

SIOP LGBTQIA+ Committee: Looking Back and Forging Ahead

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Note: Tonya, Nick, and Rick, whose names are listed in alphabetical order, contributed to the article equally.

Introduction

Workplaces have historically marginalized individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+ (Silimon et al., 2020). Despite progress, many such individuals to-date still face significant challenges, such as employment discrimination and identity concealment pressure (e.g., Hebl et al., 2020), especially given recent anti-LGBTQ+ restrictions and legislation (King et al., 2024). Such challenges have reliably produced lower psychological safety, job satisfaction, performance, and higher strain and turnover among LGBTQIA+ individuals at work. This reality applies not only to the lived experiences of working LGBTQIA+ individuals in general but also to those of LGBTQIA+ scholars, practitioners, student members, and other affiliates of SIOP who share similar challenges at work and school. In this *TIP* summer issue, featuring Pride Month, we reflect on the SIOP LGBTQIA+ committee's recent priorities, accomplishments, and insights gained from its work while acknowledging contributing members. By writing this article, we hope to connect with members of the LGBTQIA+ community and allies within SIOP. At the core of the LGBTQIA+ committee, we hope to provide a safe space for professionals with aligned interests, whether their interests are in research, teaching, practice, or mentorship efforts that elevate the LGBTQIA+ community.

The LGBTQIA+ committee primarily focuses on increasing awareness of LGBTQIA+ issues within organizations, encouraging research, and promoting LGBTQIA+ voices. The LGBTQIA+ committee is formed by three subcommittees: the professional-development subcommittee, the awards subcommittee, and the community-building subcommittee. Each subcommittee is led by a chair, all of whom work closely with the LGBTQIA+ committee chair, I-Heng (Ray) Wu. The professional-development subcommittee (led by Nick Salter) provides ongoing learning opportunities to improve members' professional knowledge, competence, and effectiveness in their careers. The awards subcommittee (led by Tonya Lucas) reviews eligible submissions and selects the recipients for the annual LGBT Research Award and LGBTQIA+ Trailblazer Award. The community-building subcommittee (led by Zhixu "Rick" Yang) designs social initiatives to create, strengthen, and sustain relationships among community members. Last, the chair of the LGBTQIA+ committee oversees the deliverables by its three subcommittees, and works with **Enrica Ruggs** (SIOP Diversity and Inclusion Officer), Heather Flattery (SIOP Program Development Manager and Staff Liaison), **Jeff Cucina** (2026 SIOP Program Chair), and **Vipanchi Mishra** (2026 SIOP Program Chair-in-Training).

Recent Initiatives and Accomplishments

Chair

This year, we continued to oversee a research-matching effort, bringing together members of the LGBTQIA+ community with similar interests to collaborate on submissions for the SIOP conference. Furthermore, two newsletters were published in November 2025 and April 2026, where we highlighted recent updates from our committee and our members. This way, members of the LGBTQIA+ community can learn about one another, both as professionals and as people. Last, at this year's SIOP conference, we connected with prospective committee members through the Commons (an engaging space at the SIOP conference providing attendees the opportunity to make new connections or reconnect with past colleagues), hosted a business meeting, and participated in the D&I reception.

Professional-Development Subcommittee

The goal of the professional-development subcommittee was to help develop job-related skills and discuss issues our community faces in the context of career-readiness. Subcommittee members included **Laura Johnson**, Daniel Maday, **Gloria González Morales**, and **Wiston Rodriguez**. Although our primary focus is on LGBTQIA+ individuals, our events are generally open and accessible to all SIOP members, so all are welcome! This year, we have been busy with several different projects. Specifically, we hosted two virtual panel discussions on professional development issues, the first titled "Navigating the Job Market as an LGBTQ+ Person" (January 22, 2026; panel: Angela Acevedo, **Mateo Cruz**, Matt Huston, **Kristen Jaramillo**, and **Ben Spurlock**) and the second titled "Secret Agents of DEI: Doing LGBTQ Work in Today's Climate" (April 14, 2026; panel: **Sabrina Volpone**, **Cindy Dziuba-Liu**, **Larry Martinez**, and **Alexandra Zelin**). Both sessions were enthusiastically received by the audience and were engaging deep dives into current issues faced by LGBTQIA+ professionals in academia and practice. Being LGBTQIA+ in the workplace is a unique experience that comes with additional considerations and challenges—such as shifts in political climate, backlash over DEI initiatives, identity disclosure—that others may not experience (Martinez et al., 2017), so having a space to talk about these topics and connect with others has been invaluable. Our next panel will take place this summer, so please keep your eye out for the announcement. We hope to see you there!

The professional-development subcommittee is also setting the stage for some larger projects. We are developing a mentorship program, which we will pilot in the 2026–2027 academic year. As LGBTQIA+ people, navigating one's career requires thoughtfulness and care. A mentorship program represents a great opportunity for early-career individuals to learn and grow from people who have shared experiences and can share advice. This program will pair early-career LGBTQIA+ individuals, regardless of their career path, with seasoned professionals in the field who match their needs and interests. The program is being developed intentionally, based on four pillars: (a) it is career-oriented, (b) but it is also identity-informed, (c) it is developmental in nature, and (d) it is structured and intentional. We will pair together our mentor-mentee dyads this summer and the program will run from September 2026 through April 2027, with a plan to expand the program next year.

In addition to the mentorship program, the professional-development subcommittee is drafting an alternative development program dubbed "SIOP Uncommons" which seeks to gather interested volunteers for a series of "difficult conversations" accompanied by feedback and coaching. The intent for SIOP Uncommons will be to help refine participant's negotiation skills by role play of hard topics around identity-based accommodations, salary negotiation, and other critical conversations which we often discuss the impacts of but seldom have a chance to experience in a safe, simulated environment. Contact Daniel

Maday with any ideas for difficult conversations that you wish you could have more practice on, and stay tuned for a survey seeking input sometime in the early summer.

Awards Subcommittee

The awards subcommittee oversaw the nomination, review, and selection process for the two awards administered by the LGBTQIA+ committee. Subcommittee members included **Gary Burns** and **Joshua Caraballo**.

The LGBT Research Award: The LGBT Research Award is an annual award recognizing the author(s) of a poster, symposium, or panel that has been accepted to the annual SIOP conference. This award honors scientifically rigorous contributions that further the field's understanding of LGBTQIA+ issues in the workplace. Specifically, the awarded submission would have the potential to advance rigorous, scientifically grounded understanding of LGBTQIA+ workplace experiences by strengthening theory and evidence, ensuring methodological soundness, and providing organizations with practical guidance for improving conditions for LGBTQIA+ employees. The prize for this award is \$1,000, to be split among author(s) or chair(s) as appropriate. This year, three symposium submissions and six poster submissions were eligible for the award. Each reviewer evaluated three submissions, though anything from one to nine was allowed, insofar as all submissions received at least three independent evaluations. The process had overall 10 reviewers who evaluated between three and nine submissions, averaging five reviews each. Each submission received from 4 to 7 ratings, with an average of 5.56 ratings per submission. Among the nine eligible submissions, the awards subcommittee identified **Lindsay Yasmin Dhanani**, **David (Dave) Arena**, and **Matthew Luke Lapalme** for their poster titled "*Controllability as a barrier to deontic responses on behalf of LGBT employees*" as the recipients of this year's LGBT Research Award. The authors found that individuals who believe LGBT identities are a controllable choice show weaker bystander reactions to discrimination, including less anger at perpetrators, less empathy for targets, and less willingness to intervene. They conducted two studies to show that perceived controllability of LGBT identities dampens both emotional and corrective responses.

The LGBTQIA+ Trailblazer Award: The LGBTQIA+ Trailblazer Award is an annual award that recognizes a visionary individual whose unwavering dedication has transformed workplace experiences, championed inclusivity, and driven meaningful advocacy for LGBTQIA+ individuals within organizations. The prize for this award is \$500. This year, we received five exceptional nominations. Rating criteria included the areas of significant contribution, leadership and advocacy, and evidence of impact. All nominees were rated favorably and recognized for their contributions to advancing research and practice in LGBTQIA+ issues. The three members of the awards subcommittee independently completed the ratings; all members confirmed that they had no conflicts of interest. Based on the collective review and ratings, the awards subcommittee ultimately recommended **Brian Roote** as the 2026 LGBTQIA+ Trailblazer Award recipient.

Roote's career reflected a sustained, research-driven commitment to advancing LGBTQIA+ equity within SIOP and across the organizations he has served. As Chair of the SIOP LGBTQIA+ committee in 2010, he led the development and eventual passage of SIOP's first-ever policy statement supporting LGBTQIA+ employee rights. Through two years of strategic coalition-building, individual stakeholder engagement, and extensive benchmarking against APA policy practices, Roote and his team produced a research-grounded document demonstrating how workplace discrimination harms LGBTQIA+ professionals and organizational effectiveness. His leadership helped shift SIOP toward the more active public-policy role it embraces today.

Roote's impact extended well beyond SIOP. At Regeneron, as director of Belonging, Culture and People Insights, he led initiatives that contributed to the company earning a top score on the Human Rights Campaign's 2025 Corporate Equality Index, its first such recognition. He developed an LGBTQ+ equity program that identified gaps in career conversations, trust with managers, and psychological safety; he then built targeted interventions to strengthen inclusion and leadership development. Prior to Regeneron, at Ernst & Young, he supported and expanded ERGs, created a corporate DEI mentoring board, and provided DEI coaching across organizational levels. Across roles, Roote has consistently embedded LGBTQIA+ equity into organizational systems, establishing himself as a thought leader whose work has improved workplace climates and advanced rights for LGBTQIA+ professionals.

Community-Building Subcommittee

The community-building subcommittee aimed to facilitate spaces where I-O psychologists who identify as part of, work with, or support the LGBTQIA+ community can connect. Subcommittee members included **Erica Boucher**, **Ashley Rhodes**, and **David Taullahu**. Although many of us meet at the SIOP conference or through professional networks, opportunities for LGBTQIA+ members and allies to network, foster community, and support each other remain limited. Our goal was to address this by creating accessible, friendly spaces for open conversations and connections.

In this past year, the community-building subcommittee hosted two virtual networking events. The first, on November 24, 2025, brought together about 15 participants in an informal setting for networking, subcommittee updates, and meaningful conversations in both one-on-one and small-group formats. Guided by conversation prompts, participants identified common interests or experiences and reflected on practices that make professional spaces more welcoming for the LGBTQIA+ community, such as including identity-safety cues in the workspace (Johnson et al., 2021) and having allies who have the courage to speak up (Thoroughgood et al., 2021).

The second virtual networking event was held on April 8, 2026, shortly before the SIOP 2026 annual conference, with 10 participants in attendance. This event had a similar purpose and also enabled attendees to connect before meeting in-person at SIOP. At this event, we were especially fortunate to be joined by Brian Roote, this year's SIOP LGBTQIA+ Trailblazer Award recipient. Roote shared reflections on his role in advancing what became SIOP's first policy statement supporting nondiscrimination for LGBTQIA+ individuals in the workplace. He highlighted that when we have clear scientific evidence, I-O psychologists have both the expertise and the responsibility to help shape more equitable workplaces for people from all backgrounds. He also reminded attendees that change within a professional community rarely happens because of one person alone; it emerges through collective effort, thoughtful dialogue, and people's willingness to bring forward ideas that may shape the field in ways they cannot yet anticipate. Participants found Roote's reflections empowering and encouraging.

The discussion also created a space for attendees to brainstorm both the challenges and possibilities involved in supporting the LGBTQIA+ community within SIOP. For example, participants discussed the idea of adding an optional question about sexual orientation to SIOP's demographic surveys, which could potentially help the organization better understand the composition, needs, and diversity of its LGBTQIA+ members. This also echoes the recent call for including sexual orientation or gender identity demographic data on the U.S. STEM workforce (Freeman, 2020). More broadly, the conversation underscored the importance of creating channels for members to share ideas, identify needs, and envision future directions for the organization.

Across both events, participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Attendees especially appreciated the chance to meet other I-O psychologists who are passionate about similar topics, reconnect with familiar colleagues, and have low-pressure, genuine conversations.

Attendees also appreciated the opportunity to meet people they might not otherwise have encountered. For example, in one breakout conversation, a participant who had recently published a book was paired with someone who was reading it, creating an unexpected and memorable connection between the author and the reader. At the same time, the feedback provided us with helpful ideas for future events. In particular, participants expressed interest in seeing more people attend, incorporating fun virtual activities or games, and continuing to refine how we facilitate conversations so that everyone feels comfortable participating.

Looking ahead, we hope to build on these lessons and continue to strengthen LGBTQIA+ community building within SIOP. We would love to see more professional members, student affiliates, and allies join future events, whether they are looking for support, hoping to meet new colleagues, or simply interested in contributing to a more welcoming professional community. We also welcome additional volunteers who would like to help plan and facilitate future community-building activities. These events have reinforced a simple but important reminder: it is important to have spaces where people can connect, be seen, and support one another.

How to Get Involved

There are many ways to get involved with the LGBTQIA+ committee, which include, yet are not limited to, the following means:

- Connecting with the Chair or any committee member.
- Signing up to volunteer on the committee through the SIOP Volunteer System (SVS).
- Submitting a poster, symposium, or panel relevant to LGBTQIA+ issues to the annual SIOP conference.
- Attending our committee's meetings and events (e.g., networking events, or the business meeting and D&I reception at SIOP).
- Serving as a speaker or mentor at one of our events.
- Reviewing for our committee awards.
- Learning more about our committee at the SIOP Commons, on-site at the conference.

Conclusion

We live in a world in which multiple marginalized identities call for meaningful recognition and intentional support. This year, the LGBTQIA+ committee's initiatives—spanning professional development, research advancement, and community building—demonstrate how evidence-based, inclusive practices can be mobilized to enhance belonging, psychological safety, and equitable career development at scale. We feel particularly grateful for the opportunity to reflect on the committee's initiatives and accomplishments in the past year. Looking forward, we will continue to work on, create, and maintain events to ensure an invaluable experience for LGBTQIA+ individuals within SIOP. Ultimately, the LGBTQIA+ committee's work illustrates how I-O psychology can continue to lead in building equitable workplaces where LGBTQIA+ individuals are not only protected but empowered, an aspiration that strengthens both our science and our profession.

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