



November 8, 2006

I am writing to express my extreme disappointment and concern regarding the passage of the constitutional amendment banning marriage, civil unions, and potentially other legal protections for gay and lesbian couples. Without a doubt, this amendment will do grievous harm to the University, to members of our community, and to the state of Wisconsin.

Our ability to recruit and retain the highest caliber faculty, staff, and students has long been compromised by our lack of domestic partner benefits and the very threat of such an amendment; the actuality of the amendment will only multiply the problem. A great many of our community members will be personally and dramatically affected by this vote. Equally importantly, it is crucial that we remember that discrimination is not harmful only on an individual basis, but is destructive to the very fabric of the entire community. We remain fully committed to supporting and working towards a community that respects, recognizes the equality of, and values all of its diverse members.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank those who fought against this amendment, and to offer our support for those who are grieving as a result of its passage. As we continue to reflect on this strike against equality and to think about what we can do next, I encourage you to take advantage of the many resources that are available to support you. The LGBT Campus Center offers a safe space for students, faculty, and staff to come together, to find community, and to discuss the impact of this vote. The Student Advocacy and Judicial Affairs deans in the Offices of the Dean of Students are available to offer you support, resources, and connections. The staff of the Counseling and Consultation Center can help you as you process your reactions to and feelings about yesterday's events. We will be offering a listening session for the entire campus community in the upcoming week.

As we reflect upon the impact of this vote, it is important that we also remember the positives: young people and students overwhelmingly rejected the amendment. A diverse and wonderful coalition of people -- Democrats, Republicans, and Independents; numerous faith communities; people of all sexual orientations; lawyers, businessmen and women, clergy members, educators, and students; and people of all ages -- came together to fight this amendment. Though it may be but small consolation right now, it is hard to imagine that history will not one day prove this to be a shameful aberration in our otherwise progressive tradition.

Sincerely,

Lori M. Berquam  
Dean of Students, Interim

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