



RESIDENCE HALL DIVERSITY GROUPS

BY VAL ERWIN - MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY NCC

Most halls have hall governments, however very few have organizations that are not a hall government and instead are directly focused on diversity on campus. At Michigan State there are many different types of groups that look at diversity in a specifically residence hall setting.

The first is the Black Caucus. In 1969 the first Black Caucus was formed in Wilson Hall in response to the firing of a Black Cafeteria worker. The Black students of that hall came together in response to the firing they felt was unjust, and had a four day sit-in as a response. Part of the demand of the sit-in was for that group of students to have a Black Culture Room in Wilson Hall. The groups started to spread across campus, each having their own culture rooms. Currently there are 17 Black Caucuses targeting specific halls or groupings of halls on Michigan State's Campus. The groups have different significance in each community. One such example of what a Black Causes hopes to achieve is in the Wilson Hall Black Caucus Constitution:

To stress the importance of academic success for Black students, to promote the political and cultural awareness of and for Blacks, to promote unity and understanding among Blacks, to become a strong minority so that we can adequately defend the rights of all Black students within the Caucus and on-campus; to improve the social life of Black residents; to commit ourselves to offering educational programming to help minority students and other individuals of color become aware of our particular concerns and needs, while at the same time becoming aware and striving to understand their needs and concerns; and to provide for the future enhancement of the Black community.

The Black Caucuses at MSU have brought about popular programming events such as Fake the Funk lip sync contested that started out as a one hall program and is now so large it is held in the largest venue at Michigan State.

Next we have the LGBT Caucuses that support the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender communities with in the residence halls. There are currently five different caucuses on campus, one for each of the complexes or groupings of halls at Michigan

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- NACURH.org now publishes all of our newsletters online. Check out NBD publications for more information!
- If you want to get involved please contact us on the back page!


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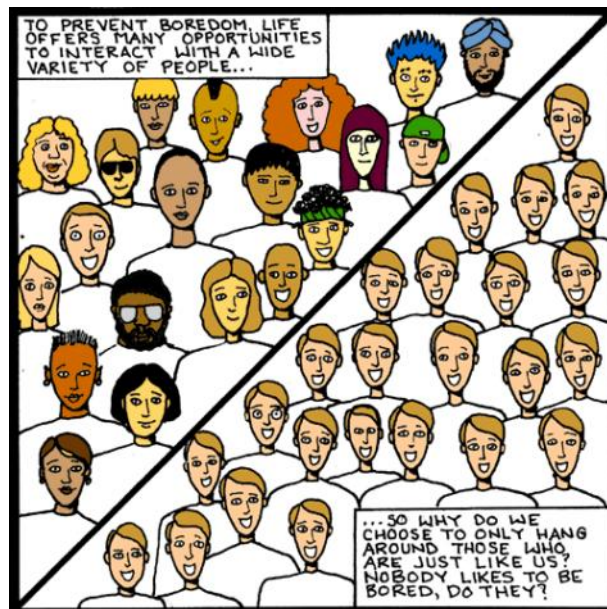
RESIDENCE HALL DIVERSITY GROUPS (CONTINUED)

State's campus. They also have their own rooms and provide education and support for the LGBT community. They provide programs on things like religion and sexuality, who is gay?, and drag shows.

Both of these types of caucuses are funded by the Residence Halls Association through a percentage of the allocation for the individual hall government. A representative from each complex represents each type of group so there is one representative to RHA from the LGBT group in East complex and one from the Black Caucuses in East Complex.

The last of the types of groups that are focused on multicultural experience in the Residence Halls is MRULE (Multi-Racial Unity Living Experience). This is a program that focuses on having students talk about diversity issues in a free dialogue lead by students and trained by professors. This free exchange of ideas has helped to make dialogue between all students easier and more focused on the whole community. These dialogues occur in three locations across campus and also focus on bringing students on field trips to unique places in diverse groups.

These three types of groups, along with other groups that are only residence hall focused, have added to the diversity at Michigan State in a way unique to many. By having these groups work with hall governments we are able to represent a more diverse population. To my knowledge, Similar groups are held on three other campuses across the country: Northern Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin-Eau Claire. The focus of these groups is somewhere between a Black caucus and how MRULE focuses on talks about diversity and diversity programming. 



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DIVERSITY TRAINING FOR RESIDENTS

BY JESSICA KNOX - UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-GREEN BAY NRHH CC

Take a moment and think about what you've learned about diversity during your college career. What memories come to mind? Do you think of real life experiences? Or do you think of training experiences that have opened up your eyes? One of the most profound experiences I have had in my college career was one that opened my mind to see how many people refuse to open up their mind to differences in others during a training session. As I sat through our Residence Life diversity training this past spring, I began to wonder how different the discussions we were having would be if we went to a different school, perhaps a large school.

I currently pledge my allegiance to the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. This is a small school of about 5,000 people. Within these 5,000 people there isn't much diversity to be found. There is very little difference in what anyone here looks like or in what kind of economic background many of the students come from. This probes the question: what are the students here really learning about diversity during their college career and how they are learning these lessons? One tactic Green Bay has used as a small school is to focus training on a specific group and have the group take forward any education of the general student population through programming. One of the groups that receive the training is all staff members of Residence Life. This past year during Residence Life training there have been two main focuses: defining diversity and economic diversity. Once the Resident Assistants have been trained, it is expected that this group will take forth what they have learned and teach it to others through programming and through living by example.


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This education of the overall student population isn't left to just the Resident Assistant staff. The campus's diversity task force plays a giant role in all diversity programming that happens on campus. Not only does the task force provide quality programs for all students, but they also work to approve and improve all RA diversity programs that will take place on campus. With these two entities working to provide an education to all students, Green Bay feels it is doing the best it can to provide diversity training to all students.

On a different level is New York University. This is a school of almost 51,000 students. While I am unable to speak on spe-

cific staff training that is provided, I have found that NYU has a different tactic than Green Bay when it comes to educating the general student population. The Center for Multicultural Education and Programs (CMEP) is a great resource for student training. This is an organization that strives “to provide cultural competency training and education for all students to enhance community development, leadership, global advantage.” The programs provided include focuses on race, religion, and economic diversity year round. NYU has an approach of having a specific organization for training all students as opposed to UWGB’s approach of focusing its efforts on a group of student leaders.

This now leaves us with the question of why each university has a different approach. With Green Bay’s approach, the student leaders that are focused on are generally seen as leaders throughout campus, not just in residence life. The advantage of a small school “where everyone knows your name” is used. Through the Residence Life staff, the training’s effects are shown and spread through campus as the students lead by example and encourage friends to attend the programming provided to promote diversity. NYU also uses its resources to its advantage. CMEP provides excellent opportunities to students to receive training in specific areas of diversity.

Are both campuses doing their best to provide a diversity education to all students? Is UWGB’s approach of using training on student leaders to spread the education as effective as NYU’s approach of having training available to all students throughout the year? Both school’s have taken advantage of the resources available to them and appear to have found success with both approaches. Each one has found what works for it and is continually working towards educating others about the importance of diversity. 

POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL DIVERSITY ON CAMPUS

BY TONY FANGEL - NEW YORK UNIVERSITY IRHC ADVISOR

As a student I hope I receive unbiased information in the classroom that I can use in formulating my own conclusions. Although I understand that all professors have their own biases, it is imperative that the classroom remains viewpoint-neutral. Students should not be punished for having diverse beliefs that contradict the professor, so long as discourse is civil.

However, a number of authors and critics argue that the American university is a bastion for liberal attitudes and professors that encourage liberal thought while admonishing anything contrary. Certainly there is evidence to support this view. In the 2004 Presidential Election, the only age demographic that liberal candidate John Kerry won was the 18-29 year-old bracket. Of course, there are many other factors that may have influenced the election. Other evidence comes from groups such as [Students for Academic Freedom](#) and the Center for the Study of Popular Culture, who have concluded from their research that Democrats outnumber Republicans on campus ten to one.

The Students for Academic Freedom, founded by David Horowitz, exists to “end the political abuse of the university and to restore integrity to the academic mission as a disinterested pursuit of knowledge.” The group’s website reports specific incidents of what they call ideological bias at universities. The group is also recognized for publishing and distributing the Academic Bill of Rights (*see right*). The Academic Bill of Rights has been proposed in Congress, and is advocated for to end putative professorial indoctrination on campuses. Some groups, both liberal and conservative, have claimed that this bill would actually infringe academic freedom rather than protect it.

Many campuses also have their own chapters of College Democrats or College Republicans. The [College Republican National Committee](#), the umbrella organization for College Republicans, boasts 250,000 members on 1,800 campuses nationwide. The [College Democrats of America](#), on the other hand, has chapters on 1,200 campuses with an estimated 120,000 members. Political ideology on campuses can be a divisive issue, but it is important that each viewpoint is let into the marketplace of ideas without hindrance.

The widely distributed *Chronicle on Higher Education* recently summarized a few studies regarding liberal bias in education. It notes research by the American Federation of Teachers and the American Council of Trustees and Alumni,

ACADEMIC BILL OF RIGHTS *Eight Principles*

1. All faculty shall be hired, fired, promoted and granted tenure on the basis of their competence and appropriate knowledge in the field of their expertise and, in the humanities, the social sciences, and the arts, with a view toward fostering a plurality of methodologies and perspectives. No faculty shall be hired or fired or denied promotion or tenure on the basis of his or her political or religious beliefs.
2. No faculty member will be excluded from tenure, search and hiring committees on the basis of their political or religious beliefs.
3. Students will be graded solely on the basis of their reasoned answers and appropriate knowledge of the subjects and disciplines they study, not on the basis of their political or religious beliefs.
4. Curricula and reading lists in the humanities and social sciences should reflect the uncertainty and unsettled character of all human knowledge in these areas by providing students with dissenting sources and viewpoints where appropriate. While teachers are and should be free to pursue their own findings and perspectives in presenting their views, they should consider and make their students aware of other viewpoints. Academic disciplines should welcome a diversity of approaches to unsettled questions.
5. Exposing students to the spectrum of significant scholarly viewpoints on the subjects examined in their courses is a major responsibility of faculty. Faculty will not use their courses for the purpose of political, ideological, religious or anti-religious indoctrination.
6. Selection of speakers, allocation of funds for speakers programs and other student activities will observe the principles of academic freedom and promote intellectual pluralism.
7. An environment conducive to the civil exchange of ideas being an essential component of a free university, the obstruction of invited campus speakers, destruction of campus literature or other effort to obstruct this exchange will not be tolerated.
8. Knowledge advances when individual scholars are left free to reach their own conclusions about which methods, facts, and theories have been validated by research. Academic institutions and professional societies formed to advance knowledge within an area of research, maintain the integrity of the research process, and organize the professional lives of related researchers serve as indispensable venues within which scholars circulate research findings and debate their interpretation. To perform these functions adequately, academic institutions and professional societies should maintain a posture of organizational neutrality with respect to the substantive disagreements that divide researchers on questions within, or outside, their fields of inquiry.

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POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL DIVERSITY ON CAMPUS (CONTINUED)

among others. Most of these scholarly articles conclude that professors have an overwhelming liberal political bias on the most prestigious campuses in the U.S. The research looks at how professors in the primary social sciences register to vote. Fields such as political science, anthropology, economics, history, philosophy, and sociology are regularly surveyed. One study concludes that liberals outnumber conservatives 30 to one in the field of anthropology.

Academia usually responds to these studies by questioning the methods or quality of the research. It is important to note in the analysis of this research that critics of Academia are claiming both that professors are overwhelmingly liberal *and* that they push their beliefs onto the students in the classroom. An article titled *Is the Academy a Liberal Hegemony?* by John F. Zipp and Rudy Fenwick was recently published questioning the claims of liberal bias on campus. They explore surveys done in 1989 and 1997 to determine the political direction that professors are going. This study is different from others because it examines political ideology rather than political affiliation. All Democrats are not liberal, and in fact some Republicans are more liberal than some Democrats. It is important to remember that the two primary political parties do not always have exact correlation with liberal and conservative values. These values are a spectrum, whereas the party system is binary. Values are not black and white but political parties are.

In Zipp and Fenwick's research, they conclude that liberals do dominate some fields. Social fields like social sciences, fine arts, and humanities were more liberal. However, they also found that conservatives were more prominent in technical, vocation, health, and business fields. They also studied the differences between institutional types. Prestigious liberal arts colleges, the schools often cited by other studies as having ten Democrats to every one Republican, are in fact the most liberal institutions in the country. Furthermore, they only contain about 6% of all students in the U.S. Interestingly, the majority of students in America are now at community colleges – institutions which have the most conservative faculty. In relative comparison, however, even community colleges have slightly more liberal than conservative faculty. Zipp and Fenwick notice over time that professors, rather than becoming more liberal, are actually gravitating from both ends towards the center.

This article further explores whether these professors push their beliefs onto students. They conclude from their research that conservative professors seemed to value academic freedom less than liberal professors. Conservative professors also favored shaping student values more than liberal professors did. Although Zipp and Fenwick's study deduces that liberal professors are not pushing their agenda onto students, it is difficult to measure such a thing. From this study and, though, it appears as if American colleges and universities are not a bastion for liberals who punish students with conservative viewpoints. This undoubtedly does happen in some classrooms, but it most likely happens with other viewpoints as well.

I had some conservative professors at my Catholic-affiliated undergraduate institution who pushed a religious agenda in the classroom. Perhaps this is not unexpected. However, as my opinions began to form I wrote final papers directly attacking the viewpoints of some of my professors— I was not punished for my beliefs. As long as I articulated my view eloquently and argued efficaciously I received a grade just as high as someone who completely agreed with the professor. In a similar vein, I also had liberal professors who subtly argued for what they believed in. Sometimes I disagreed, sometimes not, but my point of view was always treated with respect. As I have contemplated what it would be like in front of a classroom teaching young students about what I have learned over the years, I have realized it would be markedly difficult to extract my biases (both physical biases like my genetic makeup and social biases like my experiences) from my teachings. Perhaps this is the indicator of a proficient and brilliant professor: completely unbiased teaching. You just might find yourself in this situation if you are in a class wondering, "I wonder what Dr. Hatting *really* thinks about capital punishment." In my experience, these are the best classes you will ever have. 

LINKS

A look at the concept of race:

<http://www.understandingrace.org>

Get higher education news:

<http://www.chronicle.com>

Looking for grad schools?:

<http://www.myaacpa.org/c12/directory.htm>

NACURH 2007 Website:

<http://www.mio.uwosh.edu/nacurh>

RHA WEBSITE SPOTLIGHT

Michigan State University:

<http://rha.msu.edu>



NACURH Task Force on
Social and Diversity Issues

E-mail the Task Force Chair:
sageleader@gmail.com

If you have any suggestions,
comments, or criticisms feel free to
contact us. If you would like to get
involved, please e-mail the Task Force
Chair.

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Tony Fangel—Chair, IRHC Advisor & Grad Student, New York University, NEACURH
Marylou Bagus, NCC, University of the Pacific, PACURH
Marley Blonsky, NCC, University of Washington, PACURH
Val Erwin, NCC, Michigan State University, GLACURH
Jessica Knox, NRHH CC, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, GLACURH
Daryl Lawrence, RCC Minnesota, Minnesota State University - Mankato, MACURH