

UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER Currents



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‘Safe Space’ initiative aims to foster inclusion efforts

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) faculty, staff, and students—and those that support them—have an additional resource for questions or issues that might arise around sexual orientation and gender identity issues in the workplace.

“Safe Space” is a training initiative intended to create a safer and freer environment for all members of the University community

regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity or expression. The goal of the program is to provide training to faculty, staff, and students that will qualify them to display a small “Safe Space” sign in their workspaces. The signs will identify trained volunteers who are available to answer questions or engage in discussions about LGBT issues. You don’t have to be gay to drop by a Safe Space to ask a question.

When you see a Safe Space sticker posted in an office at the University, you will know the person there has been trained to listen in a non-judgmental way to help find answers to questions, problem solve, or pass along a referral for more complicated issues. Safe Space participants have attended one or more training workshops at which they’ve learned how to examine their own attitudes and beliefs, thereby building awareness and skills.

Kristin Hocker, a Safe Space trainer, says some actions can have devastating impact if not kept in check. “People can make comments—unaware that they are hurting feelings.” Raising awareness helps everyone in the University community to feel included.

All conversations with Safe Space–trained staff are confidential.

Safe Space has been in the works for more than a year and is now in place thanks to dedicated faculty and staff from all corners of the University, including the Office of Human Resources, Multicultural Affairs and Inclusion, the Pride Alliance, the Warner School, and the Intercessor of the Office of the Provost. The School of Nursing and School of Medicine and Dentistry also participated in the program.

The initiative supports the University’s policy 106, Policy Against Discrimination and Harassment, which includes nondiscrimination relating to matters of gender identity and expression.

If you are interested in participating in Safe Space training, contact Stanley Byrd in the Office Human Resources, Multicultural Affairs and Inclusion at Stanley.byrd@rochester.edu