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Local News

BYU, UofU Ranked Low in Acceptance of Queer Students

by Jere Keys
jere@slmetro.com

According to the Princeton Review in their annual review of 361 universities and colleges across the country, Brigham Young University ranks as the 10th worst school for acceptance of queer people. The University of Utah comes in at number 18.

The rankings in the well-known publication are based on survey questionnaires filled out by over 110,000 students. The 70-question survey asks students to rate their schools on several topics and to report on their experiences while attending. Topics include academics/administration, life at school, fellow students, and themselves.

The list "Alternative Lifestyles Not an Alternative" ranks Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia as the nation's most anti-gay institution for higher learning. BYU placed tenth on that list but ranked first for "Students Pray on a Regular Basis;" "Got Milk" (lack of beer use); "Scotch and Soda, Hold the Scotch" (use of hard liquor); "Stone-Cold Sober Schools;" and "Future Rotarians and Daughters of the American Revolution" (general social and political conservatism). University of Utah ranked 18 on the list of the 20 most anti-gay schools.

Charles Milne, program coordinator for the LGBT Resource Center at the University of Utah, disagrees with the anti-gay ranking.

"I don't think it's a fair assessment," Milne said. "I don't think it takes into account the programs and initiatives that are happening on campus."

Besides the LGBT Resource Center, the UofU has several programs both to assist queer students and to promote understanding. Among these are the Queer Peers and the Speakers Bureau led by the LGBT Resource Center, as well as the Gay and Lesbian Law Alliance (GALLA). Milne also mentions there are currently diversity initiatives in various departments which would impact queer students positively.

"They only ask one or two questions [about queer issues] on the survey and make assumptions based on the answers to those two questions," said Milne. "I think there are a lot more anti-LGBT schools across the country."

Milne also feels that the ranking was influenced by "stereotypes about the area," which believe Utah to be an overwhelmingly conservative state.

Carri Jenkins, spokesperson for BYU, emphasizes that the rankings are based on student opinions and not official policy.

"We follow the counsel of [LDS President] Gordon B. Hinkley," Jenkins said, "which is to treat all people with love and kindness and respect."

Jenkins also referred to the BYU Honor Code, which is a code of conduct for behavior based on the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. All BYU students are expected to adhere to the honor code.

On the topic of homosexuality, the code states: "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and BYU affirm that sexual relationships outside the covenant of marriage are inappropriate," and "Any level of sexual or similar misconduct at BYU is significant and may lead to a separation from the university."

Princeton Review also ranked the 20 best schools for gay and lesbian students, with New College of Florida taking the number 1 slot, followed by Macalester College in Minnesota and Wellesley College in Massachusetts.

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