

Announcement

Center for Scholars in Residence at the University of Southern California

The University of Southern California is pleased to announce the formation of a Center for Scholars in Residence. The special area of focus for this Center is in gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender studies. The Los Angeles campus of USC is an ideal location for research in these topics, being also the location where the International Gay and Lesbian Archives, ONE Institute, the June Mazer Lesbian Collection, and other pending lesbian and gay collections are moving. Together, these collections make USC the locale of the largest gay/lesbian studies collections anywhere in the world. Major collections also exist at nearby libraries such as the UCLA Research library, the Clark library, the Huntington Library, and the Human Sexuality Collection at California State University-Northridge.

Los Angeles was the place where gay/lesbian activism first emerged in the early 1950s, long before the Stonewall riots. Today it boasts one of the largest and most developed gay/lesbian communities anywhere in the world. Organizations as diverse as the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), which is making a major impact on the Hollywood film industry, to the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center, which is a model social service agency, are established parts of the LA scene.

The balmy southern California climate also make LA a welcome relief from weather extremes suffered by other areas, and its diverse multiethnic population makes it an attractive international crossroads at the forefront of social change. Numerous gay and lesbian artists and writers contribute to a cultural scene that is so active one can never find the time to attend all the events going on in town. From the bustle of West Hollywood Tinseltown to nearby laid-back vacation resorts at Palm Springs and Laguna Beach, southern California has justifiably been a mecca for generations of lesbians and gay men.

The University of Southern California is definitely a part of the LA gay-positive atmosphere. USC includes sexual orientation in its anti-discrimination policy, is adding major domestic partner benefits for its employees, and has an active lesbian/gay faculty and staff association on campus. Its Lambda Alumni Association is formally recognized and established. Besides a longstanding gay/lesbian undergraduate student group, USC also has a Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Graduate Student Network, and "Out for Reel" in USC's acclaimed Cinema School. USC Law School boasts the nation's first scholarship for a law student

to specialize in the area of sexual orientation and the law. The USC Annenberg School for Communications has received a major endowment to develop communications studies in innovative ways. Courses dealing with gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender studies are coordinated on an interdisciplinary basis as part of USC's prominent Program for the Study of Women and Men in Society. Numerous USC faculty in fields as diverse as feminist studies, anthropology, education, social work, religion, literature, and political science are nationally prominent in lesbian/gay studies.

The Center for Scholars in Residence, which began operation in December 1994, involves a USC-owned apartment building near campus, that will be used for the scholars in residence. This apartment building will house scholars (who can be resident during the fall, spring, or summer semesters, or for a full year) from across the United States and from other nations. It is anticipated that resident Fellows will be a multiethnic group of women and men, who will be brought in at the following different levels.

1. Senior scholars—For those who have already published significant scholarship in lesbigay studies, or in fields that can be applied to such studies, and who have sabbatical leaves, grants, or unpaid semester leaves from their regular jobs.
2. Post-doctoral fellowships—For those who have completed their Ph.D. within the last five years, and wish to do research and writing in lesbigay studies building upon their area of expertise.
3. Dissertation fellowships—For those who are admitted to Ph.D. candidacy at a recognized university, and who are writing a dissertation relating to lesbigay studies. Proof of having passed the Ph.D. qualifying exam will be required before the fellow begins residence at USC.
4. Community researcher—For veteran activists who wish to take a sabbatical from their regular leadership position in national or local lesbigay organizations, in order to associate with scholars working in the field of lesbigay studies and to write up their perspectives of the lessons they have learned from their years of activism, about which strategies and techniques have proved most effective in improving the status of the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender community.

Application for residence at the USC Center for Scholars in Residence is open to researchers in lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender studies from all disciplines, but scholarship support to apply to the cost of housing is being made available

for research dealing with the following particular areas. These topics were decided upon as priority research needs by a national conference of notable scholars working in the field. The following statement represents a slightly modified version of the conclusion of a conference sponsored by the Wayne Placek Trust, which met in Chicago during July 1994. The USC Center for Scholars in Residence will use this consensus in guiding its choices as to which research proposals will receive highest priority. The areas are as follows, listed in no particular order of importance:

1. **STUDIES OF HETEROSEXISM:** How best to change attitudes, on a societal or individual level, toward a more positive acceptance of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and/or transgender persons. This might include research in areas like case-controlled studies, demonstrating which strategies and techniques are most effective in neutralizing perpetrators of hate crimes and other homophobic activities. What are the best ways to encourage lesbian/gay persons to come out, and engage in one-to-one dialogue about heterosexism with their relatives, friends, and co-workers? How can the mass media be convinced to portray a more positive image of sexual minorities; which kind of media ads and public service announcements are most effective in creating pro-gay public opinion (especially in communities under Radical Right attack)? How can attitudes in homophobic institutions, such as schools, churches, police, and the military, be changed? What can we learn from the example of feminist and other social change movements, in enacting public policy changes on a political level?

2. **STUDIES OF DIVERSITY:** we need much more research on gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender people among different American ethnic groups, and in other cultures around the world. What are the best ways to improve the socioeconomic status of lesbian/gay people of color, to reduce heterosexism within various ethnic communities, and to strengthen alliances between racial/ethnic minorities and the lesbian/gay community? What can we learn from the experience of diverse cultures, from a multiethnic and transnational perspective. about how best to reduce heterosexism?

3. **STUDIES OF SAME-SEX FAMILY ISSUES:** How can family recognition best be accomplished. both legally and in social legitimacy? This includes domestic partner rights, legalized same-sex marriage. parents' child custody rights, foster care, and adoption opportunities.

4. **WORKPLACE AND ECONOMIC ISSUES:** How can antigay discrimination in the workplace best be reduced? How can employers be persuaded to end discrimination? How can those who lose their jobs due to homophobia locate other jobs, and how can economic development in the

lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender community (especially for people of color) be maximized?

5. YOUTH AND ELDER ISSUES: How can the experience of lesbigay youth, in schools, with their families, and in their social life, be improved? How can they be assisted to overcome internalized homophobia and transphobia, come out of the closet, improve their self-esteem, and reach their highest potential educationally, professionally, and socially? How can they be encouraged to contribute to the community in positive ways?

On the other end of the age spectrum, how can we assist lesbigay elderly in achieving their most fulfilled retirement years? How can the lesbigay community more effectively utilize these elders' skills in mentoring youth (for example, in Foster Grandparent programs, and in developing "Auntie/Uncle" relationships) and in contributing to the wider community?

Researchers who are interested in being considered for the USC Center for Scholars in Residence should request an application form from Professor Walter L. Williams.

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