Sexual Orientation

Analysis was conducted to determine whether students perceived discrimination due to their sexual orientation. The question specifically asked students, “While at this college, how often have you experienced harassment or discrimination based on your sexual orientation.” When analyzed by sexual orientation, lesbian and gay students reported experiencing harassment or discrimination due to their sexual orientation (20% reported “often” or “very often” and 60% reported having experienced discrimination at all; see Figure 1). Bisexual and Transgender students reported fewer experiences with discrimination due to their sexual orientation, however, approximately 40% of each reported some experience of discrimination by sexual orientation while at UCLA.



Utilization of Student Services

Connecting students with available resources is an important priority for Student Affairs. Approximately 18% of LGBTQ students (81) participated in LGBT Center activities “often” or “very often” and almost half (47%) reported participating at least once. In terms of other support services, LGBTQ students utilized support from the student health center most frequently (21% among LGBT and 15% among Transgender students). Other services highly utilized by LGBTQ students included tutoring and academic assistance, career counseling and advising, and student psychological services (see Table 4). The DLE did not include a comprehensive list of all services offered at UCLA and it is likely that students are also seeking support in places not listed here.

Table 4. Utilization of Student Services among LGBQ & Transgender Students	LGBQ Students (n=407)		Transgender Students (n=65)	
	Used service "frequently"	Used service "at all"	Used service "frequently"	Used service "at all"
Student Health Center	21%	62%	15%	65%
Tutoring or other academic assistance	16%	52%	14%	60%
Career Counseling & Advising	16%	77%	6%	63%
Student Psychological Services	13%	34%	8%	32%
Financial Aid Advising	12%	44%	11%	48%
Disability Resource Center	5%	15%	3%	29%
Writing Center	5%	24%	3%	34%

Conclusion

The need for inclusive campus environments and experiences are of great concern for students affairs professionals and departments. While students with different sexual orientations and gender identifications receive some visibility on campus through the LGBT Resource Center, discussions of LGBT student experiences are often not included in broader campus conversations.

These results highlight specific areas that could benefit from greater attention, particularly in the ways in which the campus climate— students’ sense of belonging, experiences with harassment, discrimination and bias, and cross-racial interactions, and the frequency of conversations across differences – influence the students’ development and undergraduate experiences on campus. Analyses of the DLE data revealed that LGBT students experienced greater experiences of harassment, negative cross racial interactions, and discrimination and bias. In particular, Transgender students high reports of sexual harassment and under-reporting of incidents to campus authorities is an area of concern.

LGBT students also reported higher than average engagement in curriculum with a diverse focus, i.e., materials related to race, gender, sexual orientation, privilege, and etc. Given that these students also reported higher pluralistic orientations than the overall campus average, this suggests there may be correlations between students’ perspectives, course-taking patterns, and co-curricular engagement that could be explored further to see how such engagement supports student development.

References

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