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NIU among the best for LGBT students

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The Advocate, a national gay and lesbian news magazine, included NIU in its list of the top 100 universities for LGBT students in August of 2006.

The top 100 didn't rank the universities in any particular order, but instead listed the leading universities that provided support and opportunities on campus to LGBT students.

"The university was either included in the list or it wasn't," said Margaret Cook, director of NIU's LGBT resource center.

The Advocate had about 20 criteria items, and NIU met about 16 of them, Cook said.

"We have an LGBT resource center, which is still rare for universities," she said. "There's a lot of LGBT programming and we have an active student organization as well."

The Ally program that NIU has was another item that helped the university in being chosen as one of the top 100 schools for LGBT students, Cook said.

"I think it definitely makes us nationally visible as part of a very elite group of colleges and universities," Cook said. "It helps us put a proactive message with future students that NIU is a place they can come to for support."

Brian Hemphill, vice president of student affairs, said this recognition will help make potential students aware of the opportunities available at NIU.

"This will make NIU a more appealing institution for students looking for a university that is dedicated to all forms of diversity," Hemphill said.

Cook said this recognition will also help let students already attending NIU know there is a very supportive community on campus.

"I think it makes a powerful statement about the institution's commitment to diversity and inclusiveness," Hemphill said. "NIU receiving this recognition is also a tribute to the hard work and the effort of the LGBT resource center staff."

Cassie Pfeifer is a campus reporter for the Northern Star.



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Retired NIU mechanical engineering professor Gretchen VanMeer plays the harp in support of the NIU LGBT Center's Ally Awards last April. NIU was recently named one of the top 100 schools for LGBT resources by the Advocate magazine.