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Safe Zones Task Force Final Report

University of Tennessee Safe Zones Task Force

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Safe Zones Task Force

Dr. Rod Ellis, Social Work, Co-Chair
Jane Redmond, Vice Chancellor, Co-Chair

The task force was established as a result of a Faculty Senate resolution.

Chancellor Loren Crabtree charged the Task Force to advise him on the planning, implementation and evaluation of a “Safe Zone” project on the Knoxville campus. After several meetings, extensive research and reviewing various manuals the Safe Zone Task Force presents the attached recommendation for the establishment of a Safe Zone plan at the University of Tennessee.

Proposal for the Creation of a Safe Zone

Mission Statement

To foster an atmosphere in the University of Tennessee that is increasingly supportive of diversity among students, faculty and staff. To foster a climate conducive to learning and personal growth for all. The Safe Zone would focus on services to the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered (GLBT) community, although it would support efforts to provide support to other marginalized groups as well.

Staffing and Development

The Safe Zone Task Force (appointed by Chancellor Crabtree) recommends a progressive, incremental approach to the development of the Safe Zone. The development of Safe Zone would begin with hiring and training a Graduate Administrative Assistant to develop and operate the program. The committee proposed that the program might be housed in some easily accessible and appropriately confidential location such as the Office of Equity and Diversity. Funding for the position would be supplied by the Chancellor’s Office or some other source within central administration. One of the key roles of the GA would be to develop a foundation for future expansion of the program to include a full time (1 FTE) coordinator in the second year of operation. Secondly, the GA would

enhance awareness of and the need for the program throughout the University community. This could be done in several ways by recruiting allies (faculty/staff) to establish “satellite” safe zone locations, training and coordinating volunteers who could perform various functions and also provide a limited number of services directly to members of the LGBT community and other marginalized groups as well. The training component is key in that it will help educate faculty and staff on the issues that LGBT students encounter while also providing resources for students and an environment that will help them feel safe. Upon completion of the training program, the faculty and staff are considered “allies” for the LGBT population.

The GA would also work closely with the Safe Zone Advisory Committee (described in the next section).

Program Implementation

In concern with the GA, the Safe Zone Advisory Committee will work to implement the “initial” components of the program. First, the Safe Zone program and training needs to be adapted to meet the needs of the University community. The Advisory Committee and GA will identify the specific needs of the LGBT community. An extensive collection of resource descriptions of other similar university programs were collected by the Safe Zone Task Force and several members of the Task Force have worked to develop similar programs at their universities.

Secondly, faculty and staff will need to be identified to complete the chosen training modules. Again, there are several training modules in which to select from.

Third, it is critical that the Safe Zone be recognized by our staff, faculty and students. Therefore, a strategic plan will need to be developed by the Advisory Committee and the GA and launched to make students and others aware of the program and its services. A key portion of the plan is to develop a Safe Zone symbol (yet to be selected) specifically related to the University of Tennessee. The symbol is a clear indicator to the LGBT population and colleagues that the person displaying the symbol is an ally who is understanding, supportive and trustworthy.

Safe Zone Advisory Committee

The Safe Zone Advisory committee would be composed of members of the university community who have a strong interest in and commitment to the development of an effective safe zone. The committee would advise and support the GA in his/her activities and role and help promote the development of both the primary zone location and satellite zones throughout the campus.

Responsibilities of the Safe Zone Advisory Committee would include:

- Develop a detailed job description and strategic plan to guide her/him in their activities.
- Participate in safe zone training. (provide information on different modules.)
- Support the university administration's efforts to identify the resources to establish and sustain the Safe Zone initiative consisting of a full-time (1 FTE) staff member, a permanent location, and an ongoing operating budget.
- Engage in and support efforts to fund supplementary external funding that would augment ongoing training, supportive resources, and ongoing publicity and public relations activity.
- Support efforts to find funding to sustain and expand Safe Zone to include a full time (1FTE) staff member, a permanent location, other necessary resources (library, education materials), an operating budget, and training.
- Help recruit and coordinate volunteers to work in Safe Zone.

Safe Zone Volunteers

Safe Zone volunteers would be members of the university and Knoxville communities who are supportive of the Safe Zone's goals and are willing to devote regular time to the activities of the Safe Zone. Examples of such activities might be helping to staff the physical location of the Safe Zone during specified hours, being able to answer phone calls, assisting with providing training to other volunteers and allies, and helping to facilitate groups and educational activities for members of the LBGT community.

Safe Zone Ally Initiative

The initiative would provide the university community with information, training, resources and guidance regarding the issues facing LGBT individuals and other marginalized groups.

A Safe Zone ally would be a member of the UT community who is committed to visibly supporting members of the LGBT population and other individuals affected by sexual violence (or threats), or other inappropriate behavior against historically marginalized groups. The Safe Zone ally project would contribute to a safer campus and a more receptive and supportive campus climate.

The Safe Zone initiative would serve as the central resource for educating the campus community about LGBT issues and the staff will provide advocacy on the behalf of LGBT students. The initiative would promote Safe Zones by recruiting allies, providing training for them, and encouraging them to place Safe Zone symbols on their doors or showing the symbol to others. These symbols signify that this space is a safe place to talk about issues which impact people affected by homophobia, sexual violence/ threats or other inappropriate behaviors.

The initiative would also promote the establishment of a center for counseling development and implementing training and orientation programs and housing resource materials. The office would offer quality programs that educate, create community, offer support and foster dialogue. Such programming of our peer institutions include: National Coming Out Day, LGBTQ Faculty and Students of Color Lunch, AIDS awareness week, educational speakers and films.

Services to be offered

1. a safe place and a listening ear
2. referral to resources for further support or professional help,
3. training for volunteers, allies and other members of the university community,
4. library/resources materials,
5. psycho education and support groups;

6. a visible reminder to non-LGBT people that there are LGBT people here,
7. a visible reminder to non-LGBT people that there are LGBT allies/supporters here, too.

Assessment

A final component of any new initiative is to incorporate an instrument that measures the outcomes of the program.