



# SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

## INTRODUCTION

A person's sexual orientation and gender identity can have an impact on a number of factors related to career planning, including which career fields are most appealing, how you identify a positive work environment and organizational culture, and how you navigate the job search. The following is a list of factors to consider when planning your career, but please schedule a confidential appointment with a career counselor to discuss these and any issues related to your career search.

### Evaluation of Environments and Researching Organizations

- Which organizations have LGBTQ affirmative policies, benefits and employee groups?
- What is the community climate like if I have to relocate to a new city?
- Which employers actively recruit LGBTQ employees?

It can be very difficult to evaluate how open employers are on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. To learn more about your rights and organizations visit the Human Rights Campaign site at <http://www.hrc.org/topics/workplace>.

In June 2020, the Supreme Court of the United States affirmed that LGBTQ workers are protected from discrimination under the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

### Job Search Process Considerations

- Have I determined how out I want to be?
- If I am beginning my gender transition, should I do this before my job search begins and job search as my new gender, or should I wait until on the job to begin my transition?
- How should I present my LGBTQ activities on my resume?
- What should be discussed, and how, during the interview process?

### Workplace Issues

- Coming Out: How do I do that in the workplace? How do I deal with various reactions?
- Transitioning: How do I transition in the workplace? How do I explain my transition to colleagues?
- How do I present my relationship, introduce my partner, and deal with social events with coworkers?

## RESUME WRITING: HOW MUCH TO INCLUDE?

Common questions asked by LGBTQ job candidates include “should LGBTQ activities be featured on my resume?” or “do I have to list my legal name on my resume if it indicates my gender, rather than my preferred name?” The process of identifying how comfortable you feel about disclosing your sexual orientation and gender identity to a potential employer will help determine how you approach this portion of your resume.

First, you can list any name you choose on your resume. Many students list preferred names or nicknames rather than legal names. Some students will abbreviate their legal first name to one letter, then list their preferred name and last name, i.e. **J. Marissa Jones**. However, you are required to provide your legal name when completing a formal job application as this serves as a legal document.

Regarding LGBTQ activities, the first option is to include these activities, and proudly demonstrate the skills that you have developed as a result. If you're pursuing opportunities with organizations where your sexual orientation or

gender identity is a non-issue, then the strengths and skills developed through these organizations will be seen as workplace assets and the activity in which you developed them will also be a non-issue.

The second option is to focus more on the accomplishments and skills developed through participation in the activity, as opposed to the activity itself. The strengths and skills developed will still be seen as workplace assets. This approach would allow you to demonstrate leadership experience and transferable skills such as communication, organizational, critical thinking and problem solving abilities. In using this functional approach, it could be appropriate for you to substitute *Swarthmore Queer Union* with commonly used designations such as *Campus Diversity Club* or *Human Rights Organization*. Be aware that some employers may not understand queer as a term of empowerment and activism – in any case, you may need a short explanation on your resume.

The final strategy is to simply omit any reference to LGBTQ organizations or activities. Some recruiters, gay or straight, will recommend using this approach. It is important to consider the relevance of the activity to the position for which you are applying, and whether or not you are writing information that you are prepared to discuss during the interview. Remember the purpose of the resume is to get you the interview, and you will need to be comfortable and prepared to elaborate on all achievements and skills in detail, as listed on your resume.

As you can see, there is no right or wrong way to represent LGBTQ activities on a resume. The answer depends on both the audience for the resume as well as your willingness to share and discuss your participation in LGBTQ groups and activities.

## EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWING

Preparing for interviews is important. You should decide how out you want to be during the process. Research the firm and know the organization's policies and climate so you have additional information to help make the decision.

If you have decided to emphasize LGBTQ activities on your resume you should be prepared to talk about how your experiences have developed skills relevant to the employment/internship opportunity. An interviewer might ask, "I see you were president of Swarthmore Queer Union for two years. Can you tell me what kind of organization it is? What do you consider to be your most important contribution as a leader of SQU?" Employers highly value substantive experience gained through activities and leadership roles. In preparing for your interview, think carefully about what you have accomplished through your activities and your transferable skills.

If you have not included LGBTQ activities on your resume, you can still reference the experience if it clearly relates to the position you are interviewing for. If you prefer to be less open about the nature of the organization, you can always refer to it as an anti-discrimination organization and then focus on the achievements that resulted from your involvement. Some students decide to wait to come out until after starting a new job when they can come out to coworkers as they feel comfortable.

If you're still trying to learn more about a company's climate you can ask the interviewer about the organization's diversity directly or listen to hear if their answers contain information about such issues. These should not be your first questions, but can be added into the conversation. Make sure to focus on the job and how your skills meet the employer's needs first. After this you can turn to other topics such as the corporate environment and diversity.

What constitutes appropriate interview attire? Professional attire typically means a business suit – take advantage of suit loans through the Career Services *Career Closet* if needed. Transgender students should dress according to the gender they identify with – interview attire is not typically gender-specific, so students have a wide range of options to choose from and a basic gender neutral suit can be enhanced by a blouse and simple jewelry or a button-down shirt as preferred.

The interview will be your opportunity to communicate your value to the employer, and convince this person that you are the best person for the job. Additionally, the interview will allow you to learn more about the organization's culture. Some general interviewing tips include be prepared, be authentic, accentuate positives, emphasize accomplishments, and ask intelligent questions. For more information on interviewing, read the Career Services *Interviewing* handout and schedule a mock interview with a counselor.

# COMING OUT AT WORK OR STAYING IN THE CLOSET ~ BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS

Deciding whether or not to come out at work is a difficult process. Here are some things to consider when making your decision...

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF COMING OUT?	WHAT ARE THE DRAWBACKS OF STAYING IN THE CLOSET?
Allows the person to develop as a whole individual on a personal and professional level.	Stagnates the development of the individual on personal, interpersonal and professional levels.
Ends the hiding game! Individual is more able to share with others who they genuinely are and who and what is important to them.	Person is living a dual identity, hiding their "true self" from others.
Ability to establish a network of friends and colleagues who can support and encourage the individual.	Individual may filter and screen comments, behaviors, actions and attitudes that may "out" them. Energy is focused on covering up.
The person is more authentic in their professional work and contributes on a higher level. Energy is focused on participation.	The person experiences isolation and sometimes escapes from participating in group functions and activities.
The person experiences and feels value and self worth and is able to share significant life experiences with others, as others do.	The person is unable to share significant life experiences as colleagues do, making others reluctant to be open as well.
Ability to be viewed as a role model for others and a mentor and source of support for other professionals. Challenges false perceptions and helps develop an open, supportive work culture.	Perpetuates the myth that there are "only a few" LGBTQ individuals at work and presents a limited view of the diversity of the culture.

**\*THE MAIN DRAWBACK OF COMING OUT AT WORK IS THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING SUBJECTED TO DISCRIMINATION, WHILE THE MAIN BENEFIT OF STAYING IN THE CLOSET IS THE DECREASED LIKELIHOOD OF BEING THE TARGET OF DISCRIMINATION.**

## CHECKING OUT A PROSPECTIVE ORGANIZATION OR COMPANY

Some considerations for evaluating an organization/company as an open, safe and accepting environment for LGBTQ staff might include any or all of the following:

- Organization's Affirmative Action Statement is inclusive.
- Recruitment and retention of open, self-identified LGBTQ staff.
- Hiring policies and benefits programs are inclusive of same gender partner considerations and transgender employees.
- Health benefits include services benefiting transgender individuals.
- Encouragement of individuals to include all of their relevant work experience on their application and resumes, including work with LGBTQ organizations/activities.
- Information sessions, job fairs and recruiting events focused on LGBTQ students.
- Publications, handbooks, policy and procedure statements and other official documents are reviewed for inclusive language for all individuals, by not assuming heterosexuality and gender binarism as the norm.
- Employee orientation programs are inclusive of information related to LGBTQ support issues and concerns in the organization.

- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Allies groups exist within the organization, and are supported by the organization.
- Staff training and development programs are inclusive of LGBTQ issues.
- Security officers participate in training sessions regarding bias-related incidents and hate crimes, with specific attention to LGBTQ concerns.

Visit the Career Services website at: <http://www.swarthmore.edu/career-services/job-search-resources-searchable-identity>

## RESOURCES

**Human Rights Campaign - [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)**

**Corporate Equality Index - <http://www.hrc.org/corporate-equality-index/#.UfaRNtnELzM>**

**Transgender Resources - <https://www.hrc.org/explore/topic/transgender>** - articles on transgender rights and transitioning in the workplace, including *Transgender Inclusion in the Workplace* and *Coming Out in the Workplace as Transgender*

**Equality Pennsylvania - <https://www.facebook.com/equalitypa/>** - advocating equality for LGBT individuals in Pennsylvania through education and policy reform.

**Lambda Legal - <http://www.lambdalegal.org/>** and the **Mazzoni Center - <http://mazzonicenter.org/>** - employment rights in the workplace and LGBTQ health and well-being

**National Center for Lesbian Rights - <http://www.nclrights.org>**

**National Center for Transgender Equality - <http://transequality.org/>**

**National LGBTQ Taskforce - <http://thetaskforce.org/>**

**Our for Undergrad – <https://www.outforundergrad.org/>** - coordinate four annual conferences for LGBTQ students seeking networking and employment opportunities

**Out Professionals - <http://www.outprofessionals.org/>** - the nation's leading LGBTQ networking organization

**Sylvia Rivera Law Project in NY Trans Resource and Referral Guide - <http://srlp.org/resources>**

**Transgender Law and Policy Institute - <http://www.transgenderlaw.org/>**

non-profit organization dedicated to engaging in effective advocacy for transgender people in our society, bringing experts and advocates together to work on law and policy initiatives designed to advance transgender equality

**GLAD Legal Advocates and Defenders - <https://www.glad.org/>** - Since 1978, GLAD's bold litigation has achieved scores of precedent-setting victories on behalf of LGBTQ people and those living with HIV.

***Transgender Workplace Diversity*** by Jillian Weiss

Human Rights Campaign's ***Workplace Gender Transition Guidelines***



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