

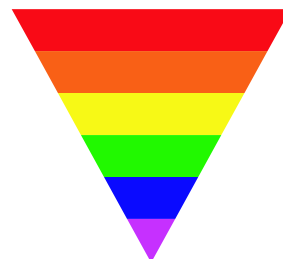
# Issues for GLBT Students

## Do You Plan To Be "Out" in Graduate/Professional School?

Whether or not to come out is a very personal decision and there is no "right" answer. For some people, sexual orientation is such an integral part of who they are that to be closeted in graduate school would be denying their true identities. Others prefer to separate their personal from their professional lives and only share this information with close friends. There are pros and cons associated with these choices. Coming out may lead to discrimination or harassment, but hiding your true self could cause frustration or anxiety. The bottom line is this - do what is most comfortable for you.

To help determine what is right for you, consider the following questions:

- What has been your involvement with the GLBT community both on- and off-campus?
- Are most of your friends GLBT-connected?
- Do most of your family and friends know you are GLBT?
- If you have a partner, is s/he out in most situations?



## Selecting a Law School or Graduate Program

If you plan to be out, you may want to select schools that consider themselves to be "gay-friendly." While researching possible programs, look for indications of this philosophy. Is there a GLBT group on-campus? How active are they? Does the school offer courses that deal with GLBT or gender issues? Are there any "out" faculty members you can speak with? Does the university have sexual orientation as part of its EEO policy? Does the school offer any form of domestic partnership benefits to faculty, staff, or students?

If you are specifically interested in law school, be sure to check out the results of the LSAC's survey on this topic (<http://www.lsac.org/LSAC.asp?url=lsac/information-gay-lesbian-bisexual-applicants.asp>). Of the 200+ LSAC-member law schools, 177 responded and their answers can give you an indication of how accepting they probably are. Of course, this list is just the beginning of your research. Many other factors will go into your decision of which school to attend.

Also, keep in mind that even the most GLBT-friendly school may have some faculty and students who are less than thrilled about having openly gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered students on their campuses. Even so, there is little doubt that you will be able to find a program somewhere that is just right for you.

## Disclosing During the Application Process/Coming Out in your Essay or Personal Statement

Once you have determined where to apply, the next decision is whether or not to come out on your application. Some people feel that their sexual orientation is irrelevant and choose not to mention it. Others believe that it is a fundamental part of who they are and want to be open about it. Many fall somewhere in between. Consider the reasons for disclosing on your application. Are you applying for a specialized program dealing with gender or GLBT issues? (Such as Yale's Lesbian and Gay Studies) Does your career goal require an understanding of the GLBT lifestyle? (For example, a lawyer specializing in civil rights or advocacy for GLBT clients) These may be good reasons for you to disclose your own sexual orientation. Another reason to identify your GLBT involvement may be to demonstrate a particular skill or leadership quality. (For example, being the President of the GSA or coordinating the Drag Ball) If you are not comfortable coming out on your application, but would like to discuss your skills and experiences, you can always do so without being too specific about the precise nature of the organization. The danger here would be sounding too general and therefore, less convincing.

## The Bottom Line

The counselors in the Career Center are happy to discuss this topic with you, but when all is said and done, the decision is ultimately yours. Do what is most comfortable for you.

Sources: "Information for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Applicants", <http://www.LSAC.org> and "Disclosing a Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual Identity in Graduate Psychology Programs: Risks and Rewards" by Jill Rader, The University of Texas at Austin, <http://www.apa.org/apaags/diversity/disclosi.html>.