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—Kari Kruse

plained, university personnel told her she needed counseling and questioned her "lifestyle choice" and disparaged her for choosing a Catholic university, she said. "Boys will be boys," she said a staff member told her.

Most officials threw their hands up in the air and said they couldn't do anything about the situation. The complainant claims she was denied when she asked for a supportive advocate to sit in on her meetings with university personnel. Her parents quickly tried to find an attorney for their daughter.

After one term at the university, she packed up and returned to live with her parents. One of her friends told *Just Out* she

eventually might return to Portland—this time to attend Portland State University.

Kruse says these stories are not isolated incidents. "It's not about me. It's about an entire institution."

She thinks the university should be taking responsibility for these issues rather than sitting back and waiting for students to complain. "If you want to make change, you need to make it yourself," Kruse said Goldrick told her.

"But that is not how it works at University of Portland," she told *Just Out*. Students aren't empowered at the university, she said.

Kruse will graduate in May with a degree in social work. She said the group she founded has potential leaders who will remain. She hopes the work FUEL has done will continue.

Although passionate about the work, more than two years of being at odds with her university has worn her down a bit. Still, she tries to see the light at the end of a very dark tunnel.

"My role in this is to set a spark, raise awareness," Kruse said. "The demonstration did that." **JN**

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After a year and a half of suffering, Kruse decided she'd had enough. There was no gay and lesbian organization on campus, there was no advocate for sexual minority students, there were few classes where the issue even would be addressed, and there was an institutional atmosphere that said her life was not a "Catholic value."

Thinking about transferring to another university, despite the financial advantage of being at University of Portland, Kruse suddenly had the idea to start FUEL. The name is from a favorite lyric by folk singer Ani DiFranco: "There's a fire just waiting to fuel."

Kruse adopted that name for her brainchild and announced in a class that she was starting the group. To her amazement, by day's end she had 45 students' signatures showing interest in getting involved.

"For the first time in life, I found my passion," Kruse said. "I felt like it was my purpose of my being at University of Portland."

More work to be done

These days, Kruse feels respected on campus. After three years of activism, her career ambitions have shifted from psychology to politics.

Students are more organized at University of Portland and care more about the same things she cares about. Kruse said she's learned that when students get together they have a voice.

But things at the university have not changed enough—not nearly enough. Kruse said she can count the number of out gay students on one hand. Even after two years, most of the members of FUEL are heterosexual.

And harassment of gays continues in the campus dorms.

A university freshman reported to *Just Out* that a male student repeatedly harassed her in her dorm because of her perceived lesbianism. Homophobic epithets regularly were heard in the hallways of the dormitories. At one point a "No on 9" sign on her dorm room door was defaced—"Yes! Fucking Fags," someone wrote on it.

When the young woman com-

The Radical Cheerleaders entertain the crowd assembled at University of Portland



STUDENT DEMANDS FOR ACTION

For immediate attention:

1. **Zero tolerance:** Residence Life should implement a zero-tolerance policy regarding oppressive actions and harassing language.

2. **Diverse classes:** Offer courses that give us education on diverse real-world issues like women's and multicultural issues.

3. **Sexual diversity education:** Sexual diversity education should be made available for dormitory resident assistants and their halls.

4. **LGBT advocate:** This underrepresented population needs a liaison in Residence Life.

5. **Club status:** Form a student committee that will participate with the administration in deciding which groups will receive club status.

Long-term goals:

6. **Diversity in the teaching body:** Within the next five years, University of Portland needs to hire at least five professors of color to enrich student education.

7. **Cultural center:** Devote some of the annual alumni funds toward building a multicultural center on university grounds in order to continue the commitment to diversity awareness and education.

8. **Visual arts:** Art programs are necessary in a school dominated by engineering and business. Expression and creation are important parts of a well-rounded education.

9. **Public safety:** Conduct open forums with Public Safety to discuss ways it can serve the university community and its surrounding neighborhoods better.

10. **Day care:** There is no availability for child care for students at the university. This detracts from the university community because it eliminates parents with young children from the possibility of attending.

The harmony was short-lived, however. John Goldrick, student services vice president, met with students Jan. 17. Kruse said the meeting was a step forward because it started a dialogue with administrators about crucial issues: harassment of gays and lesbians, lack of sexual diversity education and support for gay students, lack of student input about campus policies and low numbers of professors of color on campus, among others concerns.

But the meeting frustrated her. She said Goldrick continually passed the buck, telling the four students at the meeting that other segments of the university, including the student government body and the professors themselves, were responsible for making policy changes to address the complaints.

Kruse said the administrators criticized her for not coming to them directly with her complaints and concerns. "I didn't feel comfortable," she said in her defense.

Goldrick and the University of Portland public relations office did not respond to repeated requests for an interview.

Finding a purpose

After graduating from a Montana high school, Kruse wanted to leave the state. She started looking at the Rose City as a possible destination but knew nothing about University of Portland. She's not a Catholic and never had heard of the institution when she accepted a scholarship offer from the university.

Within a week, Kruse knew she was in the wrong place. "I made the biggest mistake of my life," she recalled thinking. "I can't even describe what it was like."

The freshman said she was an outcast from the beginning; students assumed she was a lesbian and shunned her. "It was not outright (discrimination), but you know when you're not welcome," she said.

In October 1998, student Jeff Lee wrote an editorial in the school's newspaper, *The Beacon*, about the murder of Matthew Shepard and the issue of homosexuality. "This horrific act cannot be tolerated...it must also be stated that homosexuality is an immoral lifestyle choice and should not be accepted as normal," he wrote. "Show compassion, help and lead them away from the abomination of homosexuality."