

**Ally Western Program**  
**Workshop Description and Explanation for Soph Training, September 1, 2011**  
University Students' Council, University of Western Ontario



**Presenter name(s):** Ally Western Network Coordinator Nicole Kopera

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**Presentation title:** Ally Western Program/Workshop

**Presentation abstract:**

The Ally Western Program seeks to increase inclusivity and diversity on campus through providing support, resources, and education on the issues faced by students within the LGBT community.

**Presentation detailed description:**

This workshop is an essential part of training for student leaders, particularly those who have taken an interest in becoming mentors to first-year students through the USC's Sophing Program. The Ally Workshop provides basic, working knowledge on many aspects of sexual orientation and gender identity. Providing this level of education to Sophs is important because of the large diversity of first-year students they will meet and interact with, and the role they play during Orientation Week.

The current problem faced on university campuses across Canada is that discrimination based on sexual orientation is one of the more "socially accepted" forms of discrimination.<sup>1</sup> Much of what is said or done is unintentional, but it has devastating affects on youth identifying as LGBT. If Sophs receive an increased knowledge in the topics listed below, it will help these student leaders comfortably and confidently relate to all new students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

*The topics that covered in all Ally Workshops are as follows:*

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<sup>1</sup> Ontario Human Rights Commission, *Policy on Discrimination and Harassment based on Sexual Orientation 2008*, p. 4

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#### 1. Concepts and definitions:

- a. The acronym LGBTTTQ2
- b. Gender
- c. Sexuality
- d. Heterosexism and heteronormativity
- e. Homophobia

#### 2. Issues faced by LGBT youth/students

- a. Stereotypes
- b. Myths
- c. Assumptions

#### 3. How to be an ally at Western, the guidelines for which are taken from resources such as:

- a. Evans and Wall's "4 Step Process to Becoming an Ally" (1991, *Beyond Tolerance: Gays, Lesbians, and Bisexuals on Campus*)
- b. The University of Manitoba's "Identifying Allies: A Safe Space Project"

*Both of which, as well as others, send the message of:*

- c. Creating awareness
- d. Combating homophobia/heterosexism
- e. Overcoming stereotypes/assumptions
- f. Protesting discrimination based on sexual orientation
- g. Visibly supporting
- h. Using inclusive/neutral language

#### 4. Provide contact for Support Services on campus

It may be important at this point to note that the Ally Workshop has no intention of educating its audiences on how to give support and counseling to individuals going through the "coming out process" or who may be in crisis situations. The Ally Western Program seeks instead to provide a greater sense of education to *allies*, and ensure that they feel safe and secure in their positions and activism on LGBT rights and issues. Becoming an ally does not mean becoming an expert of all facets LGBTTTQ2! It means committing to a level of comfortableness, education, and openness.

#### Presentation goals and/or outcomes:

##### 1. Create a visible network of support

Those who stand-up and speak-out in favor of LGBT rights often face adversity or harassment simply by association. This is why Ally Western hopes to encourage students to create a visible network of support, for LGBT youth on campus, but also for those identifying as allies, to ensure that being an ally is as celebrated and encouraged as possible. This is achieved through the distribution

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of "Safe Space" cards, workshop certificates, hand necklaces, and Ally Western pins, but is hoped to expand this year to include clothing and other accessories as well.



 **Ally Western Program**   
*Certificate of Success*

Congratulations on your completion of the Ally Western Program! Please consider this certificate as a symbol of your acknowledgment and acceptance of The Ally's Pledge, as outlined in the Ally Workshop and summarized by SAFE.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Ally/Pride Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_

Vice-President Campus Issues: \_\_\_\_\_

**SAFE**

**S**pace: My Ally card is to be used in my space, and reflect my beliefs only

**A**ctivism: When safe to do so, I will actively challenge homonegativity and heterosexism, in public, in private, or where I deem to be appropriate.

**F**reedom: The freedom to disclose information concerning one's sexual orientation or gender identity issues lies with the individual themselves, and only themselves.

**E**ducation: I will utilize the learning acquired in the Ally Workshop, while understanding my own limitations to offer assistance to others; I will challenge and improve my education on LGBT issues

Thank you on behalf of Western's Ally Program, Pride Western and the LGBT community, for your dedication and commitment as an ally.

## 2. Act like an Ally

As indicated above, the workshop provides information on how to be an effective ally. Even students who are anti-homophobic do not always see the ways in which their everyday words and actions may be detrimental to the others around them. The Ally Program states some of the more and less obvious forms of discrimination faced by LGBT students, and offers advice for individuals to no longer make these mistakes.

There is no longer an Ally Pledge sheet as part of the program, which previously was signed by both the participant and the Ally Coordinator, and then returned to keep on file by the Coordinator. To be distributed during Soph Training instead, will be a certificate of completion of the Ally Workshop, which is signed by the Coordinator and the Vice-President Campus Issues, but *not* by the participant (see above). The certificate is an optional part of the program, and reiterates, using the *SAFE* acronym, the basic notions of being an ally as discussed in the workshop.

### **SAFE**

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**Freedom:** The freedom to disclose information concerning one's sexual orientation or gender identity issues lies with the individual themselves, and them alone.

**Education:** I will utilize the knowledge acquired in the Ally Workshop, while understanding my own limitations to offer assistance to others; I will challenge and improve my knowledge on LGBT issues