Career Resources for LGBTQ Students

Students who identify as LGBTQ may have unique concerns when searching for an internship or job, starting their first job after college, or living in a new community. This handout provides students with information and resources to assist in their own career exploration and preparation.

Federal, State and Local Hiring Laws

Federal law does not protect employees from discrimination based on sexual orientation and real or perceived gender identity. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission only mandates employers not discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, marital status, national origin, age or disability.

Many state laws do provide legal protection from discrimination. For state-specific laws, visit the Human Rights Campaign website: http://www.hrc.org/state_maps
- Wisconsin law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, but not gender identity
- Minnesota law protects against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity

Local employment laws may also prohibit discrimination, including cities and counties. If state laws are not comprehensive, it may be valuable to inquire about local employment laws with city or county government offices.

Federal and state employment laws may change with the passage of proposed legislation. Visit the Human Rights Campaign at www.hrc.org for the most up-to-date laws.

Exploring Careers and Searching for an Internship or Job

There are a number of career-related things students may want to consider when pursuing a career field and searching for an internship or job. Overall, students should reflect on their identity, lifestyle, career goals, and personal goals to determine how they would like the relationship between these elements to co-exist. Additionally, it may be helpful for students to find someone they can talk with during the job search process. Here are other questions to consider:

Career Path and Interests
- How important is it for me to be “out” in my career?
- Are there barriers to entering specific career fields?
- Am I willing to work for a company at which I could not be “out”?

Resume
- Does my resume say that I am LGBTQ? Am I comfortable being “out” in the job search?
- How should I include LGBTQ activities on my resume?
- Should I change the wording from LGBTQ to diversity? Am I comfortable with that?

Interview
- Do I share information about my personal life? Employers legally cannot ask personal questions, such as partners, family, etc. It is at the interviewee’s discretion to share this information.
- If I am very involved on LGBTQ activities on campus, should I use these examples to demonstrate my leadership skills when answering questions? Am I comfortable being “out” in the interview?

Potential Employers
- Will I only work for an LGBTQ-friendly company?
- If health benefits are offered, are they offered to same-sex domestic partners or same-sex spouses only?
Determining LGBTQ-Friendly Work Environments

While finding companies that are LGBTQ-friendly may be an important job requirement, one should also remember to find an employer that is the right fit for their career goals, skills, and abilities.

Researching companies that are LGBTQ-friendly is like detective work. Depending on the organization, it may be obvious, or not so obvious. Here are some ideas for online research as well as resources to consider:

- Review job postings for employment non-discrimination policy statements
- Read company websites, typically in sections such as Human Resources, Careers, News, About Us
- Evaluate employment statements, policies, and benefit information (including domestic partner benefits)
- Look for employee-related news or information relating to employee LGBTQ resource groups or diversity training to learn how companies foster diverse and welcoming work environments
- Search for company information through the Google “news” search options
- Review the Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index which annually ranks companies on benefits, policies, and employee resource groups
- Consider external diversity rankings of companies, such listings are often compiled by business magazines
- After conducting research on companies, it may be helpful to explore the LGBTQ community in the locations of perspective employers for organizations, events, places to live and other resources. This can offer insight on how an individual can be involved in a community outside of work

Starting Your First Job

As LGBTQ students transition into their first job, they may face issues or have questions relating to their career and identity. Some of these issues may include:

- Should I come out to my manager or supervisor? If I do, how will I do this?
- Should I come out to my co-workers? If I do, how will I do this?
- How much do I share about my personal life at work?
- Will my identity impact my pay or opportunities for advancement?
- Do I have a picture of my partner at my workstation?
- Do I choose to become active in LGBTQ resource groups or issues at work?
- Do I participate in company-sponsored social gatherings? If I do, am I comfortable bringing my partner (if invited) and/or talking about my personal life?

These are all decisions individuals may need to sort through as they begin their careers.

Career Appointments

Career counseling appointments are available to discuss any sexual orientation or identity concerns related to the job search. Students/alumni may disclose concerns during the appointment, as they wish. Students/alumni can also request to meet with one of the professional career counselors, instead of a peer advisor, if they are more comfortable.

Resources

https://www.uwrf.edu/CareerServices/Students/JobsDiversitySites.cfm