

**Career
Development
Guide for
LGBTQ
STUDENTS**



Entering the workforce and navigating sexual and gender identities has challenges. Developing a career plan as a member of the LGBTQ community can be crafted with the NEIU Career Development staff, who can provide proven resources and guides that keep safety in mind.

PROS AND CONS TO BEING "OUT" DURING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Sharing your identity and coming out to an employer is a personal decision, and there are four opportunities:

- When creating the application
- When offered a job interview
- During the interview
- After being hired

Pros of coming out earlier in the application process allows you to weed out employers who don't provide an inclusive workplace and control the tone of the conversation around your gender or sexual identity. Being open about your identity can lead to a more comfortable interview.

Tips to consider:

- Disclosing at the beginning of the interview process could be as simple as including your pronouns on your resume and job application. Since being misgendered could happen, create a plan and practice a response so you can keep a neutral tone.
- If you disclose after being hired, talking to the hiring manager or human resources may help navigate the process of transitioning.
- Please review what an online interviewer will see behind you. Pride flags or other visual identifiers that are common in the LGBTQ community may out you. Also, be mindful of what may offend the interviewer for example the artwork you display may not be appreciated by all and may misrepresent your professional image.

Cons coming out at any stage include the anxiety you may feel about being misgendered, and there can be a shift from reviewing your skills to an interview that revolves around gender or sexual expression.

HOW CAN I FIND A DIVERSE WORKPLACE?

If a company's culture is positive toward minority populations, the job description will include terms such as equity, inclusion, and diversity. A company's website, social media, and job search platforms will show what methods it uses to promote diversity in the workplace.

- Does the organization have a clear mission, vision, or policy statement that includes diversity and inclusion on its website?
- Does the organization provide benefits that support a diversity of employees? (For example, family leave, paid sick leave, and transition support.)
- Does the organization have inclusive practices for gender identity and gender expression like employee resource groups or employee affinity groups?
- Does the organization note on their job descriptions that applications from underrepresented groups are highly encouraged?
- Has the organization celebrated or participated in recognized events like Pride or highlighted LGBTQ visibility in other ways?
- How has the organization presented itself in the media about LGBTQ issues?

Diversity
TOGETHERNESS WAS WONDERFUL

The Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index has ranked companies that comply with inclusive identifiers for LGBTQ people. The link in the resource section provides the most updated list.

THE JOB SEARCH PROCESS

Your resume is not just a piece of paper; it's your first handshake with a potential employer. Resumes are a unique way of communicating that can feel overwhelming to create. However, it needs to reflect your skills and successes in prior work and school experiences. NEIU Career Development has created a guide to help create a foundational document that the staff can help refine.

Resume Basics

NEIU Career Development encourages a simple template that focuses on the skills gained from your work experience. A future employer typically spends 6 to 12 seconds reviewing a resume. Choose a readable font (like Calibri or Arial) between 10 and 12 points. Use bold text and spacing to separate sections to keep the content easy to read in the shortest document, typically one or two pages. We suggest a one-inch margin. The sample resume at the end of this guide illustrates these guidelines and is the format Career Development suggests using.

Most individuals will have a few broad sections: education, certificates, work experience, and volunteer experiences. Some industries emphasize content in one section more than others. STEM fields will highlight work and education experiences, while the nonprofit sector will focus on volunteer experiences. Consult Career Development liaisons, professors, and other professionals in your field to discuss what highlights are vital. NEIU Career Development staff will help focus a resume that reflects the job position you want to acquire.

Skills-based bullet point statements make reading your resume simple for the employer and highlight your skills. The STAR Method focuses on what, how, and the results of your experience. To increase your chances of being called for an interview, work with the NEIU Office of Career Development to create skills-based resume.

Effective Bullet Statements:

We suggest the STAR Method:

- Situation – What did you do?
- Tasks – What specific tasks were used.
- Action – How did you do the task?
- Results – What was the contribution?

Consider the difference between these two resume statements:

- Responsible for good customer service
- Managed the store's front end, serving 20 customers an hour and keeping the store clean throughout the day, resulting in a positive customer experience.

LGBTQ Resume Options

There are no right or wrong answers to presenting your identity on your resume, but NEIU's Career Development office is here to provide support and guidance to help you make the best resume. LGBTQ workers often have to make difficult choices about being out in the workplace. Some career organizations may not be as inclusive compared to others. Some people prefer not to come out at work while others see it as the only way to be authentic. We support you in choosing what is best for you.

Names and Pronouns

Coming out on your resume to an employer as LGBTQ is as simple as including your preferred name and pronouns or listing your LGBTQ community involvement in your resume.

Chosen names and pronouns on a resume are becoming increasingly common, especially in the nonprofit sector and educational institutions. A resume and cover letter are not legal documents and are an appropriate space to set the tone for how you identify.

However, legal documents, including the job application, background check, and tax information, require the name already on legal documents like your driver's license.

However, you can still include your preferred name in parentheses when filling out a job application; for example, if your chosen name is John Doe and your legal name is Jane Doe, on the application, you could use "John (Jane) Doe."

Presenting a name and pronouns on a resume could look like one of three options:

Legal Name
Alexandra Hoya, They/Them

Chosen Name
Jack Hoya, He/Him

First Initial, Chosen Name
A. Jack Hoya, He/Him

Including your chosen name and pronouns on your resume does not guarantee that prospective employers and coworkers will respect your chosen identity. Disclosure can lead to discriminatory treatment, so assess the pros and cons of including your name and pronouns on your resume. Consider the urgency with which you need to find employment. Leaving your identity markers off the resume and revisiting them after securing employment is always okay.

You need to update identity information with the people you use for personal references.

Listing Your LGBTQ Community Involvement

Many LGBTQ people participate in community work, clubs, sports leagues, and hobby groups. Community engagements are a valuable resource to showcase your skills when building your resume. If you choose to include LGBTQ highlights in your resume, focus on what you did and the skills you used while in different groups. If you are not comfortable listing LGBTQ information on your resume, it is okay to generalize group information so that you can still highlight your skills.

Presenting work experience could look like:

Comfortable Disclosing

Treasurer, NEIU Pride Alliance
LGBTQ Journeys Retreat Leader
Lavender Graduation Award Recipient

Not comfortable disclosing

Treasurer, Diversity Student Campus Group
Journeys Retreat Leader
Community Award Recipient

LGBTQ Resumes & Discrimination

Being "out" on your resume can be a powerful statement if you want to be out in the workplace. Studies have shown that LGBTQ job seekers can face barriers when identity information is shared, but being 'out' can also lead to a more authentic and fulfilling work experience. If you are concerned about being out at work and feeling safe or in a position where you need any job, you may consider these discriminatory challenges when creating your resume.

NEIU Student Counseling Services & Timely Care

Student Counselling Services and TimelyCare are resources that are available if gender or sexual identity affect your mental health. NEIU's mental health resources are valuable to support each step of the resume and hiring process.

Student Counseling Services

Northeastern Illinois University
5500 North St. Louis Avenue, B-119, Chicago, IL 60625
M-F 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM
Phone: (773) 442-4650

TimelyCare is an app service available to all NEIU student and provides 24/7 mental health resources. Download the TimelyCare app or tmelycare.com/neiu to use "Talk Now" or to schedule a free counseling appointment.

Sample Resume

The resume below illustrates a practical, clean format, pronoun inclusion, and strong bullet point descriptions. We encourage using this sample as a guide to create your resume. The titles are in 13-point font, and the text is in 11-point font, keeping the resume to 2 pages. Also, notice what is bold and not bold text. In the sample resume, we are using a person who identifies as female to male. A digital copy of this format is available on Handshake resources or by contacting the Office of Career Development.

123-456-7890	John Doe (they/him) Chicago, IL	john.doe@email.com
Summary (or Objective)		
Effective communication skills and attention to detail are crucial elements of an effective team member. As a customer-focused person, I am primed for your position. With my degree from NEIU and previous work experience, I have gained the knowledge needed for this job.		
Education (training and relevant certifications)		
B.A. Psychology, Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, IL		May 2025
Relevant Certification		
Certificate Nonprofit Management, Northwestern Illinois University,		June 2024
Relevant Coursework		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LGBTQ Psychology• Women and Gender Studies		
Work Experience		
LGBTQ COMMUNITY CENTER , Chicago, Illinois		2024 - Present
Director of Development		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Manage operations, including fundraising, which raised \$3 million annually.• Collaborating with various teams with effective communication to develop target fundraising messages for advertising and donor awareness, consistently increasing attendance each year.• Supervised two development associates and one development intern in the last year with an adequate educational structure, increasing the amount of outreach to sponsors and client services.		
Leadership Experience		
NEIU Pride Alliance , Chicago, Illinois		1998 - 2000
President		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead weekly community-building meetings with discussion topics relevant to the LGBTQ student population.• Organized the annual queer prom working with faculty and the alum association to secure food and DJs, which created a memorable experience for all who attended.• Working with other minority clubs to be inclusive and support each other in our causes allowed ideologies and perceptions to be better understood.		
Honors & Awards		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Place honors here		

SOCIAL MEDIA – WHAT DOES THE WORLD SEE?

Employers review social media and use Google searches to evaluate candidates, making it essential to curate your online persona carefully. Your professional presence in media is just as significant as your personal presence. If you are concerned about outing yourself or have an NSFW presence online, take key steps to protect your professional identity.

1. Audit your online presence

- Search for your name to see what information is publicly accessible.
- Review all posts, photos, and comments for appropriateness and professionalism.
- Have separate emails for your professional appearance and personal activity on the internet and social media.

2. Update privacy settings

- Adjust privacy settings in apps to control what others can see.
- Limit the visibility of personal content if it doesn't align with your professional image.

3. Maintain a professional profile

- On LinkedIn, include a professional photo or substitute with a project or logo if preferred. Make an appointment with NEIU Career Development to develop a complete LinkedIn and Handshake profile.
- Keep your LinkedIn profile updated with accurate information about your skills, achievements, and career aspirations.

4. Consider a pseudonym

- For personal accounts, use a different name or nickname to reduce discoverability.
- Ensure that any pseudonyms for personal accounts do not link to your professional image and that privacy protections in social media are active.
- Consider separate email addresses for personal and professional online presence.

5. Be intentional about content that reflects on your professional appearance

- Share articles, insights, or achievements that reflect your expertise and skills.
- Engage thoughtfully in discussions, avoiding controversial topics unless relevant to your field.
- Show leadership skills.

6. Think about first impressions

- Remember, visuals matter. Use professional-quality images and consistent branding across platforms.

This approach not only helps present a polished image to potential employers but also creates opportunities for networking and personal branding.

THE INTERVIEW

The interview is a time to present your skills and show an active interest in the position. This will help you sell yourself to a future employer both virtually and in person. NEIU Career Development offers mock interviews, and practice is essential.

Virtual interviews: Test equipment and technology to ensure it's working correctly. Consider using a microphone and earbuds to control sound. Remember to dress professionally. Identify any background image that could out yourself to an interviewer.

Prepare: Make sure you know the job description of the interview and prepare accordingly. Review the resume you sent, research the company, and prepare for common questions. Having a notebook with notes is appropriate for an interview. Notes can include prepared responses and questions you may have for an employer.

Body language: The interview begins the moment you enter the building. Any person you have contact with has an opinion and could be asked how they feel you will fit with the company. Be aware of your body language; 75% of communication is non-verbal. Maintain eye contact and keep a professional posture.

Questions: Ask open-ended questions at the end of the interview to show interest and learn more about the company and position. When asking about LGBTQ inclusion, determine when in the interview process is best; often, this is the second or third interview. Phrase questions to be polite and non-offensive.

Follow up: A thank you note that is written a few hours after the interview or the next day allows time for you to reflect and craft a meaningful note that highlights your skills.

Dress for the job: Dress appropriately for the job you're interviewing for and how you choose to present your identity in the workplace. NEIU Career Development has a Power Closet for those needing professional clothes; all items are free to NEIU students.

Materials: Bring a several physical copies of your resume, a pen, and a notebook.

Listen actively: Demonstrate that you're listening by turning your phone off, giving full attention to the interviewer, and asking questions to demonstrate that you understand.

Be aware of the industry: Research and be mindful of the industry as a whole. Include a search for standard industry terms to reflect your skills in a familiar industrial language.

Sample Questions

What skills does a candidate need for the position you are interviewing for?	What is the work environment and culture like?
What are some of the challenges for the role you applied for?	What is the company's approach to celebrating cultural differences?
What professional development or training is provided for the position?	How does the company gather and act on employee feedback?

PREPARE FOR COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Prepare answers that are most often asked in an interview so you can speak clearly and boldly about yourself. For example, you use the star method on your resume to highlight your skills. Do the same for interview questions such as: What was the task, how did you complete the task, and what was the result? Responses to each question should last three to four minutes.

Tell me about yourself.

This open-ended question is an opportunity to discuss your professional skills and career. In 2 minutes, focus on your name, education, and one or two broad skills. Avoid a narrative that does not relate to the position you applied for.

What are your strengths?

Provide concrete examples of your strengths relevant to the job you're applying for.

Why should we hire you?

This question assesses your confidence in your abilities and perception of your skills. Highlight the skills and qualities that make you a good fit for the role.

What are your salary expectations?

Interviewers ask this question to determine if you're within their salary range and if they can afford to hire you. Research salary ranges on Glassdoor, LinkedIn, and Google for a reasonable answer. The compensation you expect must be relevant to your skills and experience, self-reflect, and ask for a fair salary.

Why are you leaving your current job?

This question provides insight into your career goals and how you talk about your previous job. Do not speak negatively about your former employers or coworkers; instead, point out your problem-solving skills.

What are your weaknesses?

Mention weaknesses relevant to the role or that you can put a positive spin on. Time management is often a weakness many have. As you state the weakness, follow up with how you use a calendar to schedule your day intentionally and when you work on projects.

Do you have any questions?

You should ask questions about the company, the role, or the team. Consider the stages of the interview process; you ask different questions should be asked at various stages. Have questions prepared before the interview that come from the job description. In the later stages of the interview process, explore questions about climate, culture, and diversity.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- legacy.lambdalegal.org - Learn about federal, state, and local laws that explicitly protect LGBTQ people. And people with HIV, federal and state bans on sex discrimination, and other more general workplace-related laws that may be useful.
- lambdalegal.org/helpdesk - Confidentially call or email to get information and resources regarding discrimination related to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and HIV status.
- lgbtconnect.com - job board for anyone seeking LGBTQ-friendly employers
- lgbtqcareernetwork.com - job board for LGBTQ community
- pink-jobs.com - LGBTQ friendly job board
- outandequal.org - LGBTQ CareerLink offers tools and resources focused on LGBTQ inclusion in the workplace
- The Human Rights Campaign hrc.org/resources/corporate-equality-index - the corporate equality index, a list of companies and how the rank with LGBTQ equity and inclusion

Connect with the NEIU Career Development Office

The Career Development staff are all Safe Space trained and committed to providing an inclusive student environment. An appointment will help you develop your resume and prepare for a job interview. You can also get gender-affirming clothing from the Power Closet.

Office of Career Development
Building B119
ocs@neiu.edu | 773-442-4680

8:30 am to 4:30 pm | After-hours appointments by appointment