



UNC
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

To: First Year Medical Students
Future Class of 2019

From: Perry Tsai MS3, *Queer Straight Alliance Co-leader*

Date: April 16, 2015

Re: ***The LGBTQ Environment at UNC School of Medicine***

Congratulations, incoming class! All of us here are eager to welcome you this summer to UNC School of Medicine. As you begin to make your preparations, we expect that this transition can be a challenging period for many of you who are entering a new environment. This can be especially true of our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (LGBTQ) students who are unsure of how they will be received.

I would like to take this opportunity to assure our incoming LGBTQ students, and their allies, that UNC School of Medicine is a safe place. First of all, Chapel Hill/Carrboro, like most of the Research Triangle, is a fairly progressive area and a comfortable home for LGBTQ residents to live. Durham/Raleigh hosts the annual North Carolina Pride celebration, and Chapel Hill has an openly gay elected as its mayor—Mark Kleinschmidt.

Next, UNC features an active and omnipresent LGBTQ Center run by Terri Phoenix and Danny Deputy, who seek to foster an inclusive environment for all sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions across campus. In addition to organizing discussion groups and social/educational events, they run regular “SafeZone” trainings to teach everyone how they can be LGBTQ allies. UNC also offers a student health insurance plan which does allow for same-sex domestic partner coverage.

Finally, the School of Medicine is an incredibly supportive place for LGBTQ students. Not only do we make sure that we provide a safe learning environment, but we also aim to prepare future physicians to meet the health care needs of our LGBTQ patients. Sexual orientation and gender are included in our medical student mistreatment policy; but so far in my experience, I have yet to find an example of homophobia or discrimination. Instead, I see many of our faculty, staff, and students attend SafeZone trainings and identify themselves as allies and mentors.

Currently, the administration is working closely with the Queer Straight Alliance to continue educating our students on topics in LGBTQ health and awareness. One of our UNC SOM graduates and former advocates, Jonathan Wells remarks, “I have been heartened by the level of capability and compassion that these students demonstrate prior to heading onto residency.” We take pride in this capability and compassion, and we hope that you will too.

Welcome to UNC School of Medicine!

Sincerely,
Perry Tsai MS3
Queer Straight Alliance co-leader
perry_tsai@med.unc.edu