

Time and Change

Finally! That was my first thought when I heard the OSU's Board of Trustees had passed domestic partner benefits. As excited as I am that this battle is finally won, I am disappointed that it took so long. Ohio State prides itself on being number one in athletics and being a pioneer in research and education. However, when it came to treating its GLBT employees and students fairly, it was forced to take a backseat to almost every major University in the nation. I worry that media attention given to the subject now and the attention given to similar victories at Ohio University and Miami University gives the impression that this was a new or recent issue for Ohio State, I assure you, it is not.

The issue of domestic partner benefits has been a high-level agenda item for the University for more than 15 years. As far back as the mid 80's, every President has carried this agenda item forward in some manner. Further, resolutions from student government, faculty senate, staff advisory committee, and support from virtually every top ranking official has been present the entire time as well. Then what has been roadblock? For years, it was easy to blame the board of trustees as being too conservative, or too Republican, or just not caring. Nobody believed their warnings that the legislature would cut funding to Ohio State just for passing domestic partner benefits. After DOMA, I think it is clear that Ohio's legislature would truly stop at nothing to make us second-class citizens...even penalizing the beloved Buckeyes.

It disgusts me that education has been held hostage by the legislature to push gays back into the closet. I am thoroughly disappointed that my alma mater is located in a state that doesn't respect me and looks at me as a second-class citizen.

We are now at a crossroads. The University has made a public commitment to the GLBT community and stood up to the legislature saying that GLBT faculty, staff, and students do matter. That needs to be backed up on campus with more than just employee benefits. The University must look at inclusiveness across all areas of the University. When will there be a Gay and Lesbian Studies department? Are the textbooks that faculty use inclusive? Is there inclusiveness across all fields? When will the university dedicate the same resources towards recruiting and retaining GLBT students as they do other minorities? When will the University take transgender issues seriously?

The most important question is "What have the University leaders and board members learned and what are they going to do with that knowledge?" Our board is made up of some of the most influential business and political leaders in the state. Friday, they each expressed the value of the GLBT community at Ohio State and the necessity to treat us equitably. The trustees and the University have an obligation to help make equality a priority for the state. Ohio State is the land grant university for Ohio which means that they have an obligation to educate the people of Ohio, not just the students who step foot on campus, but all of Ohio's citizens. Ohio State has benefited from the contributions of the GLBT community more than any other entity in the state...it is now time to step forward and be the state's educator. It is time to show how laws such as DOMA and

FMA discriminate and how those laws hurt Ohio. It is time to step forward and demand that the political agenda is one of inclusiveness not discrimination.

For the past few year's, Ohio State's motto has been, "Do something great!" It is now time to live up to that motto.

Jack Miner is the President of The Ohio State University Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Alumni Society and under President Gee served as Chair of the University Staff Advisory Committee.