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*Updated October 2024*

## LGBTQ STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND SUPPORT

LGBTQ students in higher education face unique challenges due to intersecting identities and discrimination. The community's diversity includes various sexual orientations, gender identities, and backgrounds, resulting in different forms of inequity that impact their educational access and success.

Understanding these challenges is crucial for advisors, administrators, and educators to better support LGBTQ students, helping them thrive and fostering a more inclusive world.

### CURRENT ENVIRONMENT FOR LGBTQ STUDENTS

[As of 2023, LGBTQ students are facing an increasingly hostile legal and social climate.](#) Anti-LGBTQ laws are emerging in several states, targeting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) funding, censoring LGBTQ discussions, restricting sports participation, and banning critical healthcare for transgender students. [Over 500 anti-LGBTQ bills have already been proposed for the 2024 elections,](#) and many LGBTQ centers and DEI offices on campuses are closing.

### UNIQUE NEEDS OF LGBTQ STUDENTS

LGBTQ students are more likely to face harassment, mental health issues, and financial challenges compared to their peers. [They report mistreatment on campus, higher debt \(averaging \\$14,769 more\), and poorer mental health outcomes. About 22% move away from their hometown to find more welcoming college environments, compared to just 5% of non-LGBTQ students.](#)

### WHY IT MATTERS

[LGBTQ students' sense of belonging is lower \(71.9%\) than that of their peers \(83.5%\), which impacts their academic success.](#) Fostering an inclusive campus

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is vital for their retention and well-being.

*"In a cultural moment when LGBTQ identity is being policed, silenced, and erased in education, it's important to have LGBTQ voices in higher education."* - Robyn Tomiko, Flagship Scholar with a Kevin Hummer Scholarship

## HOW TO SUPPORT LGBTQ STUDENTS

1. **Advocate for LGBTQ Students:** Stay informed on Title IX regulations affecting LGBTQ protections. Report incidents of discrimination using resources from the U.S. Department of Education and Campus Pride. Political influences continuously change these rules, but GLSEN provides an overview of changes [here](#).
2. **Support Access to Resources:** Direct students to alternative support from organizations like Point Foundation or use the Everywhere Is Queer app for finding LGBTQ-friendly spaces.
3. **Work Within Your Context:** Encourage visibility and support through LGBTQ staff groups and mentorship roles. Even in states with restricted services, find creative ways to help LGBTQ students. For more guidance, see Point's resource [Navigating Anti-LGBTQ Environments as a Higher Education Professional](#).
4. **Know Students' Rights:** Educate students about their rights using resources from GLSEN, Lambda Legal, and the Southern Poverty Law Center.
5. **Create Safe Spaces:** Build a supportive environment by displaying LGBTQ symbols and participating in safe space training. Encourage your administration to pursue diversity and inclusion training for staff

## RECOMMENDATIONS for CAMPUS CLIMATE

1. **Inclusive Policies:** Explicitly include sexual orientation and gender identity in non-discrimination policies.
2. **Promote Leadership:** Encourage LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ students to take on leadership roles and engage in creating inclusive spaces.

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3. **Hire LGBTQ-Specialized Mental Health Professionals:** Ensure mental health support is available from professionals trained to address LGBTQ-specific issues.

## CONCLUSION

As institutional resources decline, the role of educators and administrators in supporting LGBTQ students is more crucial than ever. By creating inclusive environments, providing resources, and being visible allies, we can help these students thrive and build a more equitable future for all.