

Providing Support for Minority LGBTQ Students: Developing a Queer Studies Course

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Abstract : The LGBTQ youth of color face stigma related to both race and gender identity. Effectively dealing with racial/ethnic discrimination requires strong connections to family and one's racial/ethnic group. However, LGBTQ youth of color seldom receive support from family, peer groups or church groups. Moreover, ethnic communities often perceive LGBTQ identities as a rejection of ethnic heritage. Thus, stigma places these young people at greater risk for substance use, violence, risky sexual behaviors, suicide, and homelessness. Offering a Queer Studies (QS) class is one way to facilitate a safer and more inclusive environment for LGBTQ students, faculty and staff. The discipline of Queer Studies encompasses theories and thinkers from numerous fields: cultural studies, gay and lesbian studies, race studies, women's studies, media, postmodernism, post-colonialism, psychoanalysis and more. We began our course development by researching existing programs and classes. Several course syllabi were examined and course materials such as readings, videos, and guest speakers were assessed for possible inclusion. We also employed informal survey methods with students and faculty in order to gauge interest in the course. We then developed a sample course syllabus and began the process of new course approval. Feedback thus far indicates that students of various sexual orientations and gender identities are interested in the course and understand the need to offer it; faculty in Psychology, Social Work, and Interdisciplinary Studies are interested in cross-listing the course; library staff is willing to assist with course material acquisition, and the administration is supportive. The purpose of this session is to 1) explore the various health and wellness issues facing LGBTQ students of color and 2) share our experience of developing a QS course in health education in order to address these needs. This process, from initial recognition of the need to a course offering, will be described and discussed in the hopes that participants will increase their awareness of the issues. A QS course would be an appropriate requirement for any number of majors as well as an elective for any major.

Keywords : black colleges, health education, LGBTQ, queer studies

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