

January 26, 2005

Alice Eagly, Professor and Chair
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Evanston, Illinois

Dear Professor Eagly,

I am writing to bring to your attention the Report of the Provost's TBLG Task Force at the University of Michigan. I have attached a copy for you, and it can also be downloaded from the UM Provost's website at:

<http://www.umich.edu/~provost/reports/tblg/index.html>

The Task Force investigated the environment for TBLG students, faculty and staff at Michigan, with special emphasis on the situation facing transgender and transsexual people here. The report identifies many difficulties facing the highly stigmatized, almost invisible but ever-present minority of gender variant people in our colleges and universities.

Many of the difficulties, especially for those in the process of gender transition, are practical ones such as problems in finding housing, gaining safe access to basic medical care, changing identification records, etc. Practical and non-controversial solutions for many of these problems are presented in the recommendations within the UM report. Most of these recommendations have now been adopted and put into effect by the Administration here.

As a social psychologist who studies the psychology of attitudes and the psychology of gender, and as the new Chair of Psychology at Northwestern, you may find this report quite interesting - especially in light of recent events in Illinois and at Northwestern. You may find the summary re Transgenderism and Transgender Rights in Appendix III (p. 41) particularly useful.

As you may know, recent Illinois legislation amended the Illinois Human Rights Act to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing, public accommodations and credit.

Transgender/transsexual people are protected under that Act's definition of sexual orientation, which now states: *"Sexual orientation" means actual or perceived heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, or gender-related identity, whether or not traditionally associated with the person's designated sex at birth.*

Given the new protections for trans people under Illinois law, it may be important for the Northwestern community to carefully reflect upon its own internal culture and environment regarding the treatment of gender variant people.

Sadly, a very dark cloud now hangs over Northwestern University in the minds of trans people worldwide, as a result of your past Chairman's aggressive pronouncements that transsexual women are really either (i) sex-obsessed gay men who are especially suited for prostitution, or else are (ii) sexually paraphilic men who are obsessed with fetishistic forms of masturbation.

He did this in total ignorance, without having any serious research or clinical practice background in gender dysphoria, and without having any contact whatsoever with the large mainstream of successfully transitioned women who are living productive and happy lives - lives that go totally counter to his pronouncements (as you'll find in many representative examples at the following pages):

<http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TSuccesses/TSuccesses.html>
<http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TSuccesses/TGallery1.html>
<http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TSuccesses/TGallery2.html>
<http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TSuccesses/TGallery3.html>
<http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TSuccesses/TGallery4.html>

As a result of Mr. Bailey's actions, Northwestern's Department of Psychology is now irrevocably identified with the ideological defamation of trans women in the name of "science." We doubt that anything can ever be done to fully erase that stain.

Naturally, trans people all around the world felt vindicated upon learning that Mr. Bailey had had to resign as Chairman of Psychology following the internal investigation of scandalous research misconduct. However, the deep stain on Northwestern Psychology remains.

On the other hand, the internal culture of the Department could perhaps be improved over time if signals were quietly sent that it now at least tolerates open discussion of alternatives to Mr. Bailey's views (in contrast to the situation there while he was Chairman).

It might also be important to reflect upon what is being taught about transsexualism to Northwestern's undergraduates in the large "sex courses" given by your Department's faculty members. Hopefully, the Department can gradually shift towards preparing Northwestern's students for a future in which trans people will have gained their full human rights, instead of indoctrinating students into thought-styles from the past that stereotype trans women as mentally-ill sexual-deviants who can only live far outside of mainstream society.

I wish you the very best in your new role as Chair of Psychology. I hope that the information in the TBLG Task Force Report and in these reflections on recent events is helpful to you.

Sincerely,

Lynn Conway

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