LiFT Works Towards Clarification
By Lindsay Dale
Contributing Writer

They came to find answers and were informed, or to simply facilitate discussion. Students, faculty, and staff held in the Common Grounds coffee house. LiFT is a group of faculty and staff that was formed in response to the large amount of dialogue and recent debate present on campus. They held the forum in hopes that communication among different groups would help to dispel some of the tension and misunderstanding.

"We don't have to agree with each other," said Barry Hart, LiFT facilitator and director of the University Accord. Hart sees his role as trying to get people to talk about their concerns.

LiFT has named four main issues they observe in discussions. They include academic freedom, interpretation of the Bible, homosexuality, and the military on campus (especially in relation to College Night).

Several other issues surfaced during discussions at the forum on Thursday night. One of the biggest questions was whether faculty and staff are at risk of being fired as a result of expressing beliefs contrary to those supported by EMU.

President Joe Lapp gave his own insight into the meaning of "academic freedom," one of the issues that springs from the Board's statement. "Academic freedom, in my mind, is not absolute," he said. "Academic freedom is not synonymous with free speech."

Some students present at the forum requested clarification on phrases like "publicly advocate." When asked to speak about the issues that were brought up at the meeting, Joe Lapp declined to define public advocacy himself and said he would wait until there is more discussion among his cabinet. He explained that the question leads into the issue of who has the authority to interpret and enforce the Board's policies.

He explained that in groups like the Board and the Cabinet, no one member has the authority to represent the group alone. The group can only act together.

One of the topics brought up in the discussion was the Board's response to the letters sent by concerned students. Members of SGA and a student-group who had submitted a petition were present at the forum. They expressed frustration over the vague nature of the Board's reply.

A member of the group of students said she felt the response "was ambiguous, but was a first step." SGA's letter was read aloud at the meeting, Thaddeus Hollingsworth, SGA co-president, said they received a reply from the Board, but it "didn't really clarify anything."

Some things were clarified, though. Students gained a better understanding of how EMU's administrative system is set up. The president and the cabinet then have the responsibility to interpret and enforce the Board's statements. In addition, they have authority over the employment of other faculty and staff.

Lapp explained that he is listening to students and they may have some influence in how the Board's policies are enforced, however, he is ultimately accountable to the Board.

Other opportunities to learn and discuss more about these issues include:

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Send Rice, Not Bombs
By David Rife
Contributing Writer

Continuing in its protest against the pending war with Iraq, the SGA has asked contributors to actually give a bit of pocket change to the cause.

Faculty and students can come to the campus center where they can put a half cup of rice into a plastic bag, put it in an envelope and send it themselves. This, however, does come at a small cost of $1.06 for postage.

Sophomore Lydia Zee said, "If speaking out against war is important to you, you should be willing to spend $1 to make your statement."

Sophomore Derrick Charles, who is a member of the SGA, responded to the inquiry of how long this project will be going, and said, "I am not sure, as long as there is a need and as long as people take advantage of it, probably."

There seems to be a good amount of interest here on campus. For example, Zee said "a lot of people are doing it," and Charles has "seen a number of people filling bags and the nice dwindles in the bags."

The stand is set up in the Campus Center and very visible when coming in and out of the building. Most students travel to the Campus Center at least once a day, so this is a good spot to have it set up.

There have been various reports as to where the initiative for this action comes. One source claims that Boulder Colorado Mennonite Church founded the idea, but the invitation is open for all organizations and congregations of Mennonite, Church of the Brethren, and anyone with the conviction against the pending