

Open Forum on Diversity

Skidmore College

March 30, 2007

Dear Dean Oles and Associate Dean Steigerwald,

We'd first like to thank you for your attendance at Project Unity on Friday. We thought the meeting was extremely productive in allowing students to get a better sense of the present state of affairs; it also allowed you to get a better sense of the issues we are dealing with and the urgency of the current situation.

As per your request, we would like to formally submit our opinions and recommendations on diversity at Skidmore College:

The biggest and most symbolic commitment to diversity at Skidmore is certainly our strategic plan. We applaud *Goal II: Intercultural and Global Understanding* and its aim of improving access, achievement and intercultural knowledge on our campus. In particular, we'd like to thank President Glotzbach and his cabinet, as well as the Intercultural and Global Understanding Taskforce, for taking these issues so seriously. We feel that these goals go a long way in addressing the needs of our increasingly diverse student body.

We also would like to recognize that Skidmore has made great strides in recent years at improving diversity on our campus. In particular, we would like to thank the admissions office by noting that we are extremely excited that this year's first-year class is the most diverse class in the history of our college.

However, we feel that the recent departure of Dr. Hilal Isler highlights many larger issues that are not being adequately addressed, despite our strategic plan. Although, we are extremely pleased with the leadership of President Glotzbach and the energy that he has put forth towards diversity on our campus, we do not feel that a sufficient amount of focus has been put towards diversity at the student affairs level under your leadership.

As a remedy to that situation, we feel that the following issues need to be expeditiously addressed:

*The Intercultural Center* – This space is insufficient to serve our student body. It is neither intercultural, nor a center for diversity on campus. Instead, it is more akin to a multipurpose room. In line with the actions of many of our peer and aspirant colleges, we feel that the space needs to be dramatically expanded in order to better serve as a support system for our students. Many colleges in this group have centers with different types of spaces such as computer labs, TV. lounges, intercultural libraries, kitchens and meeting areas. Including these types of spaces, and expanding the resources of the center is necessary to improve the space and allow it to actually become a center for interculturalism and diversity on our campus.

*Student Diversity Programs* – We again are without a director. We find the turnover and vacancy in this office to be particularly disheartening because we are the students directly affected by the office's success. We simply cannot stand idly by and allow this office to remain vacant again for another two years. We respectfully request that while the search for a new director is conducted, an interim director be appointed. Furthermore, the structure of Diversity Programs needs to be reassessed. We do not feel that enough resources and energy have ever been put into this office, even while Dr. Isler was the director. Here again, a simple comparison with our peer and aspirant schools reveals that our office is inadequate. At the very least, Diversity Programs needs a director, assistant director and administrative assistant. Furthermore, the office needs more resources invested in it, such as a larger budget. The current structure is simply not enough to address the needs of our student body.

*International Student Advising* – International students comprise an important component of campus diversity. However, Skidmore lacks an office specifically designated to advise international students in issues ranging from legal to personal affairs. Since the resignation of Barbara Opitz, Kathy Jones has been dividing her time between international students, her work in the HEOP office, and the courses she teaches. Although we appreciate her efforts, we feel she alone cannot meet the needs of all of our international students. We therefore respectfully request that more resources be put towards ensuring that the needs of all of our international students are adequately addressed. In particular, we request that Skidmore consider creating an office with a well qualified team of professionals able to counsel our international students.

*Trainings* – We also are concerned with how our staff is trained in questions of diversity. While we applaud the recent trainings of some administrators in diversity through the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI,) we frankly do not feel that this is enough. As Skidmore's student body becomes increasingly diverse, the staff and

faculty need to be provided with enough resources to allow them to adequately respond to the demands of our students. For example, optional pedagogy workshops related to diversity and multiculturalism could be held. Admittedly, we do not purport to be experts in this area; consequently, we'd like someone with an objective perspective to recommend changes in this area. We therefore think an outside diversity consultant should be brought to campus in order to provide such a perspective and make necessary recommendations. Additionally, from what experience we do have, we would like to make one additional recommendation; we feel that several key administrators should attend the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in May. Already, Kathy Simpson in Student Diversity Programs has arranged for the attendance of several students. We feel that you, Dean Oles and Associate Dean Steigerwald, as well as President Glotzbach and many other members of the Cabinet would benefit from attendance at this conference.

*Bias Response* – Skidmore College needs a formalized system of reporting, responding to and preventing bias incidents and hate crimes from occurring on our campus. The current system of simply reporting to campus safety is not enough. Although we recognize the work of a group spearheaded by Kerry Day and you, Dean Oles, over the summer, as well as the more recent work of a bias response group this semester, we nevertheless feel that change is happening far too slowly. Incidents motivated by bias on our campus continue to occur; yet, nothing is being done to either educate nor inform the campus, or to prevent them. We agree with the frustrations that both of you expressed at our meeting on Friday about this process; however, we look towards you, as our administrative leadership, to expedite the process.

*Nondiscrimination policy* – We are also concerned with the status of transgender students on our campus. Two years ago, Student Government Association passed resolution 15-7, "Resolution to Demonstrate Support for including gender identity and expression in Skidmore College's non-discrimination policy." Although the resolution received overwhelming support in senate, Skidmore's non-discrimination policy has not been modified to include gender identity and expression. This has occurred despite the fact that many colleges across the country, including several in our peer and aspirant group, have adopted such changes. This change, along with other measures campus-wide to ensure the safety and comfort of transgender students such as a trans-inclusive residential living policy, is long overdue.

Admittedly, we recognize that some of the schools we compare ourselves with have much larger endowments and consequently more resources than us; however, as you yourself, Dean Oles, said in our meeting on Friday, Skidmore has resources it can put towards diversity. It is just a question of priorities; as you stated so nonchalantly, diversity competes with other priorities like new buildings and other departments. Frankly, we feel it is time that diversity becomes an elevated priority in student affairs.

Furthermore, these are not new issues; we, ourselves, have made similar recommendations to you over the past few years. We also recognize that students throughout the history of this institution have rallied around the issue of diversity. As Mary C. Lynn's book points out, students even went so far as to take over President Palamountain's office around this question in the 1970s. Although we are certainly not at the point of storming the fourth floor of Palamountain, we do hope you will take our considerations seriously.

We look forward to hearing your response to our concerns and also hearing your suggestions for change as well. As senior administrators with many more years of experience at Skidmore than us, we are confident that you have many more suggestions for how Skidmore can improve its commitment to diversity in student affairs.

We therefore cordially invite you to share your response to our concerns and your own recommendations for change at an open forum we have scheduled for this Friday from 1:30-3:00pm in Gannett Auditorium. We plan to invite the entire Skidmore community and are specifically forwarding this e-mail to the rest of the President's Cabinet and genuinely hope that they can find time to attend as well.

We thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,  
Frederick Braunstein '08,  
SGA Coordinator of Diversity Affairs

Zhaolin Ma '08,  
President, Asian Cultural Awareness

Shubhangi Gokhale '07,  
President, Hayat

Munkhtsetseg Ayurzana '09,  
President, International Students Union

Sarah Soltau '07,  
President, Newman Club

Allison Canas '07,  
Co-President, Raices

Marleny Diaz '07,  
Co-President, Raices

Kenny Flores '09,  
Co-President, Raices

Greta Spoering '08,  
President, Skidmore Pride Alliance

Jeanne Bright '07,  
President, Students Organized Against Racism

Tiffany Islar '08,  
President, Ujima

In addition: Abra Aziagbe '10, Vanessa Banti '09, Stephanie Block '08, Emma Bloomer '10, Christopher Bradt '09, Amy Cantone '09, Signe Ceylan '09, Elizabeth Edelheit '07, Kappes Emmons '09, Sarah Faude '09, Kavita Gadani '10, Allie Grill '09, Ryan Hannon '07, Jessica Herring '07, Rob Hill '09, Amanda Izenson '09, Brent Mills '07, Karina Perez '07, Jim Ryan '09, Durvena Sarju '10, Emily Schlemmer '10, Matthew Saacke '10, Jon Schneider '09, Gemma Striker '09, Devin Sugameli '08, Daniel Tejada '09, Michael Thomas '09, Katherine Ventimiglia '09, Danika Vittoria '07, Morgan Weisser '09

**Skidmore College**

**IPEDS Full-Time Faculty Count by Gender and Race/Ethnicity, Fall 2006**

	Female		Male		Fall 2006 Total	
	Count	Overall %	Count	Overall %	Count	Overall %
<b>Asian/Pacific Islander</b>	7	2.70%	5	2.00%	12	4.70%
<b>Black, Non-Hispanic</b>	2	0.80%	3	1.20%	5	2.00%
<b>Hispanic</b>	7	2.70%	3	1.20%	10	3.90%
<b>Non-Resident Alien</b>	3	1.20%	5	2.00%	8	3.10%
<b>White, Non-Hispanic</b>	120	47.00%	100	39.20%	220	86.30%
<b>TOTAL</b>	139	54.50%	116	45.50%	255	100.00%

## Spaces Dedicated to Multicultural Student Services At Our Peer Institutions

### Vassar: The ALANA Center

US News Ranking: 12

Students of Color & International Students: 23%



#### The Space:

- Administrative offices
- Community room with television and VCR
- Offices for Asian, Black, and Latino American student organizations
- Conference room with television
- Computer room
- Full-size kitchen

### Colgate: The ALANA Cultural Center

US News Ranking: 16

Students of Color & International Students: 17%



#### The Space:

- Multipurpose room (capacity: 150 people)
- Lounge, TV, sofas
- Kitchen
- Seminar room
- Computer lab
- Administrative offices

### Bates: "The House"

US News Ranking: 22

Students of Color & International Students: 17%



#### The Space:

- Library (newspapers; books; some scholarly journals)
- Computer lab
- Two lounges (each equipped with TV/VCR)
- Full kitchen
- Buddhist shrine
- Two prayer rooms
- Art gallery

**Hamilton: The Afro-Latin Cultural Center**

US News Ranking: 20

Students of Color & International Students: 17%



**The Space:**

- Library (DVD/VHS; books)
- Computer lab
- Study Lounge
- TV Lounge
- Full kitchen
- Administrative offices

**Oberlin: Multicultural Resource Center**

US News Ranking: 23

Students of Color & International Students: 26%



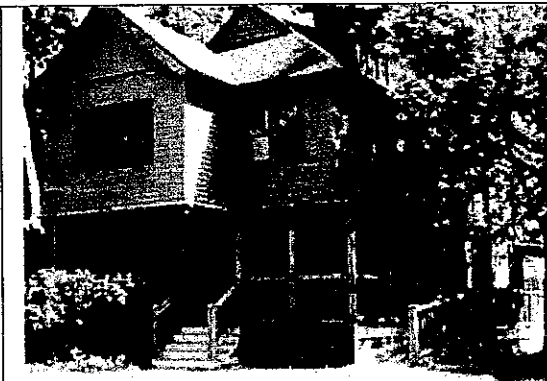
**The Space:**

- Library (DVD/VHS; books; magazines)
- Study Lounge
- TV Lounge
- Administrative offices

**Trinity: Cultural House System**

US News Ranking: 24

Students of Color & International Students: 18%



**The Spaces:**

- Asian American House
- La Eracra (pictured left)
- Umoja House
- Imani
- Encouraging Respect of Sexualities
- Zachs Hillel

*The above houses and the administrative offices that support them line "Vernon Street"*

Franklin & Marshall, Union, Gettysburg, Sarah Lawrence, Wheaton, Bard Center for Multicultural Students: *All are structurally similar to Skidmore, offering students a simple lounge to gather, and office/administrative space for the staff that serves them.*

**Kenyon: Snowden Center**

US News Ranking: 29

Students of Color & International Students: 10%



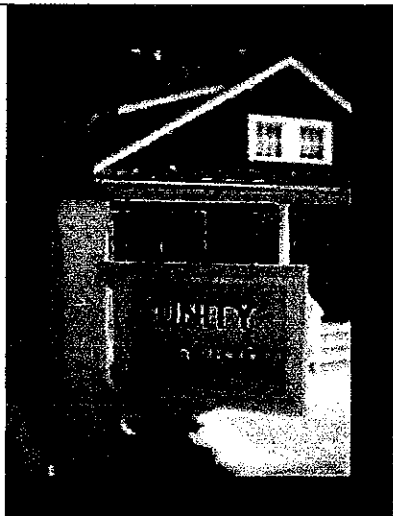
**The Space:**

- Library (DVD, books, magazines)
- Full kitchen
- Multimedia room
- Performance space (equipped with stage)
- Administrative offices

**Connecticut: Unity House**

US News Ranking: 20

Students of Color & International Students: 35%



**The Space:**

- Library (1400 books in collection)
- Meeting/Conference room
- Computer facility
- Full kitchen
- Dedicated in 1989
- PepsiCo Room (social lounge)
- Administrative offices

**Dickinson: Office of Diversity Initiatives**

US News Ranking: 40

Students of Color & International Students: 10%



**The Space:**

- Library
- Limited performance space
- Meeting room



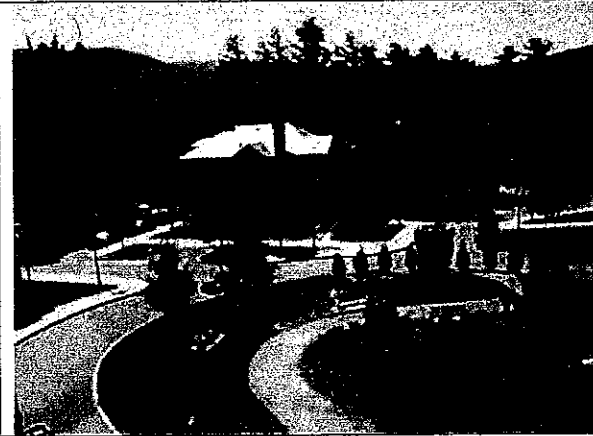
**Spaces Dedicated to Multicultural Student Services At Aspirant Plus Institutions**

**Williams: Multicultural Center Houses (Jenness, Rice, Hardy)**

US News Ranking: 1

Students of Color & International Students: 32%

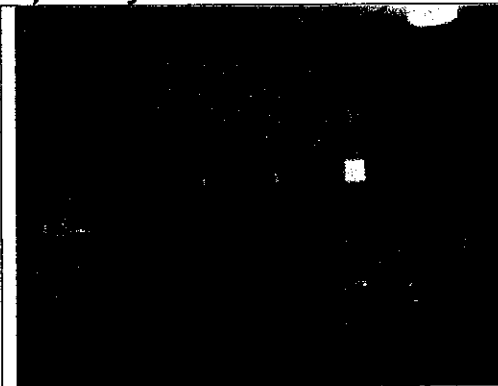
**1). Jenness House**



**The Space:**

- Large classroom
- Seminar room
- A bank of Macintosh G3 computers
- Small library (books, DVDs)
- Social lounge
- Kitchenette
- Jenness is ID card-accessible 24 hours a day
- Administrative offices

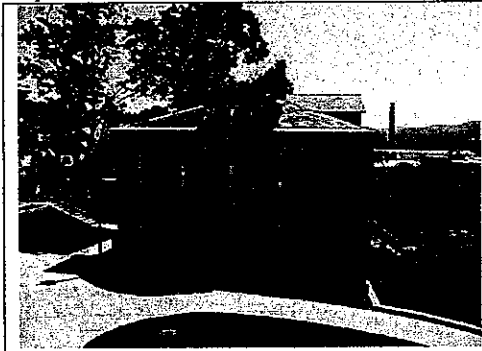
**2). Hardy House**



**The Space:**

- Workstations (3 Macs, a laser printer)
- Library
- Social lounge
- Kitchen
- Student club offices
- Study rooms

**2). Rice House**



**The Space:**

- Exhibit space
- Social lounge with fireplace
- Performance space
- Piano
- Multipurpose room for gatherings/large parties
- Study lounge areas upstairs

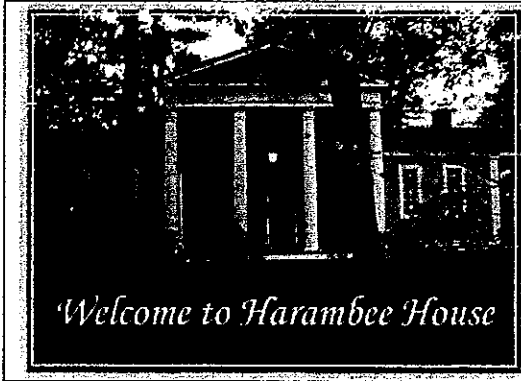
### Wellesley Multicultural Center Houses (Harambee, Slater Center)

US News Ranking: 1

Students of Color & International Students: 32%

*\*In addition, the Schneider College Center offers space and support to students of color. The Hillel is a separate center and is equipped with a kosher kitchen)*

#### 1). Harambee House



#### The Space:

- Library (DVD, print)
- Kitchen
- Social and study lounges
- Performance space

#### 2). Slater International/Multicultural Center



#### The Space:

- Lounge/gathering and meeting space for students
- Study rooms

#### Smith: Unity House

US News Ranking: 13

Students of Color & International Students: 30%



#### The Space:

- Study lounge
- Social meeting space
- Administrative offices

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**Why Is It Important For Students Of Color To Have Their Own Space?**



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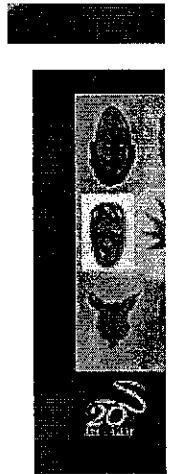
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In 1988, The Southwest Center for Human Relations Studies launched the first **Annual National Conference for Race & Ethnicity in American Higher Education (NCORE)** to address the resurgence of racist incidents in higher education. Since its inception, NCORE has evolved into a vital national resource for higher education institutions, providing an annual multicultural forum that attracts Black/African Americans, American Indians, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Latino/as, and European Americans representing campuses across the United States.

The **NCORE** conference series constitutes the leading and most comprehensive national forum on issues of race and ethnicity in American higher education. The conference focuses on the complex task of creating and sustaining comprehensive institutional change designed to improve racial and ethnic relations on campus and to expand opportunities for educational access and success by culturally diverse, traditionally underrepresented populations.

**NCORE** is designed to provide a significant forum for discussion, critical dialogue, and exchange of information as institutions search for effective strategies to enhance access, social development,



**A Conversation With...****Dialogue Sessions****One-on-One Meetings****Roundtable Discussions****Informal Caucus Meetings****Informal Networking**

education, positive communication, and cross-cultural understanding in culturally diverse settings.

Building upon a solid programming tradition, **NCORE 2007** will provide a range of policy, planning, and pedagogical perspectives from around the country and will highlight exemplary working models and approaches which are adaptable to other institutional or regional settings.

- Assisting higher education institutions to create inclusive higher education environments, programs, and curriculum; improve campus racial and ethnic relations; and expand opportunities for educational access and success by culturally diverse, traditionally underrepresented populations
- Providing policy, planning, programmatic, curricular/pedagogic, research/assessment, training, and theoretical perspectives from around the country
- Highlighting exemplary working models and approaches capable of being adapted in other institutional settings
- Attracting more than 1,800 persons each year representing virtually every state and several foreign countries
- Consistently receiving high evaluations--98 percent rated the overall value and benefit of the 2005 conference as "Excellent," "Very Good," or "Good," with 88 percent rating it as "Excellent" or "Very Good"

**Conference Participants Include:**

- Senior administrative officers at both campus and system levels
- Academic affairs administrators, deans, department chairs, and teaching faculty
- Directors and staff of offices of affirmative action, equal employment opportunity, and minority affairs
- Professionals in virtually all campus activity/service areas, including admissions, student life, financial aid, personnel, public safety, alumni affairs, and athletics
- Representatives of state and national institutes, associations, agencies, commissions, and foundations
- Leaders of student organizations
- Representatives of community-based agencies and organizations



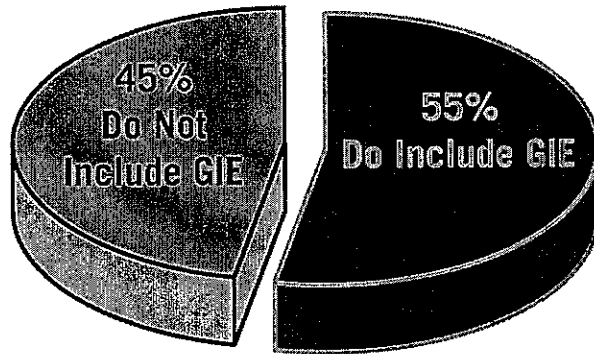
## Top Colleges & Universities Adopt Gender Protections

More than half of the top 50 institutions of higher education (54%) as ranked by *US News & World Report* include gender identity and expression in their non-discrimination policies for admissions, employment and other school programs.<sup>3</sup>

2006 proved to be a break-out year for the Ivy League, the country's oldest and most elite institutions of higher education. With policy amendments at **Harvard (MA)**, **Princeton (NJ)**, **Columbia (NY)**, **Dartmouth (NH)**, and **Yale (CT)**, the Ivies extended unanimous support for gender-based protections for students, staff and faculty. **Brown University (RI)** became the first Ivy League school to offer the protections in 2002. The **University of Pennsylvania (PA)** and **Cornell University (NY)** followed in 2003 and 2005 respectively.

Student-led and faculty-supported movements are currently underway at many of the top 50-ranked schools that have not yet expanded their non-discrimination policies – including the **College of William & Mary (VA)**, **University of Florida (FL)**, **University of Texas - Austin (TX)** and **Georgetown University (DC)**. In 2006, students at the University of Texas - Austin launched a campaign to educate administrators and students about gender identity and expression, and rally for a more inclusive non-discrimination policy. Such movements are a strong sign of continued growth among the nation's most competitive schools with expanded policies.

### Gender Protections Top 50 Colleges and Universities



100

Percentage of nation's most elite universities with inclusive policies

**Colleges & Universities with Inclusive Policies**

**Arizona**

Arizona State University  
University of Arizona

**California**

California College of the Arts  
California Institute of Technology\*  
City College of San Francisco  
Foothill-DeAnza Community College  
Harvey Mudd College  
Occidental College  
University of California System\*\*  
University of Southern California

**Colorado**

Colorado State University

**Connecticut**

Connecticut College  
Wesleyan University  
Yale University\*

**District of Columbia**

American University

**Florida**

New College

**Illinois**

Parkland College  
University of Chicago\*  
University of Illinois System\*

**Indiana**

DePauw University

**Iowa**

Central College  
Drake University  
Iowa State University  
Southwestern Community College  
University of Iowa

**Maine**

Colby College  
University of Maine System

**Maryland**

Goucher College  
Johns Hopkins University\*  
University of Baltimore

**Massachusetts**

Brandeis University\*  
Harvard University\*  
MIT\*  
Tufts University\*  
Williams College

**Michigan**

Kalamazoo College  
Kalamazoo Valley Community College  
Western Michigan University

**New Hampshire**

Dartmouth\*  
University of New Hampshire

**New Jersey**

Princeton University\*

**New Mexico**

College of Santa Fe

**New York**

City University of New York System  
Columbia University\*  
Cornell University\*  
New York University\*  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
Sarah Lawrence College  
Syracuse University  
Vassar College

**North Carolina**

North Carolina State University

**Ohio**

Case Western Reserve University\*  
Ohio State University  
Ohio University

**Oregon**

Oregon State University  
University of Oregon

**At-A-Glance**

29 Public Institutions  
42 Private Institutions  
3 Community Colleges  
28 Top 50 Institutions  
8 Ivy League Institutions

**Pennsylvania**

Carnegie Mellon University\*  
Lehigh University\*  
Moravian College  
Muhlenberg College  
Penn State University\*  
University of Pennsylvania\*

**Rhode Island**

Brown University\*  
Bryant University  
Community College of Rhode Island  
Rhode Island College  
University of Rhode Island

**Vermont**

Middlebury College  
University of Vermont

**Washington**

Central Washington University  
Evergreen State College  
University of Puget Sound  
Whitman College

**Wisconsin**

University of Wisconsin System\*

\* Ranked *US News & World Report's America's Best Colleges - Top 50 National Universities.*

\*\*Six universities in the University of California System are ranked in the *Top 50*

**Known institutions of higher education with inclusive policies**

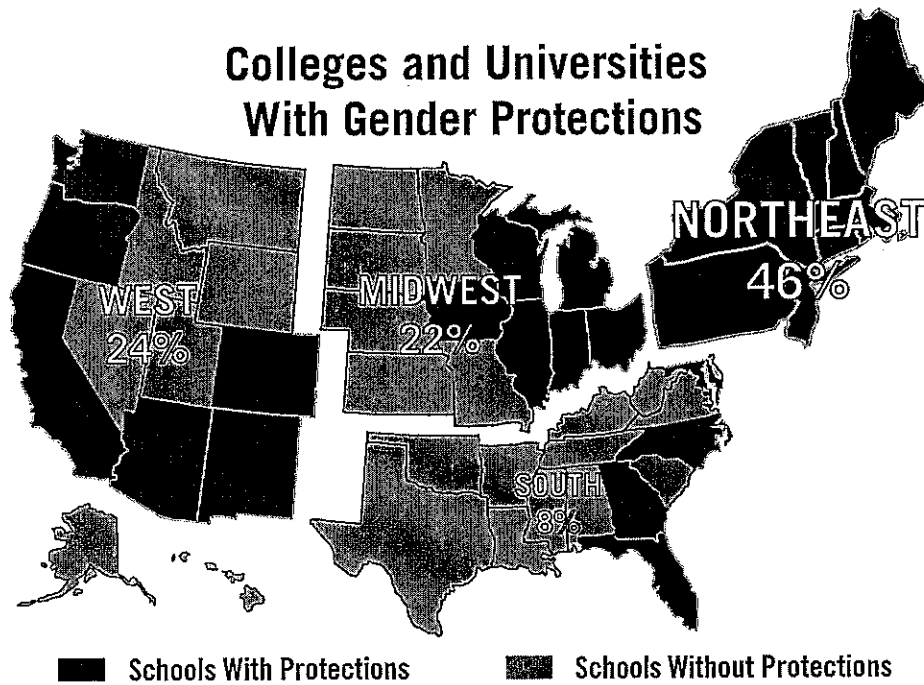
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## Location Matters

Fully 46% of all schools that include gender identity and expression protections in their non-discrimination policies are located in the Northeast. (West: 24%, Midwest: 22%, South: 8%).

State protections help. In January 2006, shortly after Washington enacted a state law banning discrimination based on gender identity, **Evergreen State College (WA)** amended its policy to include the gender-based protections.

According to the data collected from survey respondents, institutions of higher education are 1.5 times more likely to include the gender-based protections if located in a state or municipality that offers protection based on gender identity and expression through state law, federal or state court decisions, or administrative rulings.



4

States with inclusive laws that extend to public schools

