

CENTER FOR LGBTQ+ Research & Advocacy

*CENTER FOR LGBTQ+ RESEARCH & ADVOCACY TO
PROMOTE SOCIAL CHANGE AND IMPROVE LIVES*

Researchers are doing leading-edge work in LGBTQ+ issues in Kansas, but not a lot of people know it – yet. That’s about to change, when the Center for LGBTQ+ Research & Advocacy opens its virtual doors this summer. The Center, housed in the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare, will put Kansas on the map as a hub for research, advocacy, community engagement, education, and scholarship focused on the experiences of sexually and gender diverse populations.

“There are scholars in Kansas who are doing great LGBTQ+ work, but there isn’t an infrastructure that highlights it, makes it more visible, and pulls it all together,” states Megan Paceley, Ph.D. “We are going to put this LGBTQ+ center in Kansas, and that alone feels meaningful. We know that visibility is one step toward decreasing stigma.”

KU School of Social Welfare assistant professors Sarah Jen, Ph.D., Briana McGeough, Ph.D., and Michael Riquino, Ph.D., and associate professor Megan Paceley, Ph.D., have worked together over the past year to develop and launch the Center. All four are researchers whose work includes LGBTQ+ issues.



Sarah Jen



Briana McGeough



Michael Riquino



Megan Paceley



KU
SCHOOL OF
SOCIAL WELFARE
The University of Kansas

Center Opens Summer 2021



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Now, the Center will fuel further scholarship and social change by welcoming researchers from a wide array of academic disciplines, community organizations, and members of the LGBTQ+ community to study issues that impact sexually and gender diverse populations. The overarching goal is to promote social change and improve people’s lives.

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As if being in Kansas isn’t unique enough, the Center for LGBTQ+ Research and Advocacy will be unlike similar researcher centers in several important ways:

INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

McGeough says that LGBTQ+ research centers typically have a narrowly defined focus, such as LGBTQ+ mental or physical health care. The Center will be unusual in that it will have a broad scope and will connect experts in a wide array of fields to work together in new ways to advance scholarship and research.

“We are excited about the possibility of building relationships with folks in the humanities and physical sciences, to have a bigger, broader reach both in terms of the academic disciplines involved and the topics discussed,” she explains.

The Center will also welcome affiliated faculty from a wide array of disciplines. “We don’t want it to just be in the School of Social Welfare,” Paceley says. “We want to include people from across the university, but also faculty who are not in Kansas.”

One advantage of being housed in a large research university is that the Center can help facilitate connections between the resources KU has to offer and the equally valuable but different resources and expertise of other scholars and researchers, community organizations, and LGBTQ+ folks.

COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Center will serve as a connector between academics studying LGBTQ+ issues and the community organizations that serve members of the LGBTQ+ community. “We are trying to prioritize providing research that is relevant to members of the LGBTQ+ community and the organizations that serve them,” McGeough says.

She can see the Center offering services to community organizations such as program evaluations or training opportunities on topics like how to make statistical models or survey questions that are inclusive of LGBTQ+ people.

Paceley envisions one day adding a youth or older adult advisory board, with the goal of having the Center truly be community based and community engaged.

FOSTERING NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION

One big role the Center will play, its founders hope, is to provide a platform for folks to network, to discuss the work they are doing and the ideas they have, to share feedback and successes, and to generate new ideas together.

“There are people doing this work, but it’s hard to find them or make connections or collaborations. That was one of the ideas behind starting the center,” Paceley says. Through the Center, people interested in this field can come together and collaborate.

Now that the Center has launched, the faculty members who dreamed it into being are excited to see it take root, grow, and impact the lives of researchers, communities, and LGBTQ+ folks.

“We put advocacy in the title because we wanted our research to do more than just sit there,” Paceley says. “We wanted to be able to use our research to promote social change and improve the lives of LGBTQ+ people. It’s exciting.”

UNIQUE & COLLABORATIVE

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