



Thursday, October 23, 2003

New program creates SAFE campus environment

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

Oakland University students who may be struggling with personal issues related to sexual orientation or gender identity now have places on campus to turn to for support. The SAFE On Campus program (Students, Administrators and Faculty for Equality) is a new organization committed to providing an open and supportive environment for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) campus community. Program participants, or "allies," are available for assistance and also help challenge homophobia, heterosexism and other forms of discrimination.

"SAFE was created because there is no single area of the university geared specifically toward helping the LGBT community," said Sara Crampton, SAFE program coordinator. "Our allies have an impact on the campus culture by combating stereotypes, and by letting students know it's okay to be themselves."

SAFE is not intended to be a counseling program, but rather, a support system for students dealing with sexual-orientation issues.

"Our SAFE allies are trained to recognize people who are facing issues more significant than what the program provides, and can direct people toward professional services for help," Crampton said.

To become a SAFE ally, participants attend a two-hour information session where they learn more about the program, available resources, the developmental process of a typical LGBT student, and participate in a panel discussion with members of Oakland's LGBT community. After signing a SAFE On Campus agreement, new allies are given a placard to display in their office or living space. The placard helps the community to identify the allies, thereby recognizing that they are persons who are knowledgeable about LGBT resources and are willing to assist in a variety of ways. Allies also become part of a SAFE On Campus listserv, to be used as an ongoing information and education source.

Upcoming SAFE information sessions are scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 30, from 9-11 a.m. in the Oakland Center's Lake Superior Room A; and Monday, Nov. 17, from 4-6 p.m. in the Oakland Center's Lake Michigan Room. To pre-register or for more information about the program, contact Sara Crampton at (248) 370-2024 or crampton@oakland.edu.

Oakland University reaffirms its unwavering commitment to equality of opportunity for all persons. In a society that relies on an informed, educated citizenry, no one should be denied the opportunity to attain his or her fullest potential. It is therefore the policy of Oakland University that no person shall be discriminated against on the basis of race, sex, age, handicap, color, religion, creed, sexual orientation, national origin or ancestry, marital status, or veteran status.

For the complete Discrimination Policy, refer to the "Policies and Procedures" section of the **Oakland University Student Handbook**.

SUMMARY

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