

ANTI-RACISM

A Student Plan of Action

LGBTQ+ Community



Proposed Adoption April 4, 2025

Introduction

The Student Senate for California Community Colleges (SSCCC) serves as a representative body for students from California's community colleges, which boast the most diverse higher education student population in the nation (CCC)¹. Among these diverse groups, the LGBTQ+ community stands out as both resilient and diverse but often faces unique challenges within the higher education landscape. These challenges include barriers related to identity, acceptance, and equal treatment, particularly for transgender and non-binary students.

Such barriers can hinder their academic success and overall educational experience. Transgender and non-binary students are particularly vulnerable, experiencing higher levels of discrimination and exclusion compared to their cisgender peers. According to a 2021 report by GLSEN, 77.3% of transgender students and 69.1% of nonbinary students reported facing discrimination, while only 46.1% of cisgender students experienced the same (CCC)². Furthermore, LGBTQ+ students often feel less connected to their colleges and less supported by faculty and administration. Only 61% of LGBTQ+ students reported feeling a sense of belonging on campus, in contrast to 75.4% of non-LGBTQ+ students (Williams Institute)³.

In response to these challenges, the SSCCC collaborated with LGBTQ+ students and allies across California to create Chapter 5 – LGBTQ+ Students. The SSCCC sought to ensure the voices of those directly impacted were heard and represented. This effort included hosting an open forum during the Advocacy Conference where LGBTQ+ students and allies shared their experiences and concerns. Following the feedback gathered, the SSCCC organized a webinar on February 13, 2025, as part of an ongoing commitment to dialogue and progress. The webinar provided a platform for students to share their stories and offer

¹California Community College Chancellor's Office, <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/diversity-equity-inclusion#:~:text=As%20the%20largest%20and%20most,of%20students%20in%20our%20colleges.>

²California Community College Chancellor's Office, <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/lgbtq-plus>

³Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/community-college-lgbtq/>

updates on the developments made within Chapter 5, continuing the important conversation about improving the educational experience and addressing the health needs of LGBTQ+ students across California's community colleges.

LGBTQ+ Community

The LGBTQ+ community is a vibrant and diverse group, encompassing individuals from various backgrounds, ethnicities, and identities. It is essential to recognize and embrace these differences, accepting each person for who they are and acknowledging the community's wide range of experiences and identities. The LGBTQ+ umbrella includes a spectrum of identities, such as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Asexual, Pansexual, Intersex, Nonbinary, Genderqueer, Two-Spirit, Demisexual, and Graysexual. These identities reflect the broad spectrum of human experience, and many individuals within the community identify with a combination of these labels or with identities not always included in the traditional categorization.

According to the California Budget Center (CBC), approximately 9.5% of California's adult population identifies as LGBTQ+, representing about 2.7 million individuals (CBC)⁴. This percentage exceeds the national average, with approximately 8.3% of adults in the United States identifying as LGBTQ+, as reported by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC)⁵. This higher percentage in California speaks to the state's more progressive and inclusive climate, which offers a more accepting environment for individuals within the LGBTQ+ community. California is often considered a leader in LGBTQ+ rights, policy initiatives, and educational outreach, providing a model for inclusivity and equal rights.

However, despite the progress, challenges remain. LGBTQ+ individuals, especially those from marginalized racial, ethnic, or socio-economic backgrounds, continue to face discrimination, stigma, and unequal access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. These disparities highlight the importance of continued advocacy, policy reform, and community-

⁴Cal Budget Center

[h https://calbudgetcenter.org/resources/lgbtq-californians-play-vital-roles-in-our-families-communities/](https://calbudgetcenter.org/resources/lgbtq-californians-play-vital-roles-in-our-families-communities/)

⁵Public Policy Institute of California

[h https://www.ppic.org/blog/californias-lgbt-population/](https://www.ppic.org/blog/californias-lgbt-population/)

building efforts. Expanding on the significance of these numbers, it's essential to recognize that California's LGBTQ+ community is not monolithic. Different subgroups within the broader community may experience distinct challenges and opportunities based on their identity. For example, transgender individuals often face higher rates of discrimination and violence, while queer individuals may navigate a variety of intersectional experiences depending on their race, gender, and socioeconomic status.

Another avenue of consideration is inequities in healthcare. The LGBTQ+ community is disproportionately affected by HIV. In 2022, California reported 4,882 new HIV diagnoses, with the queer community experiencing a disproportionate burden. Notably, 98% of new HIV diagnoses among transgender individuals were among trans women, highlighting a critical area for targeted research and intervention. Additionally, the number of new HIV diagnoses among transgender people increased by 42% from 2018 to 2022 (CDPH)⁶. Unfortunately, many individuals within the queer community who are affected by HIV but do not receive proper treatment face a higher risk of progressing to AIDS, underscoring the need for comprehensive healthcare and support within this population.

Along with struggles regarding sexual health, many LGBTQ+ students face issues regarding their mental health. When asked, 33% of LGBTQ+ students reported that they considered suicide within the past year (for transgender and non-binary students, that number was 39%). In comparison, 7% of LGBTQ+ students reported attempting suicide in the past year. Additionally, LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly those aged 18 to 25, exhibit higher rates of substance use compared to their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts. For instance, 50.4% of gay, lesbian, and bisexual (LGB) students reported using marijuana, compared to 35.2% of heterosexual students (Stay Honest)⁷.

In California, approximately 54.5% of adults aged 12 and over reported using alcohol in the past month, and 20% reported using marijuana in the past year.

⁶California Department of Public Health

HIV/AIDS Epidemiology and Health Disparities in California, 2022 and The Trevor Project

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/September-Research-Brief-September-Research-Brief.pdf>

⁷Stay Honest

Substance Abuse and Cannabis Usage: Supporting and Affirming the LGBTQIA+ Community and Youth – Stay Honest

Among young adults aged 18 to 25, 34% reported binge alcohol use in the past month, and 40.4% reported marijuana use in the past year (CHCF)⁸.

As the state continues to support and protect the LGBTQ+ community, it is crucial to prioritize policies and initiatives that ensure equal treatment and opportunity for all individuals, regardless of their identity or background. Efforts should focus on reducing the rates of homelessness, improving healthcare access, providing comprehensive sex education, and combating the stigma that still exists in various sectors of society.

Some of the key concerns brought up by the community in the community college system include but not limited to:

INTERSECTIONALITY

Many individuals within the LGBTQ+ community do not identify with just one label but instead embrace multiple or fluid identities that reflect their unique and evolving experiences. The queer community is made up of a wide range of identities, and it's important to recognize that each person's experience is shaped by their intersectional identities. These variations in experience highlight the importance of acknowledging that not everyone in the community has the same journey or encounters the same challenges. Emphasizing this diversity is crucial for fostering understanding, acceptance, and inclusivity within the community and beyond. Two students shared their perspective,

- *"I feel that it gives me a base of a superpower...what I mean by that is that I am a Black man and a veteran and I am queer it has allowed me to experience life on a whole new level and navigate with empathy and being able to go through the different things I have been through" Xtopher Ruiz, San Diego Miramar College*
- *"As a student, a parent, a queer individual, and a Black woman, my identities often intersect in ways that shape my experiences, both in academic spaces and beyond. At times, these aspects of who I am work together to inform my perspective and advocacy, while at other moments, they exist as distinct yet equally significant parts of my journey." Valerie Pamphile, Barstow College*

EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

A lack of accurate information, combined with the prevalence of misinformation about the LGBTQ+ community, often leads to misunderstandings, perpetuates stereotypes, and fosters hate. These gaps in knowledge can contribute to harmful assumptions and discrimination, while the spread of false or misleading information further exacerbates stigma and alienation. Educating and informing both the general public and specific communities is essential to dismantling prejudice, fostering empathy, and promoting acceptance of the diverse identities and experiences within the LGBTQ+ community

ACCESS TO SERVICES

Students highlighted the need for services such as dedicated counselors for the LGBTQ+ community, legal assistance regarding name changes and gender marker updates, and health centers for transgender medical care. Students put it best when they shared their perspective:

- *There isn't really counseling available centered around queer students and their experiences. I have gone to the health center to find contraceptives, but none specifically for queer students... We are supposed to have a queer resource center, but due to lack of push it is in limbo. Brandon Cooley, San Bernardino Valley College*
- *Easy access is there, I've been on campus and am aware of where all services are. However, if I was not involved with student advocacy, I would not know the resources that are available. Xtopher Ruiz, San Diego Miramar College*

SAFE SPACES ON CAMPUS

Students highlighted the need for physical safe spaces on campus that are warm and inviting. They also emphasized the need for staff of these safe spaces to be representative of the population they serve.

- *"The campus is sorely lacking in physical or social safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ students, and it is a glaring omission. Without such spaces, it becomes increasingly difficult to exiate the umbrage we feel when our identities are not validated or respected" Matthew Gonzalez, Golden West College*
- *"No, there are definitely not. We have the pride center, but it is tucked away in*

- *a corner away from most students. We have areas where there may be an enclave of the community, but there is not a lot of physical or non-physical space.” Aj Matthews, Solano College*

REPRESENTATION IN HIRING PRACTICES

The LGBTQ+ community is incredibly diverse and someone who is a person of color and queer will have a different experience than someone who is white and queer - it is important for students to see themselves reflected in staff and faculty.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES

Many students face issues such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and overall harassment. Something students mentioned is necessary is protection from harassment for GSAs.

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Students expressed a need for training for faculty and staff on LGBTQ+ issues, menstrual products in men’s bathrooms, gender-neutral bathrooms, etc.

- *They are very sensitive, the resources just aren't there. The sensitivity does not have a placement. If a student comes to staff needing help, the staff really do care but there just isn't any established resource. Valerie Pamphile, Barstow College*
- *I feel the campus is at a 5 or 6 on a scale from 1-10. There are spaces for different affinity groups, but there isn't really a space for intersectionality. It is in the progress, recently in the process of becoming a sanctuary school, but there is still work to be done. Aj Matthews, Solano College*



Cultural Awareness and Respect

To create a truly inclusive educational environment, intentional efforts must be made to integrate LGBTQ+ perspectives into curricula, campus services, and community-building initiatives. This includes incorporating LGBTQ+ studies alongside courses on race and ethnicity to foster deeper understanding of gender, sexuality, and intersectionality. Recognizing that each individual in the LGBTQ+ community has a unique experience shaped by their race, ethnicity, gender, and other aspects of identity is essential for creating an inclusive atmosphere.

Creating inclusive spaces on campus goes beyond physical locations and involves fostering an environment where students feel safe, connected, and valued. Open conversations about acceptance should be encouraged, emphasizing that being part of the LGBTQ+ community is one facet of a person's identity and does not diminish their humanity.

Allyship must extend beyond performative actions and should involve concrete steps such as advocating for gender-neutral bathrooms, supporting LGBTQ+ initiatives, and ensuring the visibility of diverse LGBTQ+ experiences. Allies play a critical role in advocating for the rights and needs of LGBTQ+ students and making sure that their voices are heard and respected.

Encouraging student involvement in LGBTQ+ organizations offers students opportunities to raise awareness, share their stories, and empower others to join in solidarity. These organizations create spaces for connection, advocacy, and education, helping foster empathy and understanding among the broader campus community.



Cultural Awareness and Respect

Additionally, LGBTQ+ students need access to specific services such as dedicated counselors, legal assistance for name changes and gender marker updates, and health centers that provide comprehensive transgender medical care. These services support students' well-being and demonstrate the institution's commitment to addressing the evolving needs of its LGBTQ+ student body.

In conclusion, fostering a supportive and inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ students involves integrating LGBTQ+ studies, creating inclusive spaces, encouraging true allyship, and expanding services that meet their unique needs. These actions empower students to live authentically, raise awareness, and advocate for systemic changes that create a more equitable and supportive campus environment for all.



Equity Training

To foster a truly inclusive campus, it is essential to prioritize diversity in hiring practices, ensuring that queer individuals and people of color are represented on campus. Faculty training is also crucial, particularly in fostering empathy and understanding of LGBTQ+ students' identities. This includes educating faculty on appropriate language, and behaviors, and the importance of recognizing the diverse experiences of students.

Providing Mandatory Safe Zone Training for faculty ensures they can offer meaningful support to LGBTQ+ students, creating an environment where allies are proactive and supportive beyond just performative gestures. Training on intersectionality is also key, as it helps faculty understand how race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, and other factors intersect with LGBTQ+ identities.

Additionally, mandatory training on recognizing and addressing microaggressions is necessary to help both faculty and students understand the types of microaggressions LGBTQ+ individuals may face and how to avoid them. This comprehensive approach helps build a supportive and inclusive campus for all students.



Peer Mentors and Alliances

When it comes to supporting LGBTQ+ students and the community on campus it's good to ensure that we are creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for our campuses. It's essential to prioritize mentorship opportunities and safe spaces for students to connect, share experiences, and seek support from the community at large.

- Colleges should build strong alliances and allies within the student, body, faculty, and administration.
- Colleges should create designated safe spaces on campus where LGBTQ+ students can find refuge from potential discrimination, bullying, or harassment.
- It's important to acknowledge the diverse experiences within the LGBTQ+ community, particularly the intersection of race and sexuality. Being a person of color and queer can result in unique challenges that are distinct from the experiences of white queer individuals.



Classroom Experience

The classroom experience for members of the LGBTQ+ community can vastly differ due to factors such as location, individual circumstances, and as this document has said before - intersectionality. It is incumbent upon educators, administrators, and policymakers to be aware of the many issues facing queer students.

- *My campus experience has been hopeful in a sense that as a returning gay student with a disability, I was fearful to even go to campus. However, the faculty has been amazing. It's when you leave the classroom where it falls away. If you are not in a community with people, you feel alone. Brandon Cooley, San Bernardino Valley College*
- *Earliest experience - professor was giving an announcement for a queer event on campus. A student going back and forth from across the border was upset that there were queer events happening on campus and why we should be having them on campus. I was extremely angry because I love to speak up for students, it was a not so great experience for me. Xtopher Ruiz, San Diego Miramar College*
- *Our closest other CC is 1.5 hours away. We try to ensure that we push that the college is a second home and we care. Faculty and staff are caring, they will not. We try to establish a welcoming environment and a sense of community. The issue is getting the rest of the community to understand times are changing and you need to change with it. Older generations in the community are starting to foster more community and acceptance. Valerie Pamphile, Barstow College*
- *My experience on campus as an LGBTQIA+ student has been an ongoing series of challenges that are not sufficiently acknowledged or addressed. While some progress has been made, it often feels like the institution's commitment to LGBTQIA+ inclusion is an unfalsifiable claim rather than a tangible reality. In the broader community, the need for change is even more pronounced, as campuses must coalesce around efforts that transcend the picayune concerns of a few and instead champion the perpetual necessity of LGBTQIA+ acceptance and support, which I hope will not abate with time. Matthew Gonzalez, Golden West College*
- *On campus, I work as a student ambassador and meet a variety of students with different backgrounds. The work that I currently do is getting students involved in different spaces. Developing programming that makes all people feel seen and be able to communicate ideas and grievances without fear. Working on getting a curriculum developed for queer studies. Take up space and encourage others to take up space as well. AJ Matthews, Solano College*

Past SSCCC Resolutions

The Student Senate for California Community Colleges has consistently demonstrated its commitment to supporting LGBTQ+ students through a series of past resolutions. These resolutions highlight the Senate's dedication to fostering inclusive, safe, and equitable campus environments across the California Community College system. From advocating for LGBTQ+ training for faculty and staff, promoting the visibility of pronouns and gender-neutral facilities, to calling for the inclusion of queer studies courses and the establishment of a statewide support organization, the Student Senate has taken meaningful steps to uplift LGBTQ+ voices and address the unique challenges faced by this community.

F9 - LGBT ANTI HARASSMENT POLICY

The Student Senate for California Community Colleges urges action to address harassment against LGBT students. With many districts lacking clear protections and data showing high rates of physical and sexual harassment, the Senate advocates for including sexual orientation and gender identity in all anti-harassment policies and promoting awareness workshops to educate students.

F10 - LGBT+ CONNECTIVITY

The Student Senate for California Community Colleges supports a safe, inclusive, and culturally diverse environment for all students, including the LGBT+ community. In response to ongoing discrimination, the Senate urges colleges to create support systems, establish Safe Zones, provide inclusivity training, and encourage respectful communication, including on social media. It also calls for an annual day dedicated to celebrating diversity and recognizing the LGBT+ community.

S22 - LGBTQ+ TRAINING FOR ALL SBA'S

The Student Senate for California Community Colleges is committed to fostering inclusive and supportive campus environments by providing LGBTQ+ training to student body associations, advocating for policy reviews that address sexual orientation, gender expression, and discrimination, and amplifying student voices in advancing dialogue and advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights across all community college campuses.

S24 - LGBTQIA+ INCLUSIVITY

The Student Senate for California Community Colleges recognizes the vital role of student governments in creating inclusive campuses. To support the LGBTQIA+ community, the Senate encourages Pride Week participation, advocates for staff training on cultural sensitivity, and promotes displaying updated pride flags to show ongoing support and inclusivity.

S24 - IMPLEMENTING LGBTQ+ TRAINING FOR FACULTY AND CLASSIFIED STAFF

The Student Senate for California Community Colleges advocates for mandatory LGBTQ training for all faculty and staff, to be completed during hiring and every two years. Training should cover terminology, inclusive practices, and addressing bias. The Senate urges the Chancellor's Office to develop this program with stakeholders and highlights the need for outreach to show its positive impact on student success.

S24 - TRANSGENDER, NONBINARY, AND GENDER NONCONFORMING STUDENT SUPPORT

The Student Senate for California Community Colleges advocates for greater support and inclusivity for transgender and nonbinary students by promoting gender-neutral restrooms, correct pronoun usage, and replacing "chosen/preferred name" with "updated name." The Senate urges colleges to include pronouns on official platforms and provide annual training for faculty and staff to foster understanding of gender diversity, creating a safer and more supportive campus environment.

S24 - PRONOUN INCLUSIVITY

The Student Senate for California Community Colleges advocates for students to enter and update their pronouns across all digital platforms to promote inclusion and respect. The Senate urges colleges to adopt supportive measures and continue promoting pronoun visibility for students, faculty, and staff campus-wide.

S24 - ADVOCATING FOR THE PROLIFERATION OF QUEER STUDIES

The Student Senate for California Community Colleges advocates for the inclusion of queer studies courses across all community colleges, emphasizing their role in promoting diversity, equity, and social justice. In response to rising anti-LGBTQ+ policies, the Senate argues that LGBTQ+ curriculum fosters comprehensive education, reduces discrimination, and supports public health—much like ethnic studies courses recognized as equity tools.

S24 - CREATING A SYSTEMWIDE QUEER-FOCUSED ORGANIZATION

The Student Senate for California Community Colleges advocates for a statewide, sustainability-funded organization to support LGBTQ+ students, similar to Umoja and Puente. Recognizing the unique challenges LGBTQ+ students face, including higher rates of anxiety and depression, the Senate calls for collaboration with stakeholders to create a coordinated support system that promotes equity, inclusion, and student success.



Concluding Thoughts

The SSCCC extends its sincere gratitude to all members who contributed to the development of Chapter 5. This document represents a year of dedicated work, including outreach to LGBTQ+ students across the state, hosting an open forum at the Advocacy Academy, and gathering valuable feedback during a webinar led by our DEIAA Committee. Through these efforts, student voices and experiences helped shape this chapter. It is important to note that a limitation of creating this chapter was the narrow scope of the student perspective, as our focus group only contained a handful of students. While we deeply value their experience and thoughts, it would be remiss to assume they represent all LGBTQ+ students. We strongly urge you to host your own focus groups to learn about the experience of the LGBTQ+ students on your campus.

The SSCCC remains committed to working closely with system partners—including the Chancellor's Office, faculty, staff, administrators, and student organizations—to break down barriers of racism and inequity that impact student success. We invite all students, educators, and community members to join us in driving meaningful change within the California Community College system.



Next Steps



As we look ahead, the next steps outlined in this chapter serve as a call to action for colleges across the California Community College system to turn these recommendations into reality. Implementing the practices suggested here is essential to creating truly inclusive, supportive, and equitable environments for LGBTQ+ students. We encourage college leaders, faculty, staff, and student governments to take initiative, engage in meaningful dialogue, and work collaboratively to integrate these strategies into campus policies and practices. By committing to these actions, campuses can play a vital role in fostering belonging, advancing equity, and ensuring that all students—regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation—can thrive. Below is a summary of those steps

- Establish physical safe spaces across campuses to promote community and support for members of the LGBTQ+ community.
- Provide access to a range of services such as, but not limited to, dedicated counselors, legal aid for gender marker and name changes, and trans health care (health centers provide hormones for students at a lower cost).
- Make it mandatory for training faculty and staff to ensure LGBTQ+ issues are understood and faculty and staff are equipped with the tools to help their students.
- Incorporate LGBTQ+ studies into the curriculum to increase education and knowledge about the community and the issues they face.
- Ensure diverse representation in hiring practices as members of the LGBTQ+ community have intersectional identities and seeing those identities represented in the faculty and staff they interact with is imperative.

Acknowledgments

DEIAA Membership

- Joshua Simon, Vice President - DEIAA Chair
- Regional Affairs Director II, Alisha Nagpal - Committee Vice Chair
- Regional Affairs Director VII, David Duncan - Committee Member
- Regional Affairs Director VIII, César Tlatoāni Alvarado - Committee member
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SSCCC Queer Caucus

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- AJ Matthews, Queer Caucus Secretary
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- Queer Caucus general membership

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