



National Organization of Gay and Lesbian Scientists and Technical Professionals (NOGLSTP)

by Ruth M. Pettis

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The National Organization of Gay and Lesbian Scientists and Technical Professionals exists to empower lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer careerists and students in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. It offers advocacy, professional development, networking, and peer support to glbtq individuals and enlightens professional communities on homophobia and related issues.

In addition to the national organization there are several affiliated regional groups and caucuses that network within specific disciplines and geographic areas.

NOGLSTP (pronounced "nah'-goal-step") began as a grassroots network to address homophobia in sci-tech workplaces when the issue was raised at the January 1980 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). In 1983, the organization selected its first board of directors, established its membership base, and initiated a newsletter. The group acquired tax-exempt status in October 1985 through the fiscal sponsorship of the Illinois Justice Foundation.

Among NOGLSTP's early activities were surveying the degree of homophobia faced by glbtq workers, particularly in California, and producing educational materials. The group presented its findings at two AAAS national meetings: in a symposium on "Homophobia and Social Attitudes: Their Impact on AIDS Research" (May 1985) and in a session titled "Homophobia in the Scientific Workplace" (January 1989).

In May 1992 NOGLSTP incorporated as a non-profit organization in its own right in California, which enabled it, in 1994, to become a formal affiliate of AAAS.

In 2002 NOGLSTP treasurer Barbara Belmont summarized the organization's mission to interviewer Jennifer Hicks: "Until sexual orientation and gender issues are a non-issue to everybody, there will always be a need for GLBT employee support groups. The reality is that the workplace is an extension of family for most people, and socializing is an important aspect of team building and productivity. Another purpose is to give collective voice and personnel leverage to the often-invisible queer."

Throughout its history the organization has conducted educational sessions for straight colleagues on issues faced by glbtq professionals and has emphasized the need for unbiased research.

At the 1994 AAAS annual meeting NOGLSTP addressed "Social, Ethical, and Scientific Perspectives of Biological Research on Sexual Orientation." Other symposia over the years have addressed security clearance issues for GLBT scientists (2007), mentoring programs (2006 and 2007), defining male and female in the law (2005), and ethical issues in HIV/AIDS treatment (1997). Abstracts for all symposia topics are available on the organization's website.

NOGLSTP also serves glbtq students in the STEM fields. Its mentoring program offers career advice and

addresses issues such as coming out in the workplace. The organization also provides online resume posting and hosts the "Out to Innovate Career Summit," a biennial gathering for students and professionals.

In partnership with the Battelle Memorial Institute, NOGLSTP awards two \$5000 Out To Innovate Scholarships each year, one each at the undergraduate and graduate levels, to STEM students enrolled at U.S.-based institutions.

Its quarterly newsletter addresses topics such as helping dual career couples find employment in the same region, glbtq visibility at professional gatherings, staff and faculty benefits at academic institutions, and inclusion of glbtq issues and needs in health sciences curricula.

Two useful pamphlets are available for downloading at NOGLSTP's website: "Career Opportunities for LGBT STEM Grads" lists companies with GLBT-inclusive policies; "Queer Scientists of Historical Note" gives consciousness-raising visibility to glbtq figures who have contributed to scientific understanding.

Code-breaker Alan Turing, one of the greatest scientists of the twentieth century, paid dearly for his homosexuality. Astronomer Frank Kameny's government career was derailed by McCarthy-era restrictions. In its mission to empower queer people in the STEM fields, NOGLSTP works to ensure that such tragedies do not happen again and that the creativity of glbtq scientists and technicians can flourish.

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About the Author

Ruth M. Pettis is the Oral History Project manager for the Northwest Lesbian and Gay History Museum Project in Seattle and editor of *Mosaic 1: Life Stories*, a collection of stories from the project's oral history collection. She has contributed articles and fiction to a number of gay and women's publications. She has an A.B. in anthropology from Indiana University and an M.L.S. from Simmons College in Boston.