



INTRODUCTION

This guide has seven sections; additional content and an updated listing of resources can be found on the Resources website (<https://provost.columbia.edu/content/lgbtq-resources>).

Section 1 frames the goals of this guide, underscoring the importance of going beyond inclusion to address the challenges that LGBTQ+¹ individuals face in the larger context of intersecting oppressions. We connect this work to the need for effecting broader social and racial justice for all. Section 2 provides definitions of the evolving language LGBTQ+ people use to describe their lived experiences, along with tips to put this language into practice. Section 3 presents highlights of our historical roots at Columbia, the activism of the pioneers on whose shoulders we stand, and an overview of what we know about the LGBTQ+ community at Columbia today. Across the University, Teachers College, and Barnard, LGBTQ+ scholarship is thriving; Section 4 features a number of activity hubs as an illustration, and, though not an exhaustive list, it is meant to provide some examples to inspire you. Section 5 presents highlights of the progress that has been made in LGBTQ+ rights over the last 70 years, reviews Columbia policies relevant to LGBTQ+ equity and inclusion, and points toward the need for further policy development. Section 6, Climate and Well-Being, synthesizes interviews we conducted with faculty, students, and staff to inform this guide. These conversations revealed that, although Columbia is a great place to work for LGBTQ+ individuals, experiences of climate and community vary, and sustained efforts are needed to optimize well-being. Mentorship and support from leadership and peers are key for progress toward that goal. Section 7 stresses the importance of recruitment, retention, and advancement of LGBTQ+ faculty and scholars in order to strengthen Columbia's LGBTQ+ community. We share some of the successes to date and provide strategies for the enhancement of diversity and inclusion in all corners of our institution.

Altogether, this guide provides an initial orientation to faculty and staff about the rich history, pioneering scholarship, and current needs of LGBTQ+ members of the Columbia community. We hope that the guide will stimulate future work to enhance the climate and resources for LGBTQ+ faculty and staff as well as students. Please make sure to check the Resources website for specific tools and regular updates. We are committed to ensuring an affirmative environment in which we can all thrive.

We owe much gratitude to Executive Vice President for University Life and Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement Dennis A. Mitchell for his support for this project. Please join us in carrying the work forward!

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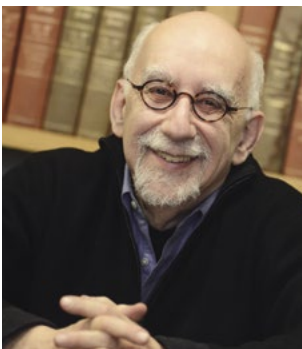
1. For consistency, we use the acronym LGBTQ+ throughout this guide as an all-inclusive term.



LETTER FROM THE PROVOST

Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to introduce the *Columbia University LGBTQ+ Guide: Resources to Foster an Affirming Community for LGBTQ+ Faculty and Staff*, an extension of the Office of the Provost's ongoing work to strengthen inclusive excellence across the University. First drafted electronically for the Columbia community in December 2020, this now revised print publication represents a tremendous collaborative effort to both celebrate Columbia's rich LGBTQ+ history, scholarship, and activism, and provide guidance for those who seek to be better allies.



This resource was developed under the leadership of Executive Vice President for University Life and Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement Dennis A. Mitchell and the Provost's Advisory Council for the Enhancement of Faculty Diversity, a group created with the conviction that an inclusive environment is critical to achieve our highest ideals of research, teaching, and engagement in the larger world.

This is the fifth volume in a growing library of guides Dr. Mitchell's team has developed to improve the Columbia climate: the *Guide to Best Practices for Departmental Climate* (2019), which was quickly followed by an addendum, *Best Practices for Inclusive Remote Work in the Academy* (2020); the *Guide to Best Practices in Faculty Retention* (2018); the *Guide to Best Practices in Faculty Mentoring* (2016); and the *Guide to Best Practices in Faculty Search and Hiring* (2014).

This guide addresses issues of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, and follows on the Office of the Provost's initiative launched in 2016 to recruit faculty in the area of LGBTQ+ scholarship as part of the University's faculty diversity commitment. It is informed by academic literature as well as interviews with more than 40 Columbia faculty, students, and staff members. By offering resources and tools for action, we hope to help members of the University community better understand each other within the complex field of identities that inform our scholarly lives. Doing so will help ensure that all members of our community, as well as those who will inherit the culture we create, can thrive at Columbia.

With best wishes,

Mary C. Boyce
Provost
Professor of Mechanical Engineering

Ira Katznelson
Ruggles Professor of Political Science and History
Interim Provost, 2020-21



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT FOR UNIVERSITY LIFE AND SENIOR VICE PROVOST FOR FACULTY ADVANCEMENT

Dear Colleagues,

Columbia University attracts a diverse cadre of students, staff, and faculty, and we work to cultivate and sustain a campus climate where each member of our community can thrive. In our work in diversity, equity, and inclusion, we seek to combat systemic oppression, in all forms, when it manifests within our University community. For those who navigate intersectional identities, the academy can be particularly challenging. Therefore, an environment affirming of diversity in gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation is essential.

Since the student activism of the 1960s that led to the founding of the first campus organization of its kind, to the LGBTQ+ Scholarship Initiative, which welcomed an initial cohort of four scholars doing work in the area of LGBTQ+ research, Columbia has been a pioneer. Our LGBTQ+ faculty have made seminal contributions in the areas of medicine, public policy, law, journalism, history, and the arts, to name a few. We have much to celebrate, but there is more work to be done, particularly in the area of offering opportunities for all to deeply engage with the experience of their LGBTQ+ students and colleagues.

The task of compiling this guide was undertaken with much care over 12 months, and was informed by individual interviews with 16 faculty and 2 staff and focus groups totaling 11 graduate students and 7 undergraduate students. We heard accounts of frustration: in defending the legitimacy of one's scholarship, in microaggressions in classroom discussions, in confusing bureaucratic processes that misgender or misname, in policies with inflexible definitions of family, and in barriers to obtaining healthcare. We also heard stories of resilience, of determination, and of optimism, and learned of initiatives such as an onboarding guide for LGBTQ+ people of color in the Law School and Employee Resource Groups at the Medical Center.

In creating this guide, we seek to illuminate these stories, to create a living repository of campus resources, and to codify recommendations from our interviewees about how we can do better. We urge everyone at Columbia, regardless of role, career stage, or identity, to ask the question: *How can I be a better LGBTQ+ ally?* Departments and schools also have an important charge: to distribute this essential guide to all faculty, to incorporate it into onboarding and ongoing training, and to use the checklist on pages 8 and 9 to inform future action. Through a coordinated, sustained effort, we can foster a more inclusive campus climate for LGBTQ+ members of our community, and by extension, for all who work and study at Columbia.

Finally, as this is a living document, we welcome your feedback. Please email us at facultyadvancement@columbia.edu with any suggestions, and visit the Resources website for updates at www.provost.columbia.edu/content/lgbtq-resources.

Best,

[Dennis A. Mitchell, DDS, MPH](#)

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