

# DAC Newsletter:



## LGBT Awareness and Intesectionality

**During its first two years in existence**, Diversity Action Committee has made it one of its priorities to promote awareness about LGBT issues on our campus. Last year we offered SafeZone Training in collaboration with Damietta Cross-Cultural Center, and our first Student Fellow, Luke Lavera, offered a workshop for faculty on how to be more Trans\* inclusive in the classroom earlier this spring. In this week's Newsletter, **Neidy Hammer, a two-term student representative on our committee and the President of Pride-GSA**, speaks to some initiatives she has been involved in, and reflects on the intersectional nature of identities:

It is no surprise that college is a time young people explore and develop a sense of identity. Sometimes it is in terms of race, culture, gender, or sexuality, yet the facets of a person's identity are as unique as our DNA. As a member of DAC as well as the president of Pride-GSA (People Representing Identity Diversity in Everyone- Gay-Straight Alliance) I have come to intimately understand the struggles that students face when they begin to recognize their intersectionalities. Many of our students come from places with homogeneous identities. They are not always familiar with the customs of other people and more importantly they do not know how to inquire in a sensitive and sympathetic way. Over the last two years I have seen an exponential increase in programs aimed at educating in a safe space.



The most obvious example of this is the safe-zone training that DAC cosponsored last year. This event focused on becoming an ally to persons of marginalized sexualities. It is exactly in this way that Siena moves both their diversity and respect initiatives forward. Although there are a variety of political opinions on issues related to the queer community, a group of individuals were able to come together and discuss dignity and the level of sensitivity that must be expressed when dealing with identities.

Other events that have imitated this style include Trans 101 & 201. These events focused on creating a space where students could ask any question without fear of being reprimanded and giving the Trans\* community the opportunity to explain why certain questions should not be asked. These events also stressed that everyone's experience is individual and that a person can only speak for their-self. Similar programs have focused on asexuality, pansexuality, polyamory, living with HIV or AIDS, etc.

Earlier this spring, In Our Own Voices, a local non-profit organization that works with LGBT people of color, teamed up with Pride-GSA to give a training on being an ally to LGBT people of color. It is my continued belief that through education and open discussion we can help the Siena community understand identities as the varied and intersecting affinities that they are.