

**Year 2 Public Description of Work for
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education**

**Columbia University &
Columbia University Irving Medical Center**

Development of the Columbia University LGBTQ+ Resource Guide

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

Identifying and Reinforcing Community Values; Practices to Improve Retention; Addressing Gender Harassment and Other Harmful Behaviors:

Description of Work:

In January 2021 Columbia's Office of the Provost published the [Columbia University LGBTQ+ Resource Guide](#) and a [companion website](#). This Guide builds upon the University's climate guide, the [Guide to Best Practices for Departmental Climate](#), providing faculty and staff with tools and resources to improve the climate for LGBTQ+ students, staff and faculty. Both Guides have been foundational resources for the Faculty Network, providing a shared language and action steps for creating a more inclusive University environment. In conjunction with this guide, in March 2021, the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement also hosted [How to Be a Visible LGBTQ+ Ally](#), a panel discussion about how faculty can demonstrate our support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students and colleagues. The session covered a range of topics including language, support services and resources. Participants learned strategies to build solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community and to make their solidarity visible.

Purpose and Goals:

With this project, we sought to:

- Create a one-stop centralized (online and print) repository of LGBTQ+ resources
- Link LGBTQ+ activism to Columbia's broader social justice mission, with an emphasis on the additional complexities faced by those with intersectional identities
- Provide tangible resources for those who seek to be better allies but do not know how to make their allyship visible
- Honor the rich LGBTQ+ history at Columbia
- Celebrate, memorialize, and bring visibility to the contributions of LGBTQ+ faculty and staff in the areas of advocacy and policy development, healthcare, law, literature and the arts, and elsewhere
- Provide a literature review to ground our work in seminal publications related to the experience of LGBTQ+ scholars in higher education

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- Document the concerns of LGBTQ+ members of our University community and bring them to University leadership

Process:

Planning for the guide began in December of 2020 as a project of the Provost's Advisory Council for the Enhancement of Faculty Diversity. The core project team consisted of one faculty member and two members of the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement, with support from the 11-member LGBTQ+ Guide Working Group.

Walter Bockting, PhD, Professor of Medical Psychology (in Psychiatry and Nursing), Director of the Program for the Study of LGBT Health, and Member of the Provost's Advisory Council for the Enhancement of Faculty Diversity, was the faculty lead. Adina Berrios Brooks, Associate Provost for Inclusive Faculty Pathways and Jennifer Leach, Associate Director for Faculty Advancement, represented the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement and provided project management, design and editorial guidance, and research support.

To inform our work, we conducted 45-60 minute semi-structured individual interviews with 16 faculty and 2 staff, and convened three focus groups with a total of 11 graduate students and 7 undergraduate students. Individual interviews were conducted via Zoom by a colleague from the Office of Alumni and Development. Interviewees represented the diversity of our community in terms of race and ethnicity, but also in academic discipline, seniority, and gender identity / expression. The interviews were recorded, and the transcripts from conversations remained confidential.

Focus groups represented students across disciplines, and were co-facilitated with LGBTQ+-identified graduate students. The undergraduate focus group consisted of members of the Queer and Trans Advisory Board (QTAB), and was co-facilitated by their adviser.

The research team reviewed the transcripts, distilling key themes and concerns, which provided a road map for the structure of the guide. We organized the document into chapters for Terminology, LGBTQ+ Life: Then and Now, Hubs of LGBTQ+ Scholarship, Law and Policy, Climate and Well-Being, Faculty Recruitment and Retention, and Advancement, and Intersectionality and Social Justice. Consistent with our other guides, we included a checklist for leaders and one for anyone interested in being a better ally.

Once the initial draft was complete, we sent the document for initial review by our Advisory Council and the LGBTQ+ Guide Working Group, incorporating their recommendations. Working

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with our design team, we produced an initial PDF and circulated it to all faculty and key staff (including the Diversity Officers Work Group) with a six-month window for comments and feedback, which was submitted via online form. During this review period, the project team met with individuals and teams across the university to hear their feedback, and spent the summer updating the initial document for both print and online distribution. The published guide will be distributed in October 2021, concurrent with a (virtual) faculty panel launch event.

Along with the initial PDF, our office also developed a consolidated [LGBTQ+ Resources website](#), which contains a map of gender-neutral restrooms, pronoun use information, healthcare resources, trans-specific resources, recommended readings, links for workplace and legal concerns, a listing of national organizations, and downloadable Zoom backgrounds. University Life followed suit with a website of [Resources for Promoting LGBTQ+ Inclusion](#) for their student audience.

Consistency with NASEM Rubrics:

This project is consistent with at least three NASEM rubric areas, as indicated below.

Practices to improve retention, such as:

Ensuring fair and equitable access to resources and information about those resources to all employees and students, rather than relying on informal communications

- *The [LGBTQ+ Guide](#) and companion websites (from [Faculty Advancement](#) and [University Life](#)) consolidate existing University resources for members of the LGBTQ+ community and those who aspire to be better allies. Prior to this, these resources were difficult to find, as they existed on disparate websites across the University.*

Monitoring use of policies and revising them when necessary to meet the needs of all groups

- *In the process of conducting interviews and focus groups for the [LGBTQ+ Guide](#), we heard about the need for further HR and administrative policy development, and these concerns have been brought to the appropriate offices. The issues raised by LGBTQ+ members of our community, such as improved health plan coverage for assisted reproductive technology and gestational surrogacy, and expanding domestic partnership benefits beyond same-sex couples, would benefit all employees. Additionally, the need for a more streamlined process for name changes across campus systems was identified.*

Identifying and Reinforcing Community Values

The 2018 NASEM report found that environments with organizational systems and structures

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that value and support diversity, inclusion, and respect are environments where sexual harassment behaviors are less likely to occur.

Efforts to identify, develop, and reinforce shared community values (at various levels within an organization) will build buy-in for and underline the importance of maintaining a civil and respectful environment.

The development and promotion of this Guide, as well as our related programming, showcases the University's commitment to creating an environment that values and supports diversity, inclusion and respect for all.

Addressing Gender Harassment and Other Harmful Behaviors:

The 2018 NASEM report found that gender harassment is by far the most common form of sexual harassment, that it is as harmful as the other types of sexual harassment, and that addressing gender harassment may prevent the other forms of sexual harassment. Additionally it found that incivility can create environments where sexual harassment thrives and is more likely to occur.

Addressing incivility, bullying, gender harassment, other harmful behaviors (e.g. harassment or discrimination based on other protected characteristics such as race, disability, and religion) early can help ensure behaviors don't escalate. Strategies and mechanisms to do this may include:

- Educating department chairs to address and call out harmful behavior
- Developing a range of consequences for initial incidents and potential consequences if the behavior is continued
- Developing a guide to recognizing such behaviors and
- Clearly articulating that such behaviors violate the policies and values of the organization
 - *The LGBTQ+ Guide has a chapter devoted to Climate and Well-Being, and a section within that chapter about microaggressions, harassment, and discrimination. We examine the greater workforce, the academy, and specifically, where these issues manifest at Columbia and how they impact the sense of belonging for LGBTQ+ individuals in our community. Results of the 2018 Student Well-Being Survey and the [2019 Sexual Health Initiative to Foster Transformation \(SHIFT\) Survey](#) outline the behaviors that constitute harassment and their prevalence at our institution. The LGBTQ+ Guide outlines Columbia's policies and procedures related to discrimination and links to the EOAA website for those who wish to report an incident.*

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- *Additional guidance is provided for supporting those who are changing their gender expression or who are transitioning*
- *Misgendering is highlighted as an invalidating behavior, regardless of intent, and as harassment when deliberate.*

Current Status of the Work:

The first draft of the *LGBTQ+ Resource Guide* was published online in January 2021; the revised version will be featured on our website and 1,000 print copies will be distributed in fall of 2021. We are currently planning our (virtual) launch event, a faculty panel, which will take place in early October.

We have developed additional items to allow members of the LGBTQ+ community and allies to be more visible: LGBTQ+ logo pins, stickers, and printable signs that have QR codes linking to our student and faculty/staff resource pages. These will be distributed with the launch.

Evaluation and Next Steps

To evaluate the effectiveness of the guide, we will continue to track website views, requests for copies of the printed guide, requests from units for LGBTQ+ Ally trainings, and, perhaps most importantly, formal and informal feedback received by our office from members of our LGBTQ+ community and from others. We will track attendance of our October launch event and page views of the event recording on our website.

From this project's inception, we sought to include the voices of LGBTQ+ members of our community - we could not have developed this guide without their input, their feedback, their wisdom, and their generosity in sharing their experiences. As we publish the printed version, we will continue to solicit feedback for incorporation into our website and future editions of the printed guide.

We envision the following next steps:

- **Ramping up competency training.** Columbia does not currently have the staff to offer competency training to respond to all of the requests of faculty and the staff who support them, and this has been identified as an area for further development.
- **Working** closely with University Life and Schools **to consolidate resources** as they become available.
- **Creating a Campus-wide Faculty Out List.** Select individual units currently maintain out lists, and students and faculty have said that this was needed across the University.
- **Connecting with Peer Institutions and Professional Organizations** to share the Guide and discuss best practices for LGBTQ+ inclusion.

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Website for further information (if applicable):

<https://provost.columbia.edu/content/columbia-university-lgbtq-resource-guide>

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