

OUT AND APPLYING?

The question of whether or not to be out on your application does not have a simple answer. While it would be amazing to think that every person involved in the admissions decision-making process is sensitive to LGBT issues, this is probably not the case. You may want to research a particular school's climate on LGBT issues before deciding to be out on your application, and may even decide to not apply at all based on what you find.

If your LGBT identity is significant to your personal development, extracurricular activities and/or academic integrity, and the school appears to be LGBT-friendly, mentioning this may be advantageous. If you decide to be out, here are some suggestions on ways to do it appropriately.

THE INTERVIEW:

The purpose of the interview is to learn more about you as a person. If you are interviewed by an alumnus/a in addition to (or instead of) an Admissions Officer, gauge this accordingly since some alumni/ae may not be as understanding of LGBT issues as other alumni/ae or an Admissions Officer. If applicable, explain to the interviewer about the process of forming or leading your school's gay-straight alliance (GSA).

THE ESSAY:

Discussing a challenge you have overcome, or your greatest achievement, is a very common application essay question. You might consider writing about your experiences "coming out" to your family and friends and the personal insight you gained as a result.

ACTIVITIES:

If you have been a member of your school's gay-straight alliance (GSA) or a local LGBT group, include it in your list of activities. Explain why your involvement in an LGBT community is important to you.

"It's extremely important that colleges/universities take measures to ensure an inclusive and safe environment for LGBT students so that students can achieve their full potential."

– KELLY COSTELLO
AGE 19, AMERICAN UNIVERSITY – WASHINGTON DC

LGBT RESOURCES

EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

GLSEN - www.glsen.org
Student Pride USA - www.studentprideusa.org

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation - www.glaad.org
Gender Education and Advocacy - www.gender.org
Gender Pac - www.gpac.org
Human Rights Campaign - www.hrc.org
National Association of LGBT Community Centers - www.gaycenter.org/natctr/
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force - www.nglft.org

POST-SECONDARY ORGANIZATIONS

Delta Lambda Phi - www.dlp.org
LGBT Campus Resource Centers - www.lgbtcampus.org
United States Student Association (USSA) - www.usstudents.org

LEGAL RESOURCES

American Civil Liberties Union - www.aclu.org
Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund - www.lambdalegal.org

ONLINE RESOURCES

Gay.com - www.gay.com
LGBT Search Engine - www.rainbowquery.com
Planet Out - www.planetout.com
Queer America - www.queeramerica.com

PHONE SUPPORT AND CRISIS LINES

Gay and Lesbian Youth Hotline: 888-843-4564
National Youth Crisis Hotline: 800-448-4663
Peer Listening Line: 800-399-7337
Trevor Help Line: 800-850-8078

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FINDING AN LGBT FRIENDLY CAMPUS

A GUIDE FOR LGBT STUDENTS PURSUING HIGHER EDUCATION

SPONSORED BY:



GAY, LESBIAN AND STRAIGHT EDUCATION NETWORK

SO YOU WANT TO GO TO COLLEGE?

What a dizzying thought! The process of searching and applying for post-secondary education can be a stressful and exhausting experience for anyone. This experience can be even more so for many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth, or those simply looking for LGBT safe and affirming campuses.

Having grown up in an era that has seen many advances in the LGBT movement, you will be one of the first generations to reap the many benefits of some hard-fought victories. One in particular is the fact that most post-secondary schools now recognize LGBT people in their non-discrimination policies. This means that if a school has such a policy, they are obliged to evaluate an LGBT applicant fairly with no biases based on one's sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. However, the mere presence of such a policy does not automatically ensure the most accepting and tolerant campus atmosphere. There are several other factors to consider when choosing which colleges or universities to apply to and ultimately, which school to attend.

This brochure is designed to help you find the best school to fit your specific needs as an LGBT student, or as a student concerned with such issues, as well as to help you navigate the application process. Finding an LGBT-safe and accepting college or university is possible!

"I don't know how accurately I can portray myself in an application without at least touching upon how being a sexual minority has affected my life. Identifying as a female-to-male transexual is beyond the scope of understanding for most people. I'm eager to find others like me in college, and to be in a place where my differences are accepted, even celebrated."

– STRAUSS
AGE 17, SHADY SIDE ACADEMY FOX CHAPEL, PA

FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN SEEKING AN LGBT-SAFE SCHOOL

1. NUMBER OF "OUT" LGBT STUDENTS

The number of "out" LGBT students can have a marked effect on how comfortable you feel being yourself. Many LGBT high school students go through high school being the only, or one of the few "out" students. For this reason, attending a post-secondary school with many "out" students can introduce you, perhaps for the first time, to what being part of an LGBT community is about.

2. NUMBER OF "OUT" LGBT FACULTY MEMBERS/ADMINISTRATORS

Just like having "out" students, having "out" faculty members and administrators can help you feel more comfortable being yourself. In addition, having LGBT people in influential positions is perhaps indicative of how the school, in general, feels about LGBT students and issues. There are most likely LGBT faculty members, administrators and students on every campus around the country. The number who choose to be "out" may be telling of how comfortable the atmosphere is for LGBT people.

3. INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

There is a broad range of programs, positions and groups that schools can deem "institutional resources." The most common and effective is a paid staff member whose job includes outreach to the school's LGBT population. Having such a person in place allows for easier and often friendlier access to a school's administration, a vital concern for students historically underrepresented, and occasionally overlooked or mistreated.

4. STUDENT RESOURCES

The heart and soul of every campus is the "student life." If you are looking to feel part of a specific community, this is most often and most easily facilitated through involvement in student groups. For example, as a member of an LGBT student group, you could find yourself getting involved with campus activism, community activism in the town/city where the school is located, community outreach to high school gay-straight alliances or HIV/AIDS service organizations, writing for the campus LGBT-focused publication, or writing for the campus newspaper as the beat writer for LGBT-related stories. LGBT student groups often plan many social events where you can interact with others in more informal ways. In addition to the existence of an LGBT-related student group, investigate the presence of other identity or issue-based groups towards gathering an idea of the school's overall diversity.

5. EXISTENCE OF LGBT STUDIES OR COURSES

LGBT/Queer Studies have only emerged as an accepted academic discipline over the past twenty years. Its interdisciplinary approach allows for the study of sexuality and gender and the varied representation of sexuality and gender in history, film, law, music, politics, women's studies, social movements, television, art, theatre, and literature. Whether a school offers LGBT/Queer Studies as a major or a school offers some courses within the field, you should be assured that such a school is committed on some level to the academic worth of LGBT contributions to society.

HOW DOES YOUR COLLEGE CHOICE MEASURE UP?

Use this chart to find out! Answer the following questions and see how many YES responses you get. After you've completed the survey, email your results to studentpride@qlsen.org and visit www.qlsen.org to find out how other schools have measured up.

NAME OF SCHOOL:			
	YES	NO	N/A
High number of out LGBT students?			
High number of out LGBT faculty members?			
High number of out LGBT administrators?			
Institutional resources?			
Student Resources?			
Existence of LGBT Studies/courses?			
First-year orientation program inclusive of LGBT issues?			
Non-discrimination policy inclusive of LGBT people?			
Free from actively discriminatory affiliations?			
Access to funding for LGBT-related events?			
Existence of an LGBT student center maintained by the school?			
Existence of community outreach programs inclusive of LGBT issues?			
Involvement with nearby schools inclusive of LGBT issues?			
Interaction with any graduate schools' LGBT student groups?			
Access to counseling services for LGBT people?			
Classifies and records harassment and assault based on one's sexual orientation or gender identity/expression as "biased?"			
Plans social events specifically for LGBT students?			
Offers LGBT-inclusive HIV/STD testing and services?			

16+ YES'S: THIS SCHOOL IS MOST LIKELY VERY LGBT-FRIENDLY

9-15 YES'S: MOST SCHOOLS FALL INTO THIS CATEGORY. WHILE SUCH SCHOOLS ARE MAKING SOME POSITIVE STEPS TOWARDS LGBT INCLUSIVENESS, THEY COULD STILL BE DOING MORE.

1-8 YES'S: THIS SCHOOL MAY NOT BE VERY LGBT-FRIENDLY, BUT STILL MAY BE WORTHY OF FURTHER RESEARCH.

IN ALL CASES, TALKING TO CURRENT STUDENTS OR RECENT ALUMNI/AE CAN SHED A LOT OF LIGHT ON WHAT IT IS REALLY LIKE TO BE LGBT AT A CERTAIN SCHOOL.

TO OBTAIN THE ABOVE INFORMATION, YOU SHOULD CONTACT ANY OF THE FOLLOWING: STUDENT ACTIVITIES OFFICE, STUDENT COUNSELING OFFICES, LGBT STUDENT GROUP (THE PREVIOUS TWO OFFICES CAN TELL YOU IF ONE EXISTS), ALUMNI/AE ASSOCIATION.