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## **“In the Family Spirit”: The University of Dayton Framework for LGBTQ+ Policies, Practices, and Communication**

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# 'In the Family Spirit:

## The University of Dayton Framework for LGBTQ+ Policies, Practices, and Communication

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*It is important for the University to formally articulate its philosophy of why and how we support our LGBTQ+ community. Our approach is grounded in our Catholic, Marianist mission – which includes honoring the intrinsic value of all people and fostering a community where all people feel respected as children of God. This rationale stems from our mission as a university where rigorous intellectual inquiry and vigorous dialogue occur.*

*Currently, at least 15% of the student population at the University of Dayton self-identifies as being members of the LGBTQ+ community, along with numerous faculty, staff, alumni and their family members; the actual percentage of LGBTQ+ individuals is surely higher.*

*As a Catholic and Marianist university, we promote and share the Catholic faith and hear the call of our Church to respond with respect, compassion and sensitivity to all of our community members. We live in a society of people who follow many diverse faith traditions, as do members of our campus community whose presence enriches it. As we uphold and prioritize the Catholic faith, we also uphold the Church's teaching on religious freedom and the inviolability of conscience. We, therefore, respect the faith traditions and beliefs of all our campus members.*

*In this effort, we draw from our commitment to our Catholic and Marianist identity, and the fullness of its complexities applied within our own unique university environment.*

*This philosophical vision details how UD, as a Catholic and Marianist institution and given the Church's teaching on sexual orientation and gender, supports all in our community. We strive to be inclusive of our students, faculty, staff, alumni, donors, and friends who identify as LGBTQ+ or are close allies of LGBTQ+ people. This rationale and approach have been approved by the Marianist provincial and are supported by our Board of Trustees.*

### LGBTQ+ Inclusion Framework **Education in the family spirit**

Guided by our Catholic and Marianist values, the University of Dayton is committed to honoring the intrinsic value and dignity of all people. We strive to foster a campus community where all members, including those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) are welcomed, respected, safe, and valued.

The University delivers programs, services, and support for all students and employees in the Catholic and Marianist tradition — educating for formation in faith; providing an integral quality education; educating in family spirit; educating for service, justice, and peace and the integrity of creation; and educating for adaptation and change. This is who we are as a Marianist university.

Thus, it is in the Marianist spirit that the University approaches the support of its LGBTQ+ members. Marianist family spirit is characterized by a community that invites and accepts each person into a community with intentionality — where we commit to learn, love, and respect all people. In Marianist community, all members are accepted as family — committed to supporting one another for continued growth and development. Communicating with respect and treating one another as equally created in the image of God is essential. We value the dignity of every member and seek to cultivate an environment in which genuine human relationships and the beauty of their diversity can flourish. In this way, individuals can thrive, learn, and live to their potential.

Our LGBTQ+ students are integral in the Marianist community cultivated here. Our LGBTQ+ employees are colleagues in our shared mission and are also spouses and parents. Our alumni are members of our family, and we respect them, their talents and gifts, and their individual UD journeys.

### **Pastoral care and formation in faith**

- The University takes our mandate as a Catholic university very seriously. We accompany students deeply into communion with God through their identity as Catholics and as members of a faith community. In our pastoral approach, we recognize that there are few more contentious issues in ministry today, and little consensus about how best to faithfully support people who are both Catholic and LGBTQ+.
- Our approach is to engage students with respect and as whole persons, with the message that you can be Catholic and LGBTQ+ at the same time. The pastoral accompaniment that we provide is a faithful representation of both the complexity and beauty of our Catholic tradition.
- We support our students on their faith journeys, as indicated in Church documents such as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the Marianist Social Justice Collaborative guidance on *Addressing LGTBQ Issues with Youth*. In all that we do, we stay true to Church teachings about sexuality with all students, including those who are LGBTQ+.
- As pastoral ministers, we journey with students, faculty, and staff from many faith traditions, many who experience the loss and shame of being shunned by their families and faith communities, and hope we can accompany them on a journey to know God's mercy and unconditional love, responding to that love with their lives.

- As the University communicates, we are mindful of the power of symbolism and are careful to avoid connecting sacred Catholic religious imagery with secular symbols such as the rainbow, while also respecting the importance of those symbols in creating community.

### **Programming and services in the family spirit**

- On a practical basis, the need and demand for services for LGBTQ+ students has been demonstrated and is growing. Student Development's programming and support for LGBTQ+ students grew directly from a student initiative. In 2014, our Student Government Association, citing a lack of services and visibility, called on the University to better support LGBTQ+ students and the LGBTQ+ campus community. Other studies have found a need for more support to assist LGBTQ+ students' retention and graduation.
- In the past 10 years at least, an increasing number of students across the country and at UD identify as LGBTQ+. In the latest Multi-Institutional Study of Student Leadership, 15% of students selected an LGBTQ+ option (+/- 2%, 95% confidence interval).
- The philosophy of the Brook Center, which provides LGBTQ+ services and education, is to acknowledge and support our LGBTQ+ students and educate more broadly through LGBTQ+ conversations. The focus is on acknowledging identity and respecting the dignity of every person in the campus community.
- The University of Dayton does not promote same-sex marriage or same sex-sexual behavior as we do not promote other sexual behavior which may be against Catholic moral principles, but we do not shun those who engage in these actions. The University focuses on ways to support students' academic success as well as their mental health and wellbeing, understanding that LGBTQ+ students are particularly vulnerable given the challenging path for acceptance that many of them must navigate.
- As a Marianist educational institution, we seek to help all our students mature as integrated, whole persons, tending not only to their intellectual development but also to their values, beliefs and moral development.
- The Brook Center has a strong relationship with Campus Ministry and frequently communicates with them and collaborates on plans for upcoming programs and events.

### **Support for faculty and staff**

- The University's support for LGBTQ+ employees is grounded in our family spirit and our commitment to provide members of our community with fair and equitable treatment as informed by our Catholic, Marianist identity.
- Beyond being our close colleagues, many of our LGBTQ+ employees are also spouses and parents. As such, in the formulation of our policies we strive to reflect respect for all individuals, equity among employees, and our support for our families.

## **Embracing alumni**

- Many LGBTQ+ alumni and their allies attended UD at a time when visibility and support were nonexistent or severely limited.
- Many have welcomed the University's more open and visible support for our LGBTQ+ community members.
- Older alumni as well as younger alumni have demonstrated their support for these programs with wider engagement in alumni activities, such as speaking on campus, participating in social events and, increasingly, offering direct support for LGBTQ+ initiatives.
- We expect that this support will continue and grow as the University continues to demonstrate real commitment to welcoming these alumni with the respect, visibility and support that may have been missing during their time as students.

## **Academic mission**

The University of Dayton, a Catholic, Marianist university, is a leader in higher education and one of the preeminent Catholic universities in the nation. As a Catholic university, our commitment to rigorous intellectual inquiry and vigorous dialogue is shaped by Catholic intellectual traditions that form Catholics and enlighten people of all faiths.

Catholic universities throughout history have been places where issues of the day are engaged, studied and debated. In this Catholic tradition, the University of Dayton welcomes the scholarly study of matters that touch and shape the LGBTQ+ community as well as the spirited dialogue and critical examination that often accompanies these issues.

Such exploration does not contradict Catholic teaching nor defy the Church, but is part of our responsibility and commitment to the scholarly, rigorous search for the truth within the context of God's presence and love. As society at large debates important questions of gender and sexual orientation, as a Catholic, Marianist university we make space for the intellectual contributions and scholarly explorations of our faculty and students.