

LGBT+ Physicists: Best Practices Guide

General Recommendations

This best practices guide is a work in progress by the group LGBT+ Physicists. You are reading a **draft** of the document, dated **June 8, 2012**.

Best practices for the inclusion of LGBT+ people on campus can be found in several places.¹ We limit ourselves here to a set of recommendations that are particularly relevant to physicists (as opposed to general university administrators).

★ = Things that you can do tomorrow

Employment

★ Inclusion of non-discrimination statements in job announcements

Including a brief statement on the EEO policy of the employer in the job announcement serves several goals. It clarifies the legal situation that a potential employee enters, but it also serves to signal potential employees that the employer is aware of the issues facing LGBT+ people. If competing institutions lack protections or partner benefits for LGBT+ people, qualified LGBT+ applicants may be attracted to a non-discriminating institution they might otherwise have overlooked.

Employers can **include a brief EEO statement** stating that "this employer prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression." In individual job postings, employers can include language to point out that they "encourage applications from eligible candidates regardless of sex, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression."

★ Contact person for same-sex dual career couples

Even for traditionally married dual career partners employment decisions are impacted by uncertainty about the career of the spouse. For same-sex dual career partners these problems

¹ Blumenfeld, W.J. (1993), "Making Colleges and Universities Safe for Gay and Lesbian Students: Report and Recommendations of the Massachusetts Governors Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth," Boston, Massachusetts. Rankin, S. (2003), "Campus Climate for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender People: A National Perspective," New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute. Windmeyer S., Rankin S., Beemyn G. (2009), "Campus Climate Index," <http://www.campusclimateindex.org>.

are only amplified because the relationship might not be recognized legally by the employer. Even when the potential employee is comfortable enough discussing this with the employers, a satisfactory solution might not be possible if the relationship is not recognized by the employer. For international hires, the Defense of Marriage act precludes married same-sex couples from obtaining a spousal visa or green card; they must qualify for a visa on their own account.

For potential employees it is important to be able to discuss dual career issues without impacting the search process. This conversation should begin early enough (for example, when an interview invitation is made) to ensure that there is clarity about the prospects when an offer of employment is made. A **single contact person for dual career issues** who is not part of the search committee (for example, a vice-provost for academic affairs) should assist in assessing the situation while the hiring process is on-going.

Advocate for inclusive health insurance

LGBT+ students, faculty and staff are often unable to take full advantage of university or college health benefits. Many health plans do not extend coverage to domestic partners, although the Human Rights Campaign reports that 58% of Fortune 500 companies now offer such coverage to their employees. Others exclude "procedures related to being transgender." As documented by the Transgender Law Center, this exclusion applies not only to medical services that are vital for the transitioning process -- such as hormone treatments, transition surgery, or even therapy -- but also has been used to deny treatment for pathologies associated with the sex assigned at birth (e.g. uterine cancer in a transgender man) and for such non-gendered problems as the flu or a broken arm. The impact of such policies on an individual's physical and mental health cannot be overstated. Offering inclusive health insurance is a competitive advantage in hiring candidates who are LGBT+ or who have LGBT+ beneficiaries.

In states where health coverage for domestic partners is permitted, **advocate with the administration to include domestic partners** (of the same or opposite sex) as possible insurance beneficiaries. If state law prohibits such an arrangement, it may be possible to pursue an alternative insurance structure subsidized by sympathetic donors. Advocate for removing the transgender exclusion from your college or university's health plan, as has been done successfully by the University of California System; as a smaller step, advocate for including specific coverage for certain procedures (such as therapy, hormone treatments, and sexual reassignment surgery) for transgender students, faculty, staff and family members.

Example of language for domestic partner benefits, used by the Thomas Jefferson National Accelerator Facility: "a non-married cohabiting couple, sharing a common legal residence, for a minimum of twelve months prior; and intending to cohabit indefinitely, sharing the common necessities of life."

Departmental Climate

★ Use Gender Neutral and Inclusive Language

The heterosexual norm is often reinforced through our use of language. This can leave LGBT+ people feeling excluded. Some suggestions for gender neutral and inclusive language are:

- There is a difference between a person's gender (culturally determined) and a person's sex (biologically defined). Gender is not a binary, but rather a continuum.
- Use gender neutral pronouns and phrasing ("Bring your partner" instead of "bring your wife", "all students should bring their laptops" instead of "each student should bring his laptop").
- Always use the pronoun of a person's choosing.
- Avoid terms that show gender biases in the profession ("chair" versus "chairman", "cleaner" versus "cleaning lady").
- Avoid defaulting to umbrella terms like "gay" or "homosexual." Use LGBT to refer to a broad community.
- Do not assume heterosexual orientation.
- "Sexual orientation" is a preferred term over "sexual preference," which suggests a degree of voluntary choice that is not necessarily the case.

★ Participate in surveys that include LGBT+ experiences

Data collection is a vital component of diversity efforts. For any individual department or organization, it is necessary to evaluate the effects of existing policies and identify areas where improvement is required. For the larger academic community, an extensive, reliable data set allows constructive comparisons between departments and institutions, which may guide policy-making or even career decisions. The inclusion of LGBT+ demographic information and LGBT+ experiences in data collection is thus an essential element of formulating policies that are friendly to LGBT+ students, faculty and staff.

Encourage participation in **national or regional surveys** that address LGBT+ issues. For example, Campus Pride (<http://www.campusclimateindex.org/>) produces the LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index, a valuable resource for students and administrators. An official authorized to represent the college or university on LGBT+ issues may contact Campus Pride in order to take part in the assessments for the Index.

In addition, consider how **internal demographic information** may be collected in an inclusive way. Does the department's demographic form include a question about sexual orientation and a question about gender identity? Can respondents list a domestic partnership as a marital status? Are respondents limited to a binary, male or female identification, or can they write in how they self-identify?

Suggested questions for inclusion on internal questionnaires are:

- What is your gender? Male / Female / Non-binary / Other: _____
- Do you consider yourself a member of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community? Yes / No

★ Invite LGBT+ speakers to campus

One way to help those belonging to marginalized populations become more integrated into the academic community is to recognize them publicly for their professional accomplishments and to provide them with role models with whom they can identify. The APS has, for years, publicized speakers' lists of women and minority physicists in order to encourage departments to diversify their colloquium and seminar series for these very reasons. Similarly, if a department invites a speaker from the LGBT+ community to make a research presentation, this simultaneously showcases that individual's work, provides them with networking opportunities in the department, and offers local students (and even faculty) a role model. It also enables the department to publicly demonstrate its commitment to inclusive excellence.

When **inviting a speaker to campus**, it is always good practice to arrange for them to meet with individuals or groups with whom they have common interests. Hence, if hosting a condensed matter physicist who you know is an advocate for LGBT+ concerns, take all dimensions of their portfolio into account in constructing their schedule. When informing the department of their impending visit, **provide a mini-bio that references their interest in LGBT+ issues** as well as their physics accomplishments; this will encourage a wider range of individuals to come to their talk or seek to meet with them. Ask the visitor if s/he is willing to meet with any interested student or faculty groups – sharing pizza and conversation with the condensed matter graduate students, a local chapter of oSTEM, or the campus WISE group may be a valuable experience for all concerned.

Help department members find resources

As a chair, one of your primary roles is to help faculty and students in your department obtain local information and resources they need to be effective. This is especially important in supporting individuals belonging to populations (including LGBT+) that are traditionally underrepresented in physics. Research shows that these physicists are less likely to be part of the informal information-sharing networks through which those in the majority gain much of their information about how to survive and thrive in the profession.

Your mission, then, is to **learn what resources are available** on your campus and then to publicize them in a way that helps other faculty become part of the effort to be inclusive. As a starting point, consult the website of your local LGBT+ Resource Center (if one exists) or of the campus Diversity Office. Arrange to **meet with the director of the center or office** to learn more about how your campus is working to support LGBT+ faculty and students and how your department can join these efforts. Then bring this information back into your department by **inviting the director to make a brief presentation at a faculty meeting** or meet with interested student groups such as oSTEM or WISE. Publicize campus resources that would be

of use to your students and faculty by referring to them in a prominent section of the departmental website or graduate student handbook – one visible to prospective as well as current department members.

LGBT+ Physicists: Best Practices Guide

Recommendations Specific to Transgender People

This best practices guide is a work in progress by the group LGBT+ Physicists. You are reading a **draft** of the document, dated **June 8, 2012**.

★ = Things that you can do tomorrow

Within the Department

★ Names and Pronouns

Every student has the right to be addressed by a name and pronoun that corresponds to the student's gender identity. A court-ordered name or gender change is not required, and the student need not change his or her official records. The intentional or persistent refusal to respect a student's gender identity (for example, intentionally referring to the student by a name or pronoun that does not correspond to the student's gender identity) is a violation of this policy.²

Restroom Accessibility

Students shall have access to all restrooms that correspond to their gender identity consistently asserted at school. Any student who has a need or desire for increased privacy, regardless of the underlying reason, should be provided access to a single user restroom. However, no student shall be required to use such a restroom because they are transgender or gender nonconforming.²

Forms

Having a "sex" category on forms that is limited to "Male" and "Female" makes transgender students feel disregarded, and with no means to identify themselves, they remain invisible to administrators and their needs continue to be overlooked. With these concerns in mind, some colleges and universities are changing forms in housing, admissions, health-care, and other areas of campus life where gender needs to be asked to enable transgender students to self-identify. For example, Oberlin College and the University of Hawaii ask "Gender: Male, Female, Transgender," and Tufts University and the University of Oregon ask "Gender: _____," on their housing applications. Duke University has students fill-in their gender on its admissions application.¹

Records and Documents

Being able to alter their records and documents is personally and legally important for many transgender students. Not only does having the appropriate name and gender listed reflect and validate their identity, but it can also allow them to avoid constantly having to explain why they use a name different from their birth name and why their appearance does not match a photo or gender designation on an identification card. Moreover, updated records and documents can ensure that transgender students will not be outed and will help protect them from discrimination when they apply for jobs, seek admission to graduate and professional schools, and at any other time that they must show a college document. Colleges and universities are addressing this issue by establishing simple procedures for transgender students to change their name and gender designation on all of their campus records, including identification cards, listings in electronic and print directories, and files in admissions, financial aid, the registrar's office, and the health center.¹

At the University of Utah and the University of Oregon, transgender students can change the gender designation on their main college record without evidence that they have had gender confirmation surgeries (GCS). Not requiring medical intervention is important, as most transitioning students are not in a position to have GCS, even if they desire it. At Ohio State University and the University of Maryland, transgender students can change the gender listed on their records by obtaining a letter of support from a mental health professional.¹

At the University of Michigan and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, students can request that a preferred name be used instead of their legal name on course rosters and in various university information systems. Students do not need to have their name legally changed first. An FAQ about the University of Michigan policy can be found at <http://www.umich.edu/%7Epolicies/preferrednamesFAQ.html>.¹

At the University of Vermont, transgender students who are not yet able to change their name legally can still request an identification card with a name other than their birth name. Transgender students at American University and the University of Illinois, Chicago can request a new ID at no cost that has a gender-appropriate picture and that uses only their last name and the initial of their first name.¹

Restroom Accessibility

School staff may designate one or more restrooms to be gender-neutral, meaning that they are accessible to students of all genders. Gender-neutral restrooms can help to make restrooms both safer and more accessible for a variety of people, not just transgender and gender nonconforming students. Gender-neutral restrooms allow students to access the restroom without having to worry whether someone is going to question or harass them for using the “wrong” one. This also increases options for gender nonconforming people. Therefore, it is ideal for schools to make single-occupancy restrooms gender-neutral whenever possible. However,

students should not be restricted to using only designated gender-neutral restrooms.²

Designation of a particular restroom for voluntary use by other students School staff, with the agreement of the transgender student, may designate one restroom in the school, such as a restroom in the nurse's office or a teacher restroom, that will be usable by students who may feel uncomfortable sharing a facility with transgender students. This allows students who have feel uncomfortable sharing the facility with the transgender student(s) the option to make use of a separate restroom to have their concerns be addressed without stigmatizing any individual student.²

Because gender-diverse students are often subject to harassment and violence when using male- or female-specific campus restrooms, a rapidly growing number of colleges and universities are creating gender-neutral bathrooms, either through renovations or by simply changing the signs on single-stall male/female restrooms. Currently, more than 150 campuses have gender-neutral bathrooms, including Oberlin College, which has two gender-neutral bathrooms in its student union and at least one in every residence hall; the University of California, San Diego, which has changed male/female signs on 88 single-stall restrooms in campus buildings; and the New College of California, where all campus bathrooms are gender-neutral. Many of the colleges and universities with gender-neutral bathrooms, including New York University, Ohio University, UCLA, and the University of Colorado, Boulder, list the locations of these restrooms on their websites.¹

Along with developing gender-neutral restrooms, some institutions, such as American University, Kent State University, Ohio State University, the University of California, Santa Barbara, and Washington State University, have implemented or are in the process of implementing policies requiring that all extensively renovated and newly constructed buildings include at least one gender-neutral bathroom.¹

The University of Arizona has established a bathroom policy that affirms that individuals have the right to use the bathroom that corresponds with their gender identity. The statement is available at <http://fp.arizona.edu/affirm/restroomaccess.htm>.¹

Residence Halls

Most colleges and universities assign housing based strictly on the individual's birth gender and have residence halls designated as single-sex by building and/or room. As a result, transgender students often lack safe and comfortable on-campus housing options. Schools are beginning to address this issue in a number of ways.¹

As a first step, some campuses are enacting a policy that supports transgender students in obtaining suitable, safe housing that is in keeping with their gender identity/expression. Ithaca College, Ohio State University, the University of California, Riverside, the University of Minnesota, and the University of Wisconsin are among the institutions with model trans-related housing statements. The University of California, Riverside's policy is available at

<http://out.ucr.edu/campus/transpolicy.htm>.¹

Besides implementing supportive policy statements, a growing number of colleges and universities are creating gender-neutral housing options, in which students are assigned a roommate regardless of gender. The type and extent of gender-neutral housing offered varies by campus, and may involve individual suites, a hallway or floor, particular buildings or areas of buildings, or the majority of residence halls. More than 25 colleges and universities offer a gender-neutral housing option, from large, public universities like the University of California, Riverside and the University of Southern Maine, to small, private liberal arts institutions like Bennington College and Oberlin College. A complete list of campuses with gender-neutral accommodations and the specific school policies is available from the National Student Genderblind Campaign: <http://www.genderblind.org/research.pdf>.¹

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and ally (LGBTQA) living-learning programs or theme floors/houses offer another trans-supportive housing option. These programs typically include gender-neutral rooms and bathrooms. More than a dozen colleges and universities have established LGBTQA housing, including Beloit College; Carleton College; Syracuse University; Tufts University; the University of California at Berkeley, Davis, Irvine, Riverside, and Santa Barbara; the University of Colorado, Boulder; the University of Iowa; the University of Massachusetts, Amherst; the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities; and the University of Vermont.¹

Locker Rooms

As with male and female bathrooms, public locker and shower rooms can be uncomfortable, intimidating, and even dangerous places for transgender students, who may be outed as transgender if they have to undress in front of others. Partly in response to this issue, a growing number of campuses, including Ohio State University, the University of Maryland, and the University of Oregon, have created private changing rooms when they have renovated or built new recreation centers. These facilities not only serve the needs of transgender students, but also parents with children of a different gender than themselves, people with disabilities who require the assistance of an attendant of a different gender, and anyone desiring greater privacy.¹

¹ Transgender Law & Policy Institute: Best Practices for Transgender Students

<http://www.transgenderlaw.org/college/guidelines.htm>

² GLSEN Model District Policy on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students

http://www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/file/000/001/1978-1.pdf