

A horizontal rainbow flag graphic with six stripes of equal width: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple, centered on the slide.

# LGBT Student Experience Study

Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges

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*VOICE-Broad Spectrum Webinar*

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# LGBT Student Study

- Inspired by the 2011 Climate Study.
  - Nearly 7% of respondents identified as LGBT+
- Partnership with AAVMC, Purdue, University of Tennessee, UPENN, University of Wisconsin.
- Methodology:
  - **Phase 1:**

Anonymous electronic survey targeted to student organizations. The survey was rolled out primarily through social media channels.

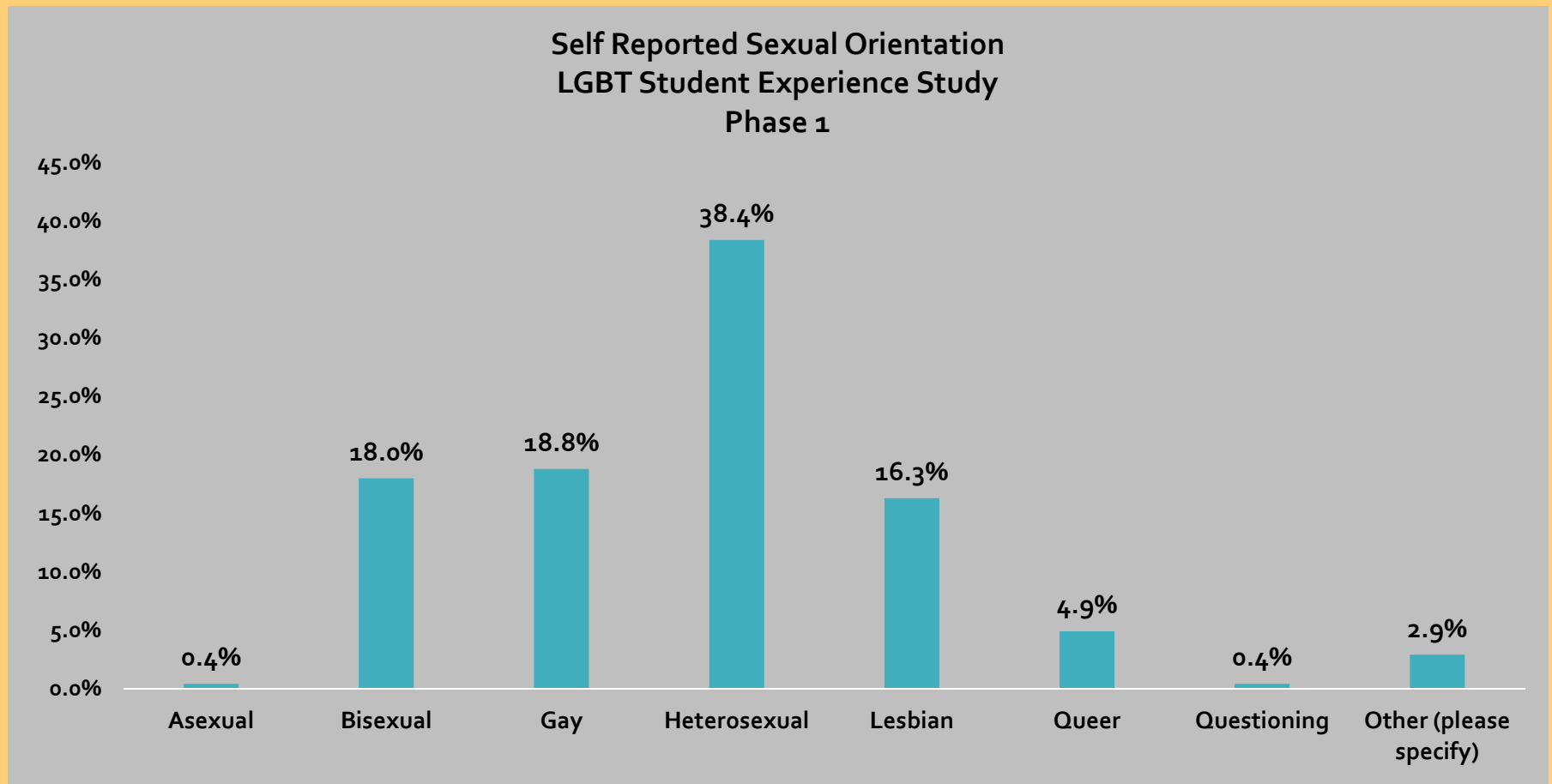
    - Demographic data
    - Two research queries:
      - Describe the climate for LGBT students at your institution.
      - Describe how the climate has affected your academic experience.
  - **Phase 2:**
    - 8 LGBT students were invited to participate in follow up interviews probing Phase 1 findings.
    - Secondary data collection (in-depth interviews) occurred this spring (2013).

# Phase I

Major data collection occurred last fall during  
LGBT History Month  
(October, 2012).

- 246 responses were recorded in the online survey.
  - Average age: 23/24
  - 93.4% identified racially as White
  - 6.6% identified as transgender or on the trans spectrum
  - 42% identified as living in the Southern region of the US
  - 1/3 of respondents were 3<sup>rd</sup> year veterinary students
  - 49.2% of respondents identified as single, 43.9% identified as partnered
- 152 LGBT student responses
  - Slightly older average age – 25
  - 94.3% identified as White
  - 62.4% identified as women,
    - 2.1% identified as neither male or female
  - 9.2% identified on the trans spectrum
  - Largest group identified as Gay, followed by Bisexual, then Lesbian
  - 30.1% are 3<sup>rd</sup> year students.
  - 27.3% of LGBT respondents are “out” to everyone.
  - 3.5% of LGBT respondents are “out” to no one.

# Phase I



The research team added a Phase III to the project to separately analyze responses of students who self identified as heterosexual.



Codes Used in the Text Analysis.

# Phase I

LGBT Student Identified Climates		
Warm Climate	Lukewarm Climates	Chilly Climate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accepting Community</li> <li>• Ally identification</li> <li>• Commitment to Building Community</li> <li>• Student driven Change</li> <li>• Availability of Services &amp; Programming</li> <li>• Presence of Welcoming Symbols &amp; Language</li> <li>• Presence of Out Students &amp; Faculty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate outward support</li> <li>• External Factors of Support</li> <li>• Passive Support</li> <li>• Ever Changing Support Levels</li> <li>• Inconsistent Student support</li> <li>• Unknown Faculty Support</li> <li>• Unknown LGBT Counselor Expertise</li> <li>• Unknown/Lack of Out Faculty</li> <li>• Professional Orgs- But Not Social</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoidance/Ignored</li> <li>• Superficial support</li> <li>• No outward support</li> <li>• Hidden support network</li> <li>• Poor Treatment</li> <li>• Students are warned</li> <li>• Generalized Perception of Non-Acceptance</li> <li>• Absence of Support Symbols</li> <li>• Compartmentalizing Life</li> </ul>

# So what do students say about these climates?

## ***Warm Climates***

- *“My academic experience has greatly improved since the formation of the LGVMA (the LGBT club) because it actually inspired me to come out at school. I feel supported and more like myself, so my grades have improved, I'm happier to participate in class and clinics, and I'm more sociable now that I feel like I'm not living a lie.” (3<sup>rd</sup> year student)*
- *“The support that I have had has helped me spend less time focusing on how to act around my peers (I feel comfortable just being myself) and I am able to focus more on my grades.” (2<sup>nd</sup> year student)*
- *“I felt very welcomed coming into veterinary school, mainly because of my fellow students. At orientation, one female student talked about social events and bringing spouses or significant others to them. She said that her wife was always made to feel welcomed. There were also a few other out lesbians in the class above me and they seemed very open and comfortable with themselves in the school environment.” (2<sup>nd</sup> year student)*

# So what do students say about these climates?

## *Lukewarm Climates*

- *"While I'm not out-out, since it's not a totally clearly supportive environment, I'm no more likely to actually be out to anyone other than close friends. I can't know that I'm supported/protected in the event that my sexual orientation is seen as a "problem" by anyone."* (4<sup>th</sup> year student)
- *"I believe that veterinary school is difficult enough without having to have internal struggles of who you can trust and how you think your sexuality will affect what others think of you."* (3<sup>rd</sup> year student)
- *Academically and professionally I am always guarded about revealing my orientation because I don't want it to effect my interactions until I know those students, faculty or staff better. Having support at the CVM doesn't always effect this because individuals have different views.* (2<sup>nd</sup> year student)
- *I do not think my grades have been impacted directly... However, there have been points that topics have been raised in class and I refuse to participate in a discussion because it is so uneducated and comments are offensive. I am not in clinics yet, and overall, social interactions have been manageable to this point. I do think it would be beneficial to have more education within the program.* (3<sup>rd</sup> year student)



# So what do students say about these climates?

## *Chilly Climates*

- “It can be tough from day-to-day to survive.” (3<sup>rd</sup> year student)
- “There is honestly not a lot of support for LGBT students in my CVM from faculty and staff. I think it might partially be due to the fact that students do not want to come out to faculty and staff because of fear they may get treated differently...” (3<sup>rd</sup> year student)
- “I think that my appearance has affected the opinions other first years may have of me. I feel less inclined to seek out study groups, etc. and my grades may or may not suffer for that reason.” (1<sup>st</sup> year student)
- “I am only out to a very few people, so I'm used to a low level of support. I've got a tough shell, so it has not really affected me other than I feel weird sometimes going to social functions because I fear I will out myself or someone will consume enough alcohol to lose their inhibitions and just ask me.” (3<sup>rd</sup> year student)

# Phase I Findings

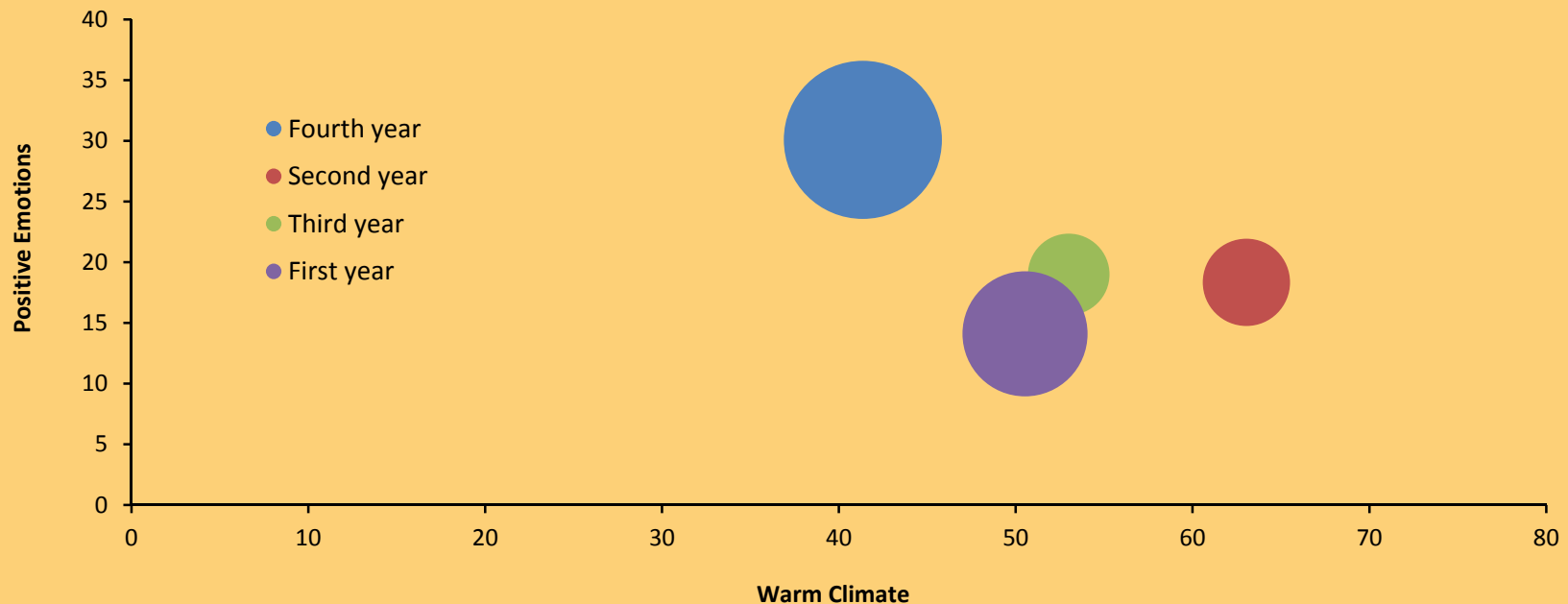
Student Emotions Associated with Climate Type By Analysis Code	
Positive Emotions	Negative Emotions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exceeding expectations</li> <li>• Free</li> <li>• Hopeful</li> <li>• I feel safe</li> <li>• Not Afraid</li> <li>• Others are comfortable with me</li> <li>• Positive affect</li> <li>• Positive Self Esteem</li> <li>• Reduced stress</li> <li>• Satisfaction in school choice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessing Services Means Outing Myself</li> <li>• Anticipatory Fear</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Burden               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Burden of how to act</li> <li>○ Burden of Leadership</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Damage to career</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Guarded</li> <li>• Hyper visibility</li> <li>• Internalized Homophobia</li> <li>• Isolation</li> <li>• Lack of Power</li> <li>• Low Self Confidence</li> <li>• Mixed Emotions</li> <li>• Regret school selection</li> <li>• Resentful</li> <li>• Retribution</li> <li>• Self-Preservation</li> <li>• Uncertain who is safe to be out to</li> <li>• Uncomfortable</li> </ul>

## And sometimes it really just depends on the student...

- "I live with my boyfriend who I've been with for 4 years, and freely talk about him to my classmates who never bat an eye. I know that there is a LGBT vet student group (Broad Spectrum), and I've briefly considered the idea of becoming more involved and starting a club at [University X] but I've never been much of a club leader and struggle to see how relevant a LGBT vet club would be. There's only so much to talk about with regards to LGBT issues in veterinary medicine and I don't see a "coming out day" type of event as a good use of my time, nor something that seems necessary on an already supportive campus. " (2<sup>nd</sup> year student)
- I do not feel as if this support or my orientation have either positively or negatively affected my academic experience. I have not had the need to seek out support nor have I made my orientation a factor in my interaction with staff/faculty/students. (3<sup>rd</sup> year student)
- At this professional level I don't feel that people are going to be judged or bullied over something like orientation. (1<sup>st</sup> year student)

# When It's Good...

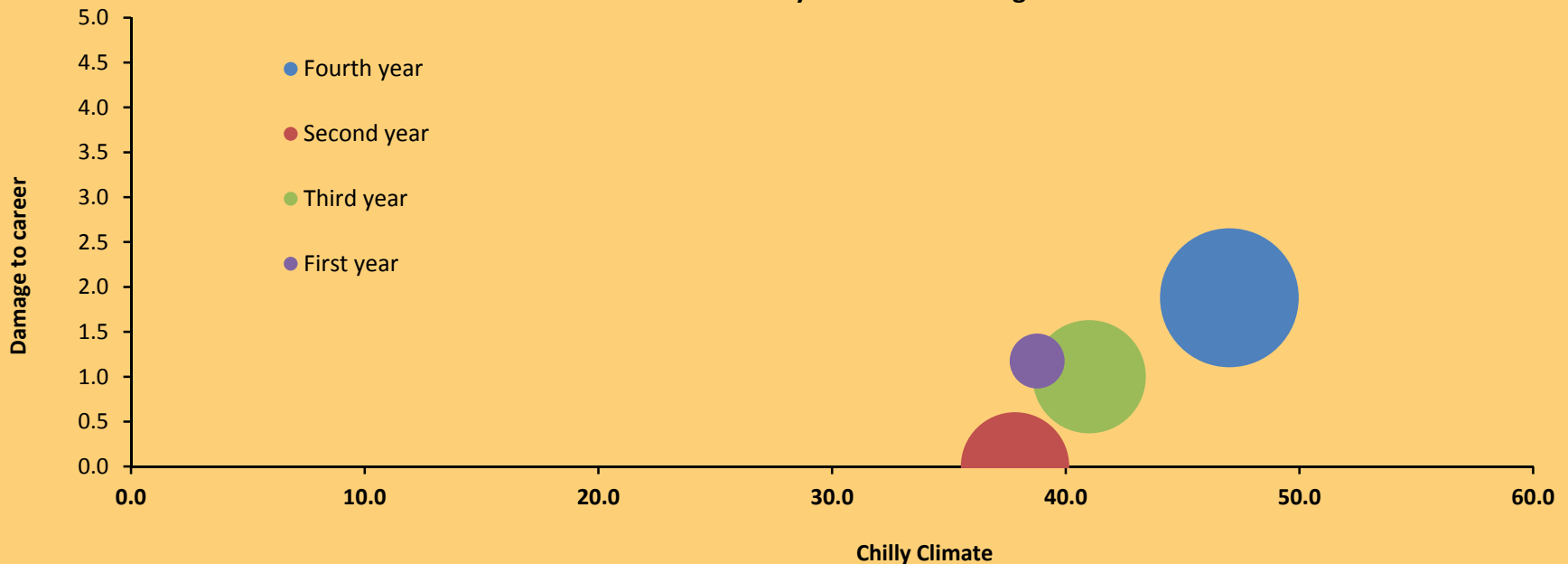
LGBT Students in Warm Climates Who Describe Positive Emotions (Hope)  
By Class & Percentage



*"Being new to [University XX] this year and not knowing the underlying tone of acceptance I hesitated to tell people. After a few months of learning about the people I slowly tested the waters and well no one seems to care. Therefore, I believe the support is there in that I'm not looked at any differently and people listen if I happen to be talking about my GF. (4<sup>th</sup> year student)*

# When It's Not So Good...

LGBT Students in Chilly Climates Who Fear Damage to Career  
By Class & Percentage



“...I am concerned that if some of the staff learns about my homosexuality it will negatively affect the opportunities I am presented with in later years of my studies. Depending on who the member of the faculty is, I feel like if it is down to my resume and someone else's resume and we are basically equal, knowing of my homosexuality would be a disadvantage to me.” (1<sup>st</sup> year student)

# Moving through the 4<sup>th</sup> year...

*"In clinics, my orientation and support level will usually result in a level of anxiety and stress that my straight counterparts don't need to worry about. For example, I constantly don't know if I should out myself in my clinical externships; some of the externships seem too short for me to have to be that candid, and others seem long enough where not sharing makes me feel like I am being dishonest.*

*While it could be argued that there isn't much place in medicine to talk about these things, most straight people can (and do, often) talk about their significant others or partners without anyone noticing, and it even serves to make these people more multi-dimensional. But when a queer person does the same thing, it becomes hypervisible, so usually in these discussions, I stay silent and thus feel like I'm not really part of a team.*

*I worry about whether to include my leadership involvement in my CV and resumes for externships and internships. My orientation also affects how I am able to interact with some of our faculty whom I know to be politically conservative..."*

# Phase I

## Academic Experiential Impact

Positive Experience	Negative Experience	No Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acceptance is helpful</li><li>• Has support of administration</li><li>• Positive impact on retention</li><li>• Positive impact on participation</li><li>• Positive Grade Impact</li><li>• Lack of Drama</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Warm climate generally is undermined by language</li><li>• Negative class participation impact</li><li>• Negative Grade Impact</li></ul>	<p>No additional descriptors</p>

# Phase III

Nearly 40% of study respondents identified as heterosexual. A third study phase was added to include analysis of this group's responses.

## ***Heterosexual respondents' demographics***

- 94 respondents
- 37% in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the DVM program
- 89% identified as women
- 77.7% indicated they were "out" to everyone
- 50% were single, 37.2% partnered, another 10% were married.
- 52% reside in the south



# Phase III

## Heterosexual Student Climate Descriptors

Warm Climate	Chilly Climate	Lukewarm Climates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accepting Community</li> <li>• Presence of Out Students &amp; Faculty</li> <li>• Student groups</li> <li>• Don't hear derogatory comments</li> <li>• Inclusivity statements</li> <li>• Presences of Welcoming Symbols</li> <li>• Partners are visible</li> <li>• Ally Identification</li> <li>• Partners are supported</li> <li>• Exceeds Expectations</li> <li>• Vet School is warmer than University</li> <li>• "We Get It"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Superficial Support</li> <li>• No outward support</li> <li>• Poor Treatment</li> <li>• Generalized Perception of Non-Acceptance</li> <li>• Homophobia is rampant</li> <li>• Not everyone thinks before they speak</li> <li>• Presence of other "isms"</li> <li>• Strong opposition to diversity education</li> <li>• Student level support but no college level support</li> <li>• Very conservative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>We have a program that is supportive</b></li> <li>• <b>We bring in speakers</b></li> <li>• <b>Treated just like everyone else</b></li> <li>• <b>Doesn't seem to be any discrimination</b></li> <li>• <b>Support is available</b></li> <li>• <b>There is a club</b></li> <li>• <b>There are talks and counseling</b></li> <li>• <b>General support for diversity, no direct LGBT support</b></li> <li>• <b>Awareness but no influence</b></li> <li>• <b>Wait &amp; See Assessment</b></li> <li>• <b>Could be more supportive</b></li> <li>• <b>Lack of student-driven activities</b></li> <li>• <b>Supportive but hear "jokes"</b></li> <li>• <b>Improving</b></li> <li>• <b>Seems to be okay</b></li> <li>• <b>Pretty good or just adequate</b></li> <li>• <b>Modest level of support</b></li> <li>• <b>Clubs exists but not openly discussed</b></li> <li>• <b>Student support</b></li> <li>• <b>Faculty support</b></li> <li>• <b>Assessment/Reaction is Location Driven</b></li> </ul>

# Comparison of Samples on Lukewarm Climates

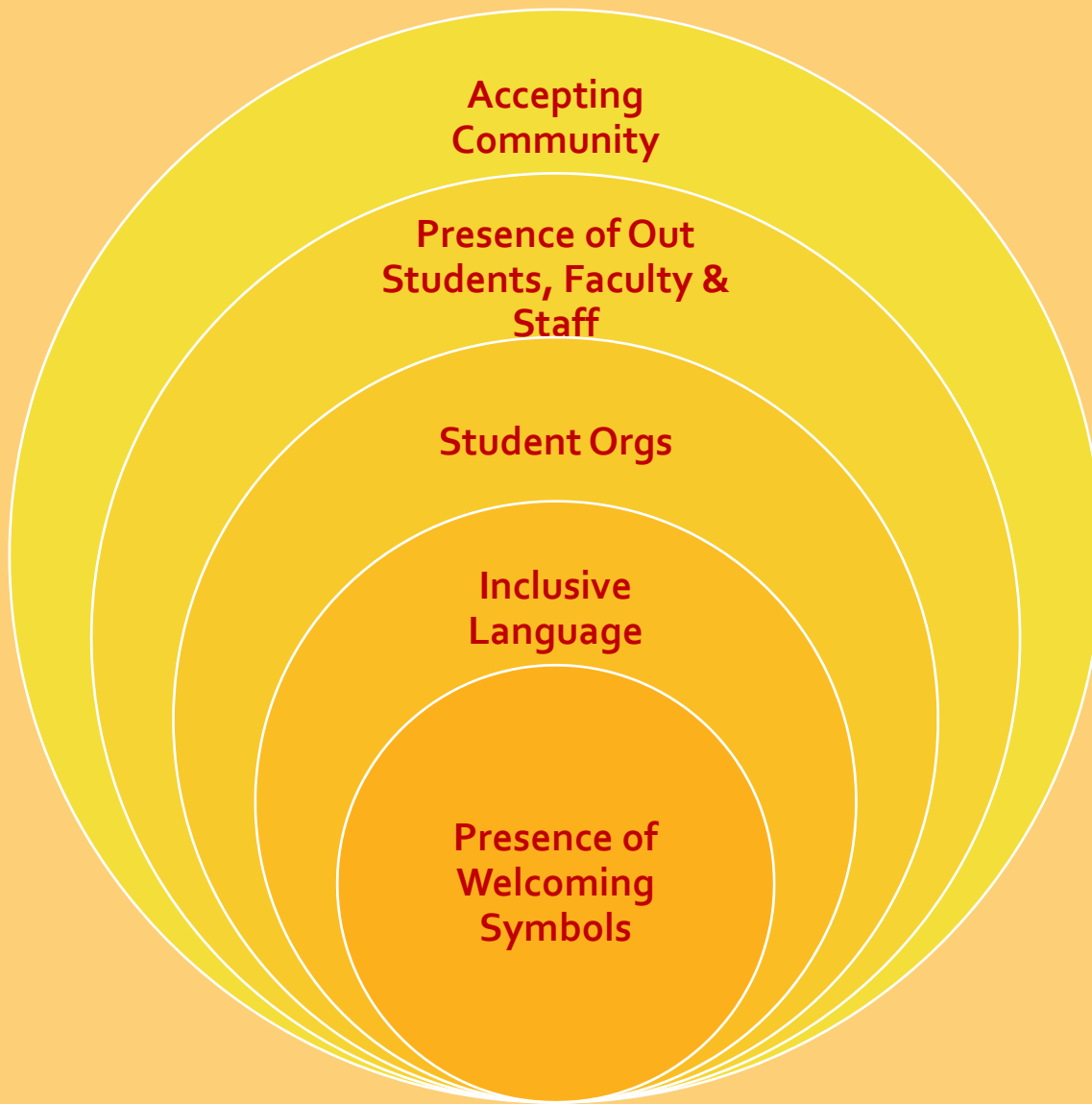
LGBT Students	Heterosexual Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate outward support</li> <li>• External Factors of Support</li> <li>• Passive Support</li> <li>• Ever Changing Support Levels</li> <li>• Inconsistent Student support</li> <li>• Unknown Faculty Support</li> <li>• Unknown LGBT Counselor Expertise</li> <li>• Unknown/Lack of Out Faculty</li> <li>• Professional Orgs- But Not Social</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have a program that is supportive</li> <li>• We bring in speakers</li> <li>• Treated just like everyone else</li> <li>• Doesn't seem to be any discrimination</li> <li>• Support is available</li> <li>• There is a club</li> <li>• There are talks and counseling</li> <li>• General support for diversity, no direct LGBT support</li> <li>• Awareness but no influence</li> <li>• Wait &amp; See Assessment</li> <li>• Could be more supportive</li> <li>• Lack of student-driven activities</li> <li>• Supportive but hear "jokes"</li> <li>• Improving</li> <li>• Seems to be okay</li> <li>• Pretty good or just adequate</li> <li>• Modest level of support</li> <li>• Clubs exists but not openly discussed</li> <li>• Student support</li> <li>• Faculty support</li> <li>• Assessment/Reaction is Location Driven</li> </ul>

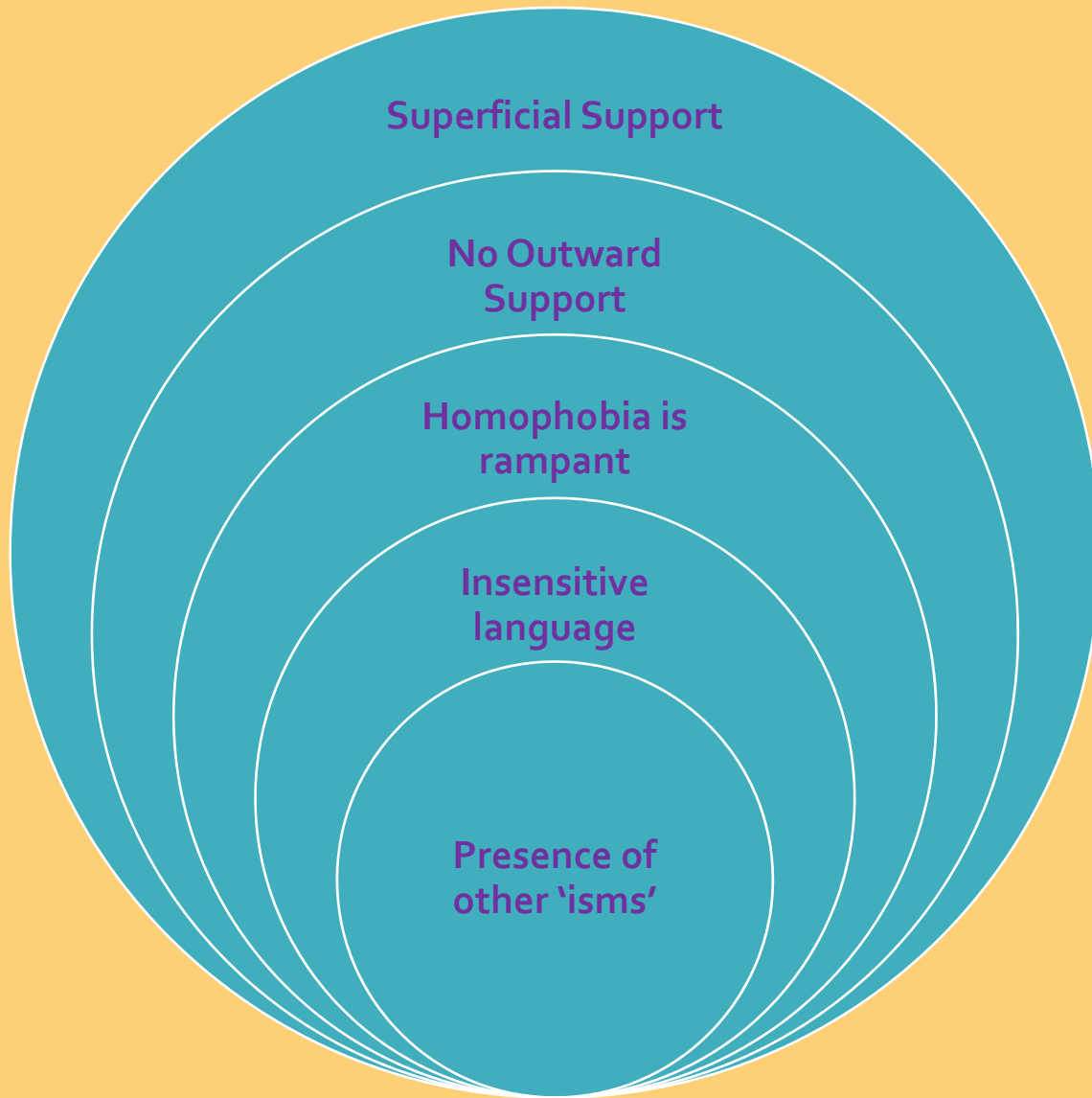
# Phase III

Although Phase III respondents generally take a more superficial view of the climate, there are striking similarities in the climate descriptions.

They see/feel the climate.

# Warm Climates





# Chilly Climates

# Allies are identified, but how they engage as allies is quite diverse.

## • Safaris

- There is a lot of “talk” support in the text, but these students do not generally engage in LGBT student clubs or see it as their place to intervene.

- *“I am a heterosexual female, but that does not diminish my passion for gay rights and agendas. If there were more activities available for us all, not just LGBTs, to get involved in, I would love to participate.”*  
(2<sup>nd</sup> year student)

## • Identifiers

- There is a personal connection that shapes student’s understanding of and perceived relevance.

- *“I think it is very important for my appreciation of the institution I attend. It makes me happier to be in an accepting community and feel like it supports my learning. I have a gay brother so I take issues of the LGBT community personally even though I am heterosexual. It definitely has a big impact on me to be a part of an accepting community.”* (3<sup>rd</sup> year student)



# The Middlings

- The “Middlings’ ” support for LGBT students or issues varies and is largely dependent on whether they feel their position is threatened.
- The concept of privilege is most visible with this group.

- *"I think LGBT individuals get a high level of support at the CVM, to the level of excessive. People go out of their way to cater to them to avoid being considered bigoted. There are t-shirts circulating around the school that say "I (heart) diversity" with a rainbow heart, implying that the only kind of diversity is LGBT? I am heterosexual, so obviously I carry that bias against my perception of the level of support.*

*Again, not LGBT, but I have struggled very much in vet school due to personal issues and received very little support or leeway, perhaps because I am not a "special" group that is valued in looking at statistics of the school. I don't think that the school should be allowed to acknowledge sexual orientation at all."*

*(3<sup>rd</sup> year student)*

# The Deniers

- There are “Deniers” in this survey sample.
  - Some make a point to disclose heterosexuality.
  - Some deny the knowing any LGBT students /faculty /others in their CVM.
    - *“Has not affected me in any way since I am not personally nor do I know any students of LGBT community.” (1<sup>st</sup> year DVM student)*
- *Others question climate concerns.*
  - *“I am ambivalent because it does not make any difference to me what your sexual orientation is. I think that it does not make any difference in the education that we receive.” (2<sup>nd</sup> year DVM student)*
- *Others just don’t want to know about any of it.*
  - *“If anything, I wish there was less support for these individuals. I don't really feel like the world needs to know my sexual orientation, and I would rather not know other peoples' orientation.” (3<sup>rd</sup> year DVM student)*

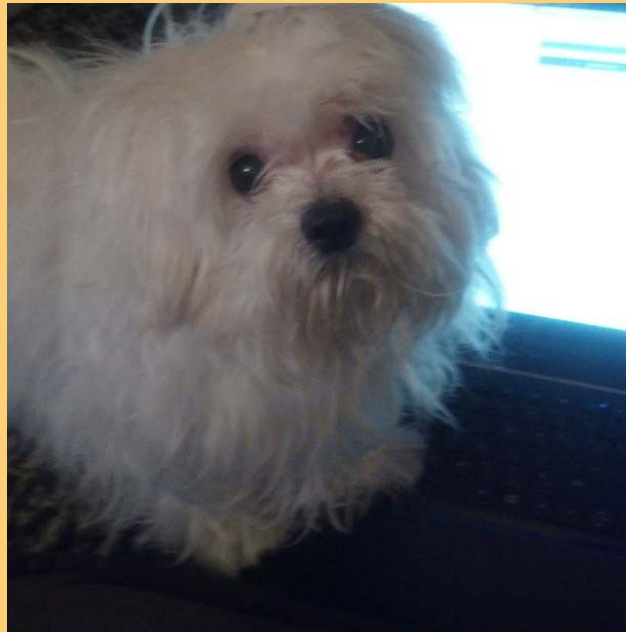


# Preliminary Conclusions

- The Bad News
  - Some students are likely not performing at full capacity because of climate issues.
  - Some students are also socially withdrawn because it is not safe to bring a partner along.
  - There is concern that LGBT students will be marginalized in clinical rotations or in the job search.
- The Good News
  - While there are some serious concerns about climate for LGBT students in the US Colleges, these students generally have positive perceptions about their experiences.
  - Student expectations are low, so small efforts to improve inclusion result in huge climate improvements.
  - Most students have similar pulse checks on what the climate is for LGBT students at their CVM.

# Next Steps

- Continue analysis of Phase II interviews.
- Big picture analysis
- Publication submission in 2014



# Acknowledgements

Dr. Kauline Davis - Purdue

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Dr. William Hill – University of Kansas

Ms. A. Nikki Wright – University of Pennsylvania

Thank you!

**Please type questions in the Q&A box and**

**I'll try to answer as many as I can!**

# Questions from the 11/6 Webinar

- What institutions participated in this study?
  - DVM students attending the 28 US Schools and Colleges of Veterinary Medicine were invited to participate in this study. Because of participant anonymity, we are unable to report if students from every institution participated.
  - Members of the research team represented AAVMC, Purdue University, University of Pennsylvania, University of Tennessee, University of Wisconsin.
- Will institution specific data be available?
  - This study's methodology provided participants anonymity in Phase 1 and confidentiality in Phase 2. Institutional level data is not available as a result.
- Please feel free to forward additional questions to webinar presenter, Lisa Greenhill at [lgreenhill@aavmc.org](mailto:lgreenhill@aavmc.org).