

[Off To School](#)

How to Find a Gay-Friendly or Lesbian-Friendly College

by Kathy Belge

For Gay and Lesbian College Students

Moving out of your home and going away to college is a big step for most young adults. For gay and lesbian students, finding a college that is gay-friendly is especially important. For some gay and lesbian students, college may be the first place they feel free enough to be out and open. So, how do you find a college that is friendly towards gays, lesbians, bisexuals, trans and queers?

What do you want to study?

Regardless of your sexual orientation, you should pick a college based on what you wish to study. If your dream is to become a doctor and the college you pick has a great queer student population, but no pre-med program, you're not going to be happy there. Your school guidance counselor can help you pick the schools that are right for what you want to study.

Use the Internet

After you have narrowed your school choices down to ones that offer the major you want to study, there are ways you can determine whether or not the college you wish to attend is gay-friendly.

Spend some time on the college web site. Look at the groups on campus, the class offerings and the university policies.

Nondiscrimination Policies

Find your college's web site online or request a catalogue in the mail, and search for their nondiscrimination policy. Every school should have one. Does the school you want to attend have a nondiscrimination policy that includes sexual orientation or gender identity? If so, that is a good sign. It means that if you are discriminated against because you are gay or lesbian, you will have some legal recourse.

It also means that the school administration has given the issue of gay and lesbian students and employees some consideration and attempts to make the campus a welcoming environment.

What Classes are offered?

Does the school offer any courses with gay and lesbian themes? Is there a Queer Studies Department? Check out the English department and see if they offer a gay and lesbian in literature class. Gay history? Sexuality and Gender? Women's and Lesbian Studies. Colleges that offer such coursework are likely to be queer-friendly, or at least have some gay and lesbian-friendly students and staff.

Check out the Directory

[The National Consortium of Directors of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Resources in Higher Education](#) has a listing of all colleges who have gay and lesbian student organizations with paid staff. This is a good place to start. But many universities have gay and lesbian centers that are run by student volunteers, so just because your college is not on this list, does not mean it does not have a gay and lesbian student group.

Gay Student Organizations

Investigate whether or not the college of your choice has a gay and lesbian student organization. Look on the college internet site or call the general information number on campus. Ask if there is a gay student group. Get the phone number or an email of someone from the group and you'll be able to get an honest sense of the climate on campus.

Visit the School

You can search the Web all night and day, but nothing beats paying a visit to a college campus in person. Take an official campus tour. How do you feel there? Do you see other students on campus that you think you could be friends with? Check out flyers and posters on the walls. Are any advertising gay events? What does the climate seem like in the school cafeteria?

Check out the surrounding area

Does the city or town the college is in have an active gay community? Are there coffeeshops, bookstores or gay bars in the area? These can all be indicators of a gay-friendly environment.

Check out the Ranking

Each year [The Princeton Review lists the Best 357 Colleges](#).

The top Five colleges where the Gay Community is Accepted for 2005 are:

1. Eugene Lang College (New York City)
2. New York University
3. Sarah Lawrence College (Bronxville, NY)
4. New College of Florida (Sarasota)
5. Brandies University (Boston)

The Five Colleges where the gay community is least accepted are:

1. Notre Dame (Indiana)
2. Baylor (Waco, TX)
3. Grove City College (Grove City, PA)
4. Wheaton College (Wheaton, IL)
5. Boston College (Boston, MA)