

Faculty Information Literacy Stipend Final Report

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Course: EPL 7380 – History of Higher Education

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Introduction: I have had my history of higher education students visit the University Archives to help them better understand primary documents/sources and to begin thinking about what types of things are kept in archives and what might be missing. This is a starting point for the historical research projects that I have had them do. Still, I have wanted to deepen their interaction with the archives, so when Joan asked if I would be interested in working on a project like this I jumped at the opportunity. This new project allowed students to dive deeper into the archives, ask more questions, and be more hands on with the archives, all of which further the goals of the course particularly the following two:

- Learn about the resources available within the University Archives for the study of the history of American Colleges and Universities
- Explore the history of College

Finally, each group identified potential archival sources that they wish they could have had access to that could create a more full picture of the event.

Combined these products made up 35% of the students overall grade (15% for the overview, 15% for the Class Facilitation, and 5% for the recommendations for additional sources).

Results and impact on student learning:

I was able to invite Joan to the facilitations. We were both very impressed with the work that the

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Future Research (5%) – Each group will submit a short plan for how the archives could

(Hecht, 1983).

We found it telling that the results of the SMU Board of Governor's review of GLSSO (Clements, 1984) were missing. Given the board's position that GLSSO should not be a recognized student organization (Clements, 1984), we suspect they hoped the issue would go away if they took it out of the spotlight. They were successful, as recognition of GLSSO did not come until 1991 (Campus Life, 1991). Events such as a university sponsored dinner at which a "strongly anti-gay speaker spoke against recognition" of GLSSO (Moxley, 1983, para. 1) indicate the university leadership were either anti-LGBTQ or scared of backlash from alumni and donors.

Historical Context

Overall, SMU's failure to recognize the GLSSO showed how behind the university was in supporting LGBTQ students. The modern fight for queer equality began in the late 1960s, most famously at Compton's Café in San Francisco and the Stonewall Inn in New York City (Blumenfeld, 2022). Soon after, LGBTQ student groups began forming at institutions like Columbia, Cornell, MIT, and Stanford. While many universities like the University of Texas at Austin refused to recognize these organizations at first, these incidents occurred about 10 years before the GLSSO's push for recognition at SMU (Blumenfeld, 2022; Trevino, 2016).

By 1980, universities across the country already had officially recognized LGBTQ student organizations, including those affiliated with the United Methodist Church (UMC) like SMU (Finnin, 1982). At that time, the UMC's position on same-gender relationships called for

bigotry across the nation and at SMU (Beauchamp, W., 1983). Pointing to the AIDS crisis, one SMU student senator in the first vote for GLSSO recognition argued that supporting the organization would jeopardize the health of the entire campus community (Beauchamp, B., 1983). Indeed, at the time of Senate debates on the GLSSO, members of the Texas Legislature in Austin were debating “a bill to protect Texans from the spread of AIDS” by jailing people for “homosexual acts” (Beauchamp, B., 1983, para. 5). Though the bill never passed, it highlights how the fear of AIDS ignited anti-gay sentiment, especially at SMU.

Contemporary Context

Though the GLSSO no longer exists under that name, SMU currently has several organizations and resources to support LGBTQ+ undergraduates. The Women & LGBT Center of Student Affairs (Southern Methodist University, 2023b)

of their efforts. Tollie also spearheaded SMU's first annual Pride Visibility Day to welcome queer students and allies, educate the community, and celebrate the fact that queer people belong at SMU (Southern Methodist University, 2022).

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