



**Student Senate
of the
East Tennessee State University
Student Government Association**



SGA-126-11

Mr. M. Dalton Collins, Mr. Matthew Huffines, and Mr. Jared Leftrick present the following legislation to the East Tennessee State University Student Government Association on behalf of the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance, LGBTieS: The Gay - Straight Alliance and the entirety of the student body who stand for equality in all aspects of campus life.

**A RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND
RESIDENCE LIFE, THE DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS, AND THE UNIVERSITY
PRESIDENT AT EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY BEGIN AN
INVESTIGATION AS TO THE VIABILITY OF OFFERING A GENDER NEUTRAL
RESIDENTIAL OPTION FOR STUDENTS WHO CHOOSE TO OCCUPY ON-CAMPUS
RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES AND TO MODIFY THE ROOMMATE PREFERENCE
AND ASSIGNMENT PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS LIVING WITH A RANDOM
ROOMMATE.**

WHEREAS, the mission of the Department of Housing and Residence Life on the campus of East Tennessee University reads, in part, “It is the mission of the Department of Housing and Residence Life to provide housing, programs, and services that:...Establish and foster a diverse, interactive learning community,” and;

WHEREAS, the mission statement of East Tennessee State University reads, in part, “ETSU affirms that a diverse population is necessary for the intellectual, social, economic, and professional development of our campus and regional communities,” and;

WHEREAS, universities across the nation including but not limited to: Brown University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Humboldt State University, Stanford University, University of Chicago, University of Michigan, University of Pennsylvania, University of Southern Maine, and Wesleyan University have effectuated policies that allow for, but in no way require, a gender neutral housing preference to students who are more comfortable sharing a living space with a member of the opposite biological sex than the common sex, and;

WHEREAS, East Tennessee State University has not begun assaying the attributes such a policy may confer upon the university, and;

WHEREAS, gender neutrality is becoming a growing trend throughout the aggregate of the institution of higher education in the United States and a new generation of students are

increasingly demanding universities and colleges that stand for commensurateness and magnanimity, and;

WHEREAS, a policy of gender neutrality would set East Tennessee State University apart as the only university in Tennessee to offer such an option and would distinguish the institution as one of social acceptance, progressivism, and foresightedness, and;

WHEREAS, a study of the campus opinion on the issue would allow for a more objective view of the option of gender neutral housing and how it would be viewed by residents and potential occupants of on-campus housing facilities, and;

WHEREAS, society is evolving into one of non-gender bias and it is increasingly seen as a non-issue among friends, acquaintances, and associates of differing biological sexes to live with one another in canonical, off-campus localities, and;

WHEREAS, students in gender crisis, who are transgender, pre-operative transsexual, trans-questioning, and/or homosexual currently have not the option of living in a comfortable accommodation on campus without requesting an exemption from the Department of Housing and Residence Life -- a process that may force an individual "out" who is not ready to express their gender identity or sexual/affectional orientation to another. This may cause extreme emotional distress among the individual and most certainly serves as a discouragement to such requests, and;

WHEREAS, it is not nor should it be the avocation of the University to police or otherwise mandate or repress the consensual relational encounters among students who have reached the majority age of eighteen years, and;

WHEREAS, many students elect to call campus residence halls home, and home is a place where individuals should feel welcomed and secure in all respects of their person. Current campus residential arrangements preclude some students from enjoying this right, and;

WHEREAS, all students deserve an innocuous place to live, learn, and engage socially without regard to gender, and;

WHEREAS, students should be entrusted to make decisions about their housing arrangements free from the consideration of gender or other bias if they so desire, and;

WHEREAS, students embarking on a random roommate experience should be comfortable and accepted in the residence hall without regard to their race, culture, sexual/affectional orientation, and/or religious preference, and;

WHEREAS, the only current measure in place to match roommates is smoking or non-smoking and this is completely out of touch with the inclination of matching roommates based on common interests and ideas, and;

WHEREAS, some students are inherently intolerant of others' views when it comes to the aforementioned designations and placing these students with those who ascribe to a belief system, world outlook, or relational preference different from their own puts both students at risk for confrontation, and;

WHEREAS, it is inappropriate to place students into a potentially harassing, volatile situation in the very place they should be the most comfortable – their home.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE 2010-2011 STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION SENATE OF THE EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY THAT:

Section 1. The Student Government Association Senate, the elected representative assembly of the entirety of the student body, hereby respectfully requests the Department of Housing and Residence Life, Dr. Bonnie Burchette, Director, the Division of Student Affairs, Dr. Joe Sherlin, Dean of Students, the University President, Dr. Paul E. Stanton, Jr., subordinate committees, departments, programs, and other professionally interested parties develop and conduct a survey of students regarding the possibility and viability of a gender neutral housing option on the campus of East Tennessee State University.

- A. The survey shall be anonymous, but shall require a method of controlling responses in a manner as to ensure each student is only permitted to submit one response.
- B. The survey shall state the policy, if changed, would in no way be mandatory for all students and that the policy would only be in effect if each roommate agreed to a gender neutral situation and specifically requested one another. No random roommate situation would result in a mixed gender room.

Section 2. It is further requested that the results of the survey be analyzed by a collaborative committee composed of the one individual representing each of the following seven entities: Division of Student Affairs, Department of Housing and Residence Life, Residence Hall Association, LGBTieS: the Gay Straight Alliance, Multicultural Affairs, Facilities, and Student Government Association.

- A. The representatives from Residence Hall Association, LGBTieS: the Gay Straight Alliance, and Student Government Association shall be student representatives.
- B. The committee chair shall be chosen from the faculty/staff membership of the committee and shall be a nonvoting member except in the instance of a tie.
- C. The committee shall interpret such factors as campus receptivity, feasibility, and impact.
- D. The committee shall give an official recommendation to the University President regarding implementation and execution of a gender neutral housing environment either for the whole or part of the on-campus housing system.
- E. This report shall be given to the President no more than six months after the completion of the campus survey.

Section 3. It is further requested the University President review the committee recommendations and render a decision as to whether East Tennessee State University shall include gender neutral housing options for on-campus residential facilities.

Section 4. In order to make the transition into residence hall life as enriching, rewarding, and educating as possible, it is further requested the Department of Housing and Residence Life modify the application and assigning processes for on-campus residential facilities.

- A. The application should require a reference to the tolerance level of individuals when it comes to differing races, cultures, affectional orientation, religion, and national origin.
- B. This system should include a positive, neutral, and negative preference for each choice.
- C. These factors shall be considered when assigning random roommates to share common living quarters in order to create an environment which is conducive to learning through acceptance, safety, and security.
- D. In order to consider these areas of identity, there shall be a confidential section of the housing application in which students may mark their affectional preference, race, cultural/ethnic identity, and religious preference. This area shall be a voluntary response section and the information contained therein shall be used only by the Department of Housing and Residence Life for roommate assignment purposes. The information shall not be forwarded to any entity within the Department that is not directly responsible for rooming assignments or to any party with the exception of the student whose name appears on the form.
- E. It is requested that Section 4 be enacted by the Department of Housing and Residence Life with all due expedience as to foster an environment of respect to diversity with the safety and security of all students in mind.