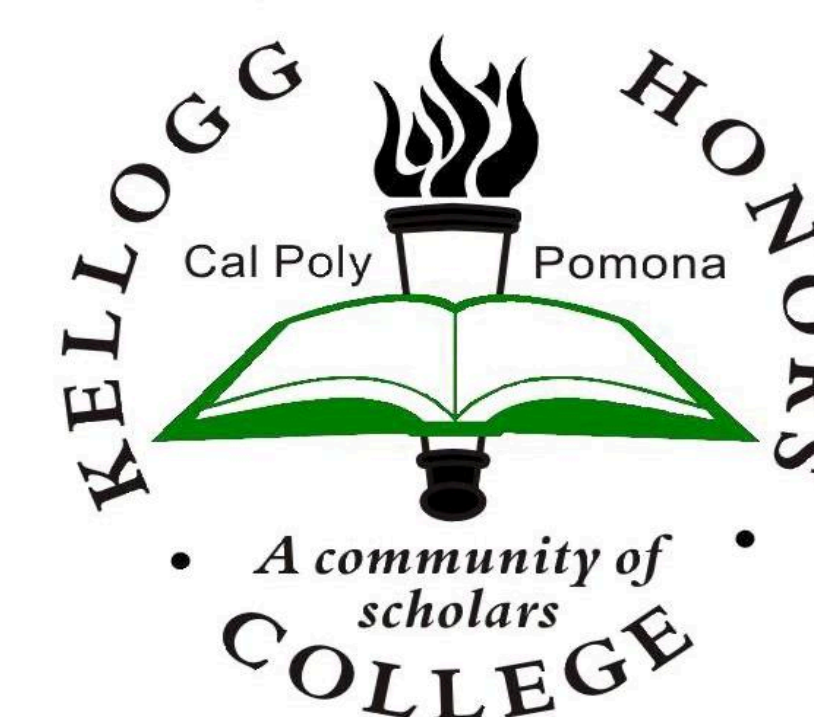# Colleges of California Online Resources for LGBTQ+ Students

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According to a 2020 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study of Adolescent and School Health, approximately 85% of students in a national survey identified themselves as Heterosexual with a slightly lower percentage in a state survey of students in California, meaning there are about 15% percent who identify as either LGBTQ+ or unsure. This leaves approximately 429,000 (15% of 2.1 million) (1) students who may need or wish for additional support from their campus related to their identity, gender, sexuality, ect. A gateway for these students to find this support is through websites that the colleges have, especially during the last year when the pandemic forced all colleges into virtual settings. This research project looked at what support all 23 CSUs, 10 UCs, and 10 regionally diverse randomly selected CC had to offer in the way of LGBTQ+ websites and resources. The research was done through a couple interviews, literature research, and a comparison of all the websites previously mentioned.

	UC	CSU	CC
Web Site	10 out of 10	21 out of 23	2 out of 10
Date Visited			
Time invested - target 10 minutes			
Google Search Results indicate University Name + lgbtq	10 out of 10	15 out of 23	2 out of 10
Contact Information for Center or Coordinator is found on the initial page of the Center	8 out of 10	14 out of 23	2 out of 10
Page includes links to Campus Resources	9 out of 10	12 out of 23	0 out of 10
Event Listing: Upcoming Events	6 out of 10	8 out of 23	0 out of 10
Event Listing: Events within the past year	6 out of 10	5 out of 23	0 out of 10
Physical Location is mentioned	7 out of 10	10 out of 23	2 out of 10
Physical Location is described as convenient or central	1 out of 10	2 out of 23	0 out of 10
Link to Mental Health/medical services	9 out of 10	7 out of 23	1 out of 10
Link to campus wide student services	6 out of 10	7 out of 23	0 out of 10
Length is more than one page	10 out of 10	14 out of 23	0 out of 10
Well Designed - not cluttered, easy to read	10 out of 10	17 out of 23	0 out of 10
Quality of labeling - how well are the links labeled? Do you know what to expect?	10 out of 10	19 out 0f 23	1 out of 10
Accessibility (Languages, supports text -to-speech)	10 out of 10	21 out of 23	2 out of 10
Reliable and efficient (loads fast (within 5 seconds, same if visited twice)	9 out of 10	21 out 23	2 out of 10

Methodology

I developed a checklist based off of a few articles about website design and the checklist was initially used to evaluate the Chancellor's office websites for the University of California, California State University, and California Community Colleges. Next the checklist was used to evaluate a total of 43 campus web sites (23 CSU, 10 UC, and 10 regionally diverse randomly selected CC). The checklist was developed based on what students may be looking for and Introduction Methods and Models of University Website Evaluation. (2) With these a 17-question checklist was developed to look at website and if it provided contact information, events, physical location, resources, was well designed and accessible. The first aspect looked at was the Chancellor's Office or equivalent for each of the university types. Both UC Office of the President and the CSU Chancellor's Office were able to find links related to LGBTQ+ resources or news with a simple search, while the CC Chancellor's Office had nothing. Next the 17-question checklist was used to examine the university websites and results were compared to each other. The maximum amount of time to be spent on the website was about ten minutes, to mimic what a student quickly looking might do, so the information that is gathered is only what can be found quickly and simply.

Interviews

In the interviews with Bri Serrano from the Cal Poly Pomona Pride Center (3), and Nat Betancourt from the CSU Fullerton LGBTQ Resource Center (4), further insight was gathered about the resources provided to students. One that became clear is that both centers have a lot to offer, ranging from events and more serious support such as medical and mental assistance. However, the multitude of assistance to be made use of was not as apparent on either of the college's websites. The interviews did not focus on the virtual presence of the centers, instead focusing more on their financing, resources, and guidelines. From those topics, depth was added to the understanding of the websites, mainly that there is no standard for the centers so they must each figure out how to do everything on their own. This is reflected in the websites and how they are all different, in format and effectiveness.

Website

Out of all the websites the UCs did the best with a website for each campus, 91% of the CSUs had websites, and 20% of the randomly selected CCs had websites. Most of the websites that did exist could be found with a google search of the universities name as well as LGBTQ. This may be the first way that a student looks for LGBTQ+ representation and resources on campus, especially when word of mouth or on-campus events that have tabling are decreased or non-existent due to the pandemic.

Contact Information

One of the criteria is if there is contact information is available for the center or coordinator, of which 80% of the UCs, 61% of CSUs, and none of the CCs had. The contact information could include a name, e-mail address, or telephone number on the University page for the Center. This study did not look at the social media links which may or may not be included on the University page for the Center. The interviews with Bri Serrano and Nat Betancourt provided much more information regarding the available resources and practices than on the University page for the Center.

Events

In virtual format events are one of the main ways for students to connect in with the LGBTQ+ centers of the campus. While in most cases, the events ikely will be looking for and displayed on the social media of these centers, will they be displayed on the university webpage for those who do not have access to the social media? 60% of the UC websites mentioned future and past events, while on the CSU pages 35% future events and 22% past events were shown. This shows that for the most part students must rely on finding the social media pages or receiving information about such events elsewhere. In the case of Bri Serrano, they did do outreach in other ways which may be true of other centers as well.

Physical Location

The percentages for the websites that mentioned a location on campus were 70% of the UC websites, 43% of the CSU websites, and 20% of the CC websites. Of each of those, there is rarely any description, with only 10% of UC websites providing any information, 9% of CSUs and none of the websites from CCS. This shows how students may not know how to find campus locations, and if they are interested, they will be going in blind to what the location will look or feel like. This may have an impact when Campuses return to in-person, because incoming students will not have had a chance to visit the center during orientation or the first weeks of school.

Resources

One of the main reasons a student may be looking for this information, other than community, is for medical or mental resources. Many students may not be able to get the help they need at home if their identity is not accepted, so they instead will look towards their university for help. 90% of UC websites had resources available or linked, while only 30 percent of the CSUs did, and only 10% of the CCs did. While community is important, resources for LGBTQ+ students are even more important as those are basic standards for any group within a university.

Design and Accessibility

The last section looked at simply how well the website was designed and if it was accessible. Most of the websites were relatively clear, such as the links being labeled well on 100% of the UC websites, 83% of the CSU websites, and 20% of the CC websites. Most of the pages loaded reliably and were not too cluttered. All the websites supported text-to-speech, but barely any of them had options for other languages or descriptions of pictures for visually impaired people.

Conclusion

There is not a good system in place for university websites to be built and community colleges are especially lacking. A common theme throughout the research was that CCs did not have nearly as good LGBTQ+ presentation, potentially because there are so many campuses, and they are much less cohesive a system than that of the UCs or CSUs. The UC websites were the best at meeting the checklist requirements, which is likely because the UC has put effort into ensuring each campus has LGBTQ+ resources for years. The CSU websites fell right in the middle, with most fulfilling more than half the checklist and only a few fulfilling all or none of the checklist. One main suggestion would be for a website reference with all of the requirements met to be created and provided to LGBTQ+ centers for use. This ties into the deeper issues within the centers, the lack of communications between centers within each system as well as lack of guidelines for running a center. This is a topic that should be researched further and improved.

Limitations

The study was done entirely on a computer so there may be differences when accessing the websites on a mobile phone or tablet. This study was completed over a six-month time period in a virtual learning environment.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further research can be done on the social media of the LGBTQ+ centers, the centers themselves, and the student needs.

- The research could be recreated on mobile phones, as many students may be using their phones to look at these websites.
- Social media is much more accessible than webpages so there may more information to be found there if a similar checklist was used.
- Develop a model of best practices in all areas of operations for LGBTQ+ centers that could be applied to the UC, CSU, and CC systems.
- Acquire information about the LGBTQ+ community on college campuses to evaluate how well current practices meet current needs of the students.

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Complete list available.