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GSU Offers Safe Schools Training

University Park, Illinois, April 23, 2007 - Some students in our high schools and colleges can feel isolated from classmates and educators because of sexual orientation and gender identity. They may feel they are without the understanding and support they need to learn and succeed.

"The challenge for every educational institution is to create a safe and tolerant environment in which students can learn, share, and grow," says Dr Adam Zagelbaum, Assistant Professor of school counseling in the College of Education at Governors State University.

To help school personnel create a more understanding environment, GSU is hosting a free workshop designed to give educators the knowledge and tools they need to create a better, safer learning environment.

"Safe Schools Training: Improving the Academic Climate Around Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity" will be held on May 18 from 2 to 4:30 p.m. at GSU.

"Because issues of sexual orientation and gender identity are either ignored or seen as too problematic to address, a potentially intolerant and negative school atmosphere can develop. Students can't reach their potential if they feel disconnected from or threatened by their environment," said Zagelbaum.

"We are inviting the faculty and staff of the university and school counselors, administrators, and educators from area colleges and high schools to join us to learn how to effectively address these issues."

While this is a potentially volatile issue, concerned educators are responding with great interest, according to Zagelbaum. "Our job as a university is to provide the information we all need to do our jobs better."

According to Zagelbaum, assisting educational institutions at all levels to reach the level of knowledge and understanding that ensures a safe learning environment for all students is essential to the work of educators.

Participants in this free workshop will learn from local experts, network and problem-solve with other educators, and receive resources and tools to share with colleagues. Specific workshop topics include terms and definitions in sexuality and gender identity, a statistical review of affectional orientation and gender identity of youth in high schools, colleges, and universities, and effective methods of improving school climate.

In addition to GSU, sponsors of the workshop include the Metropolitan Institute for Leadership in Education at GSU, the GSU Student Life Unit, Creating Safe Schools for Illinois, the Coalition for Education on Sexual Orientation, University of Illinois at Chicago, and DePaul University.

For more information or to register for the workshop, call (708) 235-7362.