



# Recruitment and Retention of LGBTIQ Astronomers

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219<sup>th</sup> AAS Meeting, Austin, Texas

9 January 2012

# Our Goal

- To build a community in which members' contributions are valued regardless of their sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity.

# Definitions

- **LGBTIQ:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, or Questioning
- **Lesbian:** Sexual or romantic desire between women.
- **Gay:** Sexual or romantic desire between men.
- **Bisexual:** Sexual or romantic attraction to both men and women.

# Definitions, cont.

- **Transgender:** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity or expression is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth.
- **Gender Identity:** An individual's internal sense of being male, female, or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.
- **Gender Expression:** How a person represents or expresses one's gender identity to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice or body characteristics.

# Definitions, cont.

- **Intersex:** A term used for people who are born with external genitalia, chromosomes, or internal reproductive systems that are not traditionally associated with either a “standard” male or female.
- **Questioning:** The questioning of one's gender, sexual identity, sexual orientation, or all three is a process of exploration by people who may be unsure, still exploring, or concerned about applying a social label to themselves for various reasons.

Definitions from the National Center for Transgender Equality ([transequality.org](http://transequality.org))

# Legal Challenges: Employment

- No federal laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.
- Only 21 states and the District of Columbia prohibit employment discrimination based on sexual orientation. Of these, 16 states and D.C. also prohibit discrimination based on gender identity.
- An additional nine states have executive orders prohibiting discrimination against public employees based on sexual orientation and gender identity, three states based on sexual orientation only.
- Many institutions that have anti-discrimination policies do not include LGBTIQ as protected classes.

# Legal Challenges: Marriage

- Six states and D.C. issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Nine states provide the equivalent of state-level spousal rights to same-sex couples; three offer some spousal rights.
- 29 states have constitutional amendments and 12 states have laws restricting marriage to one man and one woman.
- The Defense of Marriage Act forbids the federal government from recognizing same-sex marriages. As a result, married same-sex couples
  - are ineligible for the federal Family Medical Leave Act,
  - cannot sponsor their partner for visas or immigration, and
  - must pay taxes on health-care benefits.

The GAO has identified over 1100 federal benefits, rights, and privileges in which marital status is a factor.

From the Human Rights Campaign ([hrc.org](http://hrc.org))

# The Peculiar Sociology of the Physical Sciences

- Sexuality is assumed to be irrelevant in the scientific workplace, so is not discussed.
- Scientists and engineers don't study social phenomena, so are unaware of recent research and theory on sexuality and identity.
- Once homosexuality is realized, there can be pressure to tone it down. Social interactions can become so awkward that LGBTIQ folks avoid them.
- To combat this conspiracy of silence, an explicit commitment to inclusion is required.



# Campus-Wide Policies

- Include the words “sexual orientation” and “gender identity or expression” in your institution's non-discrimination policy.
- Include sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in public written statements about diversity and multiculturalism.
- Include LGBTIQ issues and concerns in
  - Grievance procedures
  - Housing guidelines
  - Admission application materials
  - Health-care forms
  - Alumni materials/publications... and include representations of LGBTIQ people in these publications.

# Employee Benefits

- Offer health insurance coverage to employees' same-sex partners or cash compensation to employees to purchase their own health insurance for same-sex partners.
- “Gross up” wages for employees who enroll for same-sex partner health benefits to cover the added tax burden from this benefit.
- Offer other benefits equally to both opposite-sex and same-sex spouses/partners of employees.

# Transgender Inclusion

- Policies: Include “Gender Identity or Expression” as a protected category
- Process: Establish gender-transition guidelines
- Education & Compliance: Provide information and training
- Documentation: Update personnel records
- Facilities: Grant restroom and locker room access according to an employee's full-time gender presentation
- Benefits: Remove discriminatory health insurance exclusions

From the Human Rights Campaign ([hrc.org](http://hrc.org))

# Within Your Department

## Recruitment

- *Before* recruiting, educate yourself about workplace climate, partner benefits, and applicable state and federal laws.
- If your institution has inclusive policies, tell all applicants about them. Use commitment to inclusion as a recruiting tool.
- If your institution's policies are not inclusive, lobby to change them.
- If you lose existing staff, prospective students, or employees over LGBTIQ issues, notify your top administrators, especially if they take grant money with them.

# Within Your Department, cont.

## Language

- Become comfortable using the words gay, lesbian, transgender, and LGBTIQ.
- Don't assume that your colleagues are straight.
- Listen. Point out offensive and/or homophobic language, and ask that it stop. Make clear that such language is unprofessional and unwelcome in your department.

# Within Your Department, cont.

- When developing family-friendly policies, be mindful of non-traditional families. For example, explicitly include
  - adoption in parental-leave policies;
  - domestic partners in family leave and insurance;
  - LGBTIQ couples in dual-career accommodation practices;
  - partners in invitations to departmental events.

# Resources: WGLE

The AAS Working Group on LGBTIQ Equality (WGLE) is tasked with promoting the equality of LGBTIQ individuals within our profession.

To that end, WGLE will work to

- end hiring and workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression;
- eliminate inequalities in pay and benefits experienced by LGBTIQ individuals;
- create a professional climate that respects and values diversity;
- serve as a conduit for communication between the AAS Council and the LGBTIQ community;
- support networking and peer mentoring among LGBTIQ individuals; and
- provide resources to support LGBTIQ equality within the astronomical profession.

# WGLE Executive Committee

For 2012, the members of the executive committee are

- Rolf Danner, Northrop Grumman Aerospace Systems
- Van Dixon, STScl
- Chanda Prescod-Weinstein, MIT
- Jane Rigby, GSFC
- Kris Sellgren , OSU

*Please join us!*

*We'll be on the web shortly.*



# More Resources

- LGBT Astronomer Outlist: [physics.ucsb.edu/~blaes/lgbtastro](http://physics.ucsb.edu/~blaes/lgbtastro)
- The Astrodyke Blog: [astrodyke.blogspot.com](http://astrodyke.blogspot.com)
- Human Rights Campaign: [hrc.org](http://hrc.org)
- National Center for Transgender Equality: [transequality.org](http://transequality.org)
- Intersex Society of North America: [isna.org](http://isna.org)
- National Organization of Gay and Lesbian Scientists and Technical Professionals: [noglstp.org](http://noglstp.org)
- LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index: [campusclimateindex.org](http://campusclimateindex.org)