June 13, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: Gene Sander, Interim Provost

FROM: Maurice J. Sevigny, Dean

SUBJECT: Endorsement LGBT Proposal to Create a Center

As one of the Arts and Science deans, I have been sympathetic and supportive of the initiatives to create a more positive climate for gay and lesbian colleagues. I was supportive in the formation of a Committee on LGBT Studies that has received Arts and Sciences colleges funding and Provost support since its inception in 1993. The members of this UA committee now propose to establish a UA Center for LGBT Studies. For the past several years, select faculty in the College of Fine Arts have taken an active role in the development of courses and programs that support a positive climate for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender faculty and students. A fair number of faculty and students in the college have provided program support and contributions to the LGBT Committee. Beverly Seckinger, Associate Professor and Associate Department Head of Media Arts, was “on loan” for two years to help establish credibility for this initiative. She has continued to be centrally involved in LGBT Studies since its inception, and she will continue to serve as a Board Member for the new Center.

Through faculty in each of our five schools, and especially through Beverly’s leadership, the College of Fine Arts importantly contributes to LGBT Studies at the University. In return, LGBT Studies has been delighted to financially sponsor the Lesbian Looks Film and Video Festival and many other film screenings and events that Media Arts and our Vivian and Jack Hanson Arizona Film Institute have organized over the years.

Furthermore, the College leadership sanctions the intention of the proposed Center to reflect interdisciplinary breadth for the study of: (a) Transgender Youth and Health; (b) Fostering Oral History Projects in Southern Arizona; and (c) Subjectivity, Sexuality, and Political Culture (which examines subjectivity and sexuality under contemporary neo-liberal economic and political regimes).

The request for status as a research Center appeals to me for several reasons:

It will serve as an interdisciplinary hub that will connect faculty across campus to stimulate innovative social science and research on gender and culture. Researchers document that LGBT populations continue to face distinct challenges, barriers, and forms of exclusion in areas such as
education, employment, health care and housing. This ultimately impacts on regional
development, quality of life and College of Fine Arts ability to attract and retain outstanding
faculty and students. Their proposed research clusters will bring together scholars from across
the disciplines to address critical research/scholarly questions related to LGBT peoples, histories,
and cultures. Where appropriate, the Research Clusters will include College of Fine Arts
graduate, professional, undergraduate students, and/or representatives from local, regional or
national groups. The Research Clusters are expected to generate original research, scholarly
networks, grant-writing initiatives, faculty publications, university-community collaborations,
public programming, educational activities for UA students, and other valuable outcomes.

By formalizing the work of this cross-campus interdisciplinary group of faculty as a research
Center, they will be better able to leverage their limited resources, expand upon their social
impact and activities, and attract external funding from granting agencies and private donors.

I endorse the position that the Center for LGBT Studies could realize a plausible claim that it
could serve the missions of the University of Arizona and ABOR, as described in President
Shelton's memo of 4/27/07, by promoting (1) academic excellence through its support of research
and teaching; (2) student success and success through its contributions to creating a positive
campus climate for all students, and curriculum enrichment; and (3) enhancing the quality of life
for the people of Arizona through its collaborations with community-based organizations, its
public programs, and its policy-related research.

The Center will not offer a degree or formal curriculum, either initially or in the future. Planned
activities, however, will enrich curricular offerings across the campus in several ways. A
promise of the center concept is to foster public programs and events that reflect the rich LGBT
cultures and histories of the region and the nation. These include cosponsoring the annual
Lesbian Looks Film and Video Festival, and cosponsoring campus visits by nationally and
internationally distinguished LGBT Studies scholars and cultural workers. All these events will
be open to UA faculty, students, staff and the local community, and will contribute to intellectual
enrichment, networking, and university-community exchange.

Therefore, I am wiling to add my support on behalf of the College of Fine Arts to endorse this
proposal for a change in status.

cc  Eithne Luibeheid
    Bev Seckinger