



Guide to LGBTQ Career Questions

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MU Career Center's Guide to LGBTQ Career Questions: Part of the Diversity Guide Series

Diversity Guide Series:

- ⇒ Guide to LGBTQ Career Questions
- ⇒ Guide to Work Abroad
- ⇒ Guide to Career Opportunities While Studying Abroad
- ⇒ Guide to Study Abroad
- ⇒ Guide to Career Services for Students with Disabilities

MU Career Center Guide Series:

*Career and Major Exploration
Job Search Preparation
After College Planning
Diversity*

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Introduction

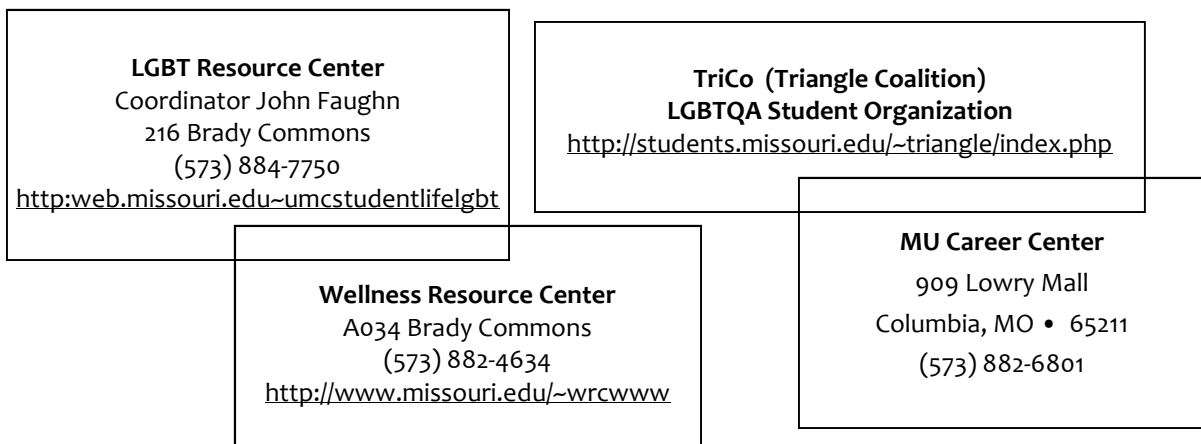
The University of Missouri – Columbia’s Career Center prides itself on providing students with resources that help with career research and job hunting. The Career Center’s Diversity Advisory Team has created new resources for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) students. The “Guide to LGBTQ Career Questions” hand-out is a great resource to use if you are trying to do research on LGBTQ friendly companies, graduate schools, or if you have questions about disclosure within a resume, cover letter, or interview. The MU Career Center also has book resources on all of these topics and more. Feel free to stop by and browse through the Career Center resources, or ask one of our Career Specialists if you need help with career guidance.

The staff at the LGBTQ Center on campus is always willing to help students who have questions about LGBTQ issues and concerns.

The LGBTQ Resource Center’s mission: “...to provide a safe environment that is welcoming to all students, staff, faculty, and community members. In this environment, we actively support student learning through programming and leadership opportunities. The Center encourages understanding by providing a broad range of resources on LGBT / Ally issues and by advocating for the creation of an inclusive MU community.”

Some of the LGBTQ Resource Center’s services include:

- Open office hours to address questions and issues on a personal basis and in a safe space.
- Supporting allies interested in learning how they can make a difference.
- Coordinating of the Safe Space Program on the MU Campus.



Questions to Consider During the Job Hunt

As a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) college student getting ready to begin your job search, you may be wondering what career challenges you will face regarding your sexual orientation. At this point you are probably accustomed to having widely available resources on your campus like the LGBTQ Center, multiple student organizations, and university-supported non-discrimination policies. Some companies may or may not have similar policies or supports for LGBTQ employees. It is important to know your rights and to ask the correct questions when searching for that perfect job.

In 2006, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) evaluated the policies and practices of more than 300 companies, scoring them on a scale of 1-100, on how “friendly” the companies were toward their lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender employees and their partners. The criteria that the HRC used can be a great starting point in forming questions to ask companies during interviews, or during job hunting and research.

Here are a few questions to keep in mind while job searching for gay-friendly companies:

- Does the company have a non-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation?
- Is diversity training that includes sexual orientation offered?
- Does the company’s non-discrimination policy include gender identity and/or expression?
- Does the company provide domestic partner health insurance?
- Do they provide COBRA, dental, vision and domestic partners’ legal dependent coverage?
- Do they have a company-supported LGBTQ employee resource group or firm-wide diversity council that includes LGBTQ issues?
- Does the company engage in appropriate and respectful advertising and marketing or sponsors LGBTQ community events or organizations?

A few examples of companies that scored a perfect 100 on this evaluation are:

AT&T Inc. (San Antonio, TX)
Bank of America Corp. (Charlotte, NC)
Boeing Co. (Chicago, IL)
Clear Channel Communications Inc. (San Antonio, TX)
Coca-Cola Company (Atlanta, GA)
DuPont (E. I. du Pont de Nemours) (Wilmington, DE)
Google Inc. (Mountain View, CA)
New York Times Co. (New York, NY)
Sprint Nextel Corp. (Reston, VA)
Walgreens Co. (Deerfield, IL)

You can find more information about job searching, national LGBTQ policy, and a complete list of gay-friendly companies at: <http://www.hrc.org>.

LGBTQ Career Resources

National LGBTQ Career Services Websites

GayJobs

<http://www.gayjob.biz/>

Here, you can search for full-time and part-time jobs, post your resume online for free, as well as browse potential employer profiles.

PlanetOUT– Money and Careers <http://www.planetout.com/money/>

At PlanetOUT, you will find the latest information on the queer workforce. The site has everything from a corporate pride directory that allows you to search for queer friendly jobs to information on what to leave on or off a resume.

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force <http://www.thetaskforce.org/>

Receive current information on workplace issues and find out more about how you can be active in the workplace.

Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund <http://www.lambdalegal.org/>

This resource can provide more information on domestic partner rights, past litigations, and other information about legal rights for the LGBTQ community.

ProGayJobs <http://www.progayjobs.com/jobseeker.php>

This website is useful for posting your resume and learning more about diversity issues in the workplace. Also search for job openings and explore companies' benefits and domestic partner policies.

Equality Forum <http://www.equalityforum.com/fortune500/>

Here, you can search for Fortune 500 companies that have same sex partner benefits and other non-discrimination policies including sexual orientation.

LGBTQ Resources in Higher Education <http://www.lgbtcampus.org/index.html>

This website features books and links for LGBTQ job related resources. It also has links to other university Career Centers that offer LGBTQ services.

HireDiversity <http://www.hirediversity.com/>

This website has career resources for special populations including African Americans, Asian Americans, individuals with disabilities, gay and lesbian, Hispanics, Native Americans, and women.

Transgender Employment Links <http://www.gendersanity.com/resources.shtml>

An excellent set of resources related to transitioning on the job and other issues transsexual and transgender workers and their employers may face. Some present the transsexual worker's point of view, others offer advice from professionals.

Books Available in the MU Career Center

100 Best Companies for Gay Men and Lesbians

Career and Life Planning with Gay, Lesbian, & Bisexual Persons

Straight Jobs, Gay Lives

Gay Issues in the Workplace

Straight Talk About Gays in the Workplace

Lavender Road to Success

LGBTQ Friendly Graduate School Resources

When considering graduate school, it is important for all students to ask themselves questions and weigh their options. Are you passionate about your particular field? Is a graduate degree necessary to meet your career goals? Have you decided on a specific career path? Can you effectively manage stress while juggling multiple roles such as student and worker? Can you work without much structure and remain self-motivated?

For the LGBTQ student, several other considerations exist including: domestic partner benefits, university policy, and campus safety. Consider the following resources during your Graduate School search:

Graduate Programs of Special Interest to LGBTQ Students

Kinsey Institute of Indiana University

<http://www.kinseyinstitute.org>

The Kinsey Institute at Indiana University promotes interdisciplinary research and scholarship in the fields of human sexuality, gender, and reproduction. The Institute was founded in 1947, just before the publication of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in 1948. Today the Institute investigates sexual behavior and sexual health today, and carries out its mission through:

- development of collections of resources for scholars
- programs of research and research publications
- presentation of interdisciplinary conferences and seminars
- provision of information services
- graduate training

Check out ‘Graduate Education’ and ‘Educational and Training Opportunities’

<http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/resources/education.html>

Graduate School Program Ideas

http://www.campuspride.org/grad_student_trips.asp

“American Institutions with Human Sexuality Programs”

<http://www.hawaii.edu/PCSS/links/programs.html>

Graduate Student and Domestic Partner Benefits

Graduate students are frequently offered or even required to have an insurance plan with the institution in which they are enrolled. In some cases, the institution offers insurance benefits to domestic partners of LGBTQ students and in other cases the institution only offers benefits to a spouse. To determine if an institution provides benefits for domestic partners, check out the following resources:

University of Missouri – Collected Rules and Regulations – Benefit Plans

<http://www.umsystem.edu/ums/departments/gc/rules/benefit/>

Human Rights Campaign – Workplace Search – Colleges and Universities

<http://www.hrc.org>

Choosing a LGBTQ Friendly Graduate School

Adapted from Campuspride.org

You want to find the perfect campus match that offers services surrounding lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ) issues. Things like queer studies classes, gay student groups, local gay hang-outs, gay support resources, gay supportive policies, or even a drag show. Sadly, these are not typically topics that come up on your official tour of campus... unless you ask!

Finding a college or university that supports LGBTQ students can be exceedingly difficult - even for a potential student who has been openly gay in high school. Closeted students even have a greater issue due to the fact that they are often fearful of asking such questions or being identified as LGBTQ.

Nevertheless, more colleges and universities are coming forward to create safer learning environments and are finding innovative ways to extend a rainbow welcome for LGBTQ students. Check out <http://www.campusclimateindex.org> for a national survey of campus climate and efforts to increase LGBTQ-friendliness.

1. LGBTQ Policy Inclusion

The presence of policies that prohibit discrimination of LGBTQ students is an easy way to determine the friendliness of the campus. Lack of such policies are early warning signs against choosing such a school, but may not rule out the institution as a correct fit for you. Consider the following:

- Does your campus include sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in the written non-discrimination policy statement and written statements about diversity and multiculturalism?
- Does your campus provide domestic partner benefits for LGBTQ employees with same-sex partners and, or their families?

2. LGBTQ Support & Institutional Commitment

It is important to note if the institution itself has programs in place to support the existing LGBTQ community and attract prospective students. Consider the following:

- Does your campus have a Safe Zone program or Safe Space program (e.g. an ongoing network of visible people on campus who identify openly as allies for LGBTQ people and concerns)?
- Does your campus have a professional staff person who is employed to increase campus awareness of LGBTQ concerns/issues as part of his/her job description?
- Does your campus have a LGBTQ concerns office or an LGBTQ student resource center (e.g. an institutionally funded space specifically for LGBTQ education and support services)? If not, does your campus have another office or resource center that deals actively with LGBTQ issues and concerns (e.g. Women's Center, Multicultural Center)?
- Does your senior administration actively demonstrate inclusive use of the words - lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender - when discussing community, multicultural and, or diversity issues on campus?

3. LGBTQ Student Life

In addition to the institutional commitment to LGBTQ issues and needs, prospective students may also want to inquire into visibility of the existing student, faculty, and staff community and LGBTQ-tailored events. Consider the following:

- Does your campus sponsor regular, on-going campus-wide activities and events to increase awareness of LGBTQ issues/concerns on campus?
- Does your campus have regular, on-going social events specifically for LGBTQ students?
- Does your campus have a college/university-recognized LGBTQ campus student organization for all LGBTQ students and allies?
- Does your campus have any student organizations that primarily serve the social and, or recreational needs of LGBTQ students (e.g. Gay social fraternity, Lesbian Volleyball Recreational Club, Gay Coed Lacrosse Club, etc)?
- Does your campus have any student organizations that primarily serve the needs of under-represented and, or multicultural LGBTQ populations (e.g. LGBTQ Latinos/Latinas, International LGBTQ students, LGBTQ Students with Disabilities, etc)?
- Does your campus have any student organizations that primarily serve the religious/spiritual needs of LGBTQ students (e.g. Unity Fellowship for Students, Gays for Christ, LGBTQ Muslims, etc)?

4. LGBTQ Academic Life

LGBTQ inclusion extends even to the classroom, the reason for even deciding to go on the hunt for grad schools at all. A campus that truly supports LGBTQ issues will hopefully give honest answers to these challenging questions of the queer academia. Consider the following:

- Does your campus have out LGBTQ faculty members?
- Does your campus have a LGBTQ-specific studies academic degree program? If No, does your campus have LGBTQ-specific courses offered through various academic programs?
- Does your campus integrate LGBTQ issues into existing courses when appropriate? Does your campus include LGBTQ issues in new faculty/staff orientation programs and on-going training opportunities?
- Does your campus have an extensive collection of LGBTQ-related holdings in the campus library?

5. LGBTQ Housing

Whether it is financially advantageous or even required for students to live on campus, as an LGBTQ student, you must know the facts, your housing options and the ability to be who you are. Consider the following:

- Does your campus provide LGBTQ theme housing options or LGBTQ specific living learning communities in campus housing?
- Does your campus allow for students with same-sex partners to reside together in campus housing?
- Does your campus provide housing options that are sensitive to the needs of transgender students?

6. LGBTQ Campus Safety

You should consider up-front the level of safety for LGBTQ students and whether the campus has clear procedures and services to address LGBTQ safety for concerns. Consider the following:

- Do your campus public safety officers make LGBTQ outreach efforts and meet with LGBTQ student leaders/organizations?
- Does your campus have a clear procedure for reporting LGBTQ-related bias incidents and hate crimes?
- Does your campus have a bias incident and hate crime reporting system for LGBTQ concerns?
- Does your campus provide training sessions for public safety officers on LGBTQ issues and concerns and anti-LGBTQ violence?

7. LGBTQ Counseling & Health

You must have the options for help when dilemmas arise that you may uniquely face as an LGBTQ student. Inquire about the necessary services to support your health emotionally, physically and mentally. Consider the following:

- Does your campus have support groups for LGBTQ individuals in the process of coming out and for other LGBTQ issues/concerns?
- Does your campus have individual student counseling that is sensitive to LGBTQ issues/concerns?
- Does your campus provide training for campus health care professionals to increase their sensitivity to the special health needs of LGBTQ individuals?
- Does your campus actively distribute condoms and LGBTQ inclusive safer sex information on HIV/STD area services and resources?

8. LGBTQ Recruitment & Retention Efforts

LGBTQ students are becoming an increasing population for colleges and universities to seek in increasing enrollment numbers. Some institutions attend LGBTQ-themed college admission fairs and have specific LGBTQ programs to increase retention. Consider:

- Does your campus participate in a LGBTQ Admission Fair designed for outreach to incoming LGBTQ high school students? Does your campus have any scholarships specifically targeting LGBTQ students and heterosexual students who are supportive of LGBTQ equality?
- Does your campus include LGBTQ issues in new student orientation programs?
- Does your campus have a Lavender Graduation, Rainbow Graduation (e.g. a special commemoration for LGBTQ students and allies) upon completion of degree(s)?
- Does your campus have a LGBTQ Mentoring program to welcome and assist LGBTQ students transition to academic life and other involvement on campus?

Disclosure: Resumes, Cover Letters,

and Interviews

Deciding whether to disclose your sexual orientation during your job or graduate school search is a personal choice only you can make. Whatever you do decide, be prepared to further explain in an interview the activities and experiences included in your resume, cover letter, and personal statement. There are traditionally two views on the matter.

Dan Woog author of *Gay Men, Straight Jobs* says, “I can’t imagine any job that is so great it’s worth hiding who you are or selling yourself short by leaving out all those organizations you volunteered time with, just so no questions would be asked.” Another perspective is offered by Liz Winfield, coauthor of *Straight Talk about Gays in the Workplace*, “it is as inappropriate to come out on one’s resume as it is to mark down one’s religious or political affiliations. Chances are, these things, while being very important to the construct and character of the individual, have nothing to do with the task at hand.”

It is your personal choice whether to come out during your job search or graduate school application process. Either way, here are some tips for you to apply when writing cover letters, resumes, and personal statements, as well as when interviewing.

Resumes and Cover Letters

Tips

- Seventeen states and the District of Columbia have laws that currently prohibit sexual orientation discrimination in both public and private jobs: California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin. Six states have laws prohibiting sexual orientation discrimination in public workplaces only: Colorado, Delaware, Indiana, Michigan, Montana, and Pennsylvania.
- Remember to focus on your skills and achievements. Those are the most important aspects of your resume.
- Consider your audience. Research companies and organizations that interest you to evaluate the climate and policies of these groups.
- Some job seekers use their resume and cover letter to “screen out” employers who aren’t gay-friendly.
- You always have the option as referring to an organization you were involved with as an “Anti-Discrimination” organization. Remember to focus on what you contributed to the group and what transferable skills you gained.

Functional vs. Chronological—Formatting Your Resume

You may choose to use a functional or “skills-based” resume instead of a chronological resume. This format takes the focus off of the specific organization or employer, and highlights the transferable skills and experiences you gained as a leader in that organization. For example if you were the treasurer of PRIDE you might list things to do with money management, bookkeeping, and fundraising under a heading named “Business Skills”. This allows you to highlight your leadership, planning, and teamwork abilities while taking the emphasis off of where you developed them.

Interviewing Strategies

Adapted from “Out on a Job Interview” by John J. Kinyon

Similar to when you wrote your resume, you must plan ahead of time about how out you are willing to be during the interview process. It is critical that you effectively prepare for your interview and are ready to answer questions about organizations you were involved in or jobs you’ve held that may pose possible discrimination against you.

Tips:

Research the firm.

Investigate what the company’s anti-discrimination policies are. Look at their culture and climate so you have additional information to help you decide whether or not to come out during the interview.

Check gay publications.

See if the company advertises to gay people, and to see if there is a LGBTQ employee support group. Contact the NGLTF Workplace Project to see if they have any information about the company. Look in the Queer Resources Directory for the list of supportive employers.

Look into policies.

If you are using a recruiter or student placement office, ask them about the company's non-discrimination policy and how well they support their LGBTQ employees. If you are a member of a union, find out what their policy is and how proactive the union is in working with employers on gay issues. Some unions are very supportive.

Be prepared.

Depending on what you revealed in your resume and cover letter you may have already given the interviewer an indication that you are bisexual, gay, or lesbian. Be prepared to talk about your experiences and how you developed desirable transferable skills. For example, an interviewer might ask, “I see you were the treasurer of LGBA for two years. Can you tell me about this organization?” If you have decided to be out you can provide them with a simple description. If you have chosen not to come out, consider referring to it as an anti-discrimination organization and focus on your achievements as a result of your work.

Ask questions.

Consider “testing the water” with an interviewer by asking a question about their organizations diversity policies. Based upon their response, you can get a feel for whether their company has diversity initiatives that may deal with sexual orientation.

Follow up.

If you still have concerns after the interview, you can follow up with a phone call to the supervisor to find out, in a less threatening situation, if there will be any problems because you are a gay person. Be prepared to answer questions about why your "sex life" is relevant to the job.

It’s your choice.

Some people decide to wait to come out until after receiving a job offer when they have more leverage. Others wait until they have started their new job, when they can come out to their coworkers in their own terms.