

Walking with Our LGBTQ Students: Best Practices Quick Sheet

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This quick sheet and links to more resources can be found at fordhamqueery.org under “Campus Resources.”

This page contains resources for making your college or university a better place for LGBTQ+ students. It is important to note that these resources are only a starting point; they [should not be taken as a limit or upper bound](#) on campus climate efforts. These resources are not a replacement for conducting assessments and engaging students at your institution to understand your particular, local needs. Still, it is often helpful to have policy recommendations that are supported by research and designed by experts in the field. The research supporting these recommendations can be useful in motivating stakeholders, and the details of policy guidelines can help navigate the complicated process of implementing effective policy. A summary of key policies is below, followed by links to detailed recommendations.

Campus Facilities and Housing

1. Single-occupancy bathrooms can easily be made gender-neutral by changing the sign on the door. Single occupancy bathrooms can also help minimize policy resistance and reduce worries for bathroom users.
2. Single-occupancy or gender neutral housing options greatly reduce stress and increase safety for LGBTQ students. Housing policy is complex, and doing it well is difficult. Consult the detailed guidance in the attached resources and your local LGBTQ students during the policy design and implementation to ensure it achieves the desired outcomes.
3. Opt-in LGBT housing communities have been shown to benefit students and foster healthy community. (Again, see the resources and consult your students for detailed guidance, as there are many potential pitfalls)
4. New and randomly assigned students benefit from policy that tries to match them with accepting roommates; random assignment is often an extremely stressful process for them. Expecting all students to be accepting dismisses LGBTQ students’ well-founded concerns. Consult the resources and your campus community for ideas about assignment policy.
5. Trans students’ access to facilities is protected by Title IX and by many state courts.

Student Organizations and Activities

1. Foster multiple campus organisations for LGBTQ students (e.g. in campus ministry, a social club, a political club, a trans-focused club, an academic reading group). Like any other group, LGBTQ students have diverse interests and personalities. They will not all feel at home in any single group, but finding community of other LGBTQ students has been shown to be essential for their wellbeing, retention, and success.
2. Events like Coming Out Day, Lavender Graduation, and Safe Space training signal to students that their institution cares about them. They also serve to raise awareness and change campus culture for the better.
3. Make sure LGBTQ students and resources are represented in New Student Orientation to set a welcoming tone from the beginning and help new students find their way.
4. Support students and groups to attend or host Ignatian Q: The Ignatian LGBTQIA+ and Ally Conference run by students at AJCU institutions.

Policy and Administration

1. Include sexual orientation and gender identity in all nondiscrimination and anti-harassment policy.
2. Make sure campus documents and policy use inclusive wording. (e.g. sexual assault policy should be written without assuming the genders of people involved. Changes extend to more than pronouns: for example the FBI’s definition of rape was revised so it no longer assumes genital configuration.) Explicitly mentioning LGBTQ students can help to
 - a. overcome the distrust of institutions many have, rationally, learned, and
 - b. address their specific, often different, needs.
3. Allow students to change their name and gender in official records and class rosters, and make the process as simple as possible. (In practice, these processes tend to be Kafkaesque. Walk through yours as a hypothetical student to find areas for improvement.)

4. Ensure campus health and counseling resources are inclusive of LGBTQ students and their needs. This means having professionals trained specifically in LGBTQ issues.
5. Form an LGBTQ resource center, or offer similar resources and programming through an OMA. Paid staff have the experience, time, authority, and resources necessary for many kinds of justice work that are beyond the capacity of students.
6. Have and enforce policy for reporting and responding to anti-LGBTQ incidents and bias. (This is a Title IX requirement as well.) Allow anonymous reporting and options not to follow up: often students want their experiences counted so that they can motivate structural and cultural change, even if they do not want to go through the stressful process of an investigation.

Curriculum

1. Many of the figures in existing curriculum are LGBTQ. When figures like Alan Turing come up, mentioning that he was persecuted for being gay helps students see that people like them matter at their school.
2. Ensure that some LGBTQ people are included on as many syllabi as possible: seeing people like themselves in the curriculum helps LGBTQ students feel they have a place in the world.
3. Use neutral language (e.g. “parent,” “partner,” singular “they”) when possible.
4. Highlight when LGBTQ people are missing from a text or discussion, and ask students to reflect on how including them might change things.
5. Include preferred pronouns along with preferred names in introductions so that students may specify how they want to be addressed. “What would you like to be called?” is a normal question for everyone: I prefer “Jeff” to “Jeffrey,” and I’m comfortable with the pronouns “he” or “they.” My advisor prefers “Elizabeth” over shortened forms like “Liz.” This signals a welcoming environment and sets expectations that this is a normal part of respectful student interaction outside the classroom.

Detailed Recommendations and Sources for this Document

1. Research-Based Best Practices [overview post](#) from Kristen Renn.
2. Fordham Que(e)ry [Community Report](#), with recommendations based on a large study of LGBTQ students at a Jesuit university.
3. 2010 [State of Higher Education for LGBT People](#). The executive summary has broad best practices, but the full report has extensive, detailed policy suggestions.
4. 2012 [LGBTQ National College Athlete Report](#). The executive summary has broad best practices, but the full report has extensive, detailed policy suggestions.
5. The [Campus Pride Index](#) ranks schools according to their score on a long list of policies and resources for LGBTQ people. The list is public, so you can check its accuracy for your institution and get ideas about what to implement to make your campus more welcoming.
6. Best Practices for [LGBT Student Records](#) from AACRAO.
7. [Supporting Trans Students](#) from the [Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals](#). Lambda Legal has [a version](#) of this as well.
8. Best Practices for [Attorneys](#) from the American Bar Association. Share with your university’s legal counsel.
9. GLSEN [Safe Space Starter Kit](#). Designed for K-12 schools, but contains much helpful advice and resources for colleges as well.
10. Trans-Inclusive College [Health Program Guidelines](#).
11. LGBTQ Inclusive [Curriculum and Classroom Climate](#) from Fordham University’s Center for Ethics Education.
12. [Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender programs and services](#) from the CAS Professional Standards for Higher Education. There is a chapter by Alex C. Langeon implementing these in the book [Using the CAS Professional Standards](#): Diverse Examples of Practice.
13. [Asking Questions about Sexual Orientation on Surveys](#) from the Williams Institute at UCLA.
14. Responding to [LGBTQI sexual assault](#) well, from Inside Higher Ed’s Conditionally Accepted column.