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## 500 Queer Scientists: A new campaign for a more inclusive STEM future

**SAN FRANCISCO (June 4, 2018)** – National Pride Month marks the launch of a powerful new visibility campaign for LGBTQ+ people and their allies working in science, science education, and science advocacy: [500 Queer Scientists](#), intended to shine a light on the incredible individuals working in STEM and STEM-supporting jobs. Built on individual, self-submitted stories that raise the visibility of queer scientists and their allies, the movement has three primary goals: to ensure that the next STEM generation has LGBTQ+ role models; to help the current generation recognize they're not alone; and to create a database that helps to facilitate better diversity among speakers and panelists. **Visit [500QueerScientists.com](http://500QueerScientists.com) to read stories or submit one of your own, and join/follow the conversation on Twitter ([@500QueerSci](https://twitter.com/500QueerSci)) and Instagram ([@500queerscientists](https://www.instagram.com/500queerscientists)).**

500 Queer Scientists was started by two scientists at the California Academy of Sciences—entomology curator Dr. Lauren Esposito and infectious disease biologist and science illustrator Sean Edgerton—to help forge connections among LGBTQ+ STEM workers, who often feel isolated or alienated among their colleagues.

A 2013 survey<sup>1</sup> of American STEM workers found that more than 40% of LGBTQ+-identified respondents working in STEM fields are not “out” to their colleagues—a statistic that may be related to the fact that in 28 states, it’s still *legal* for employers to discriminate against someone for their sexual or gender identity.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps even more harrowing is a 2018 study<sup>3</sup> that found undergraduate sexual minority students were 8% less likely to be retained in STEM majors when compared to their heterosexual counterparts.

“Despite the increasing LGBTQ acceptance I’ve experienced in my lifetime,” says Esposito, “I’ve also felt the icy chill of isolation working in a STEM career, and the awkwardness of coming out over and over again in professional settings. Recently, while reading an article about LGBTQ+ experiences in STEM, I was saddened to realize I didn’t even blink an eye when it mentioned that many STEM workers don’t know any other LGBTQ+ workers in their discipline. It’s time for that to change.

“At a time when both the acceptance of LGBTQ people<sup>4</sup> and the perceived value of data-based science are on the decline,” Esposito adds, “I wanted to find a way to band LGBTQ+ STEM workers together to show each other—and the world—that we’re a powerful force for scientific progress, and that we will stand up for science and for LGBTQ+ rights.”

### *A note about names & allies:*

Though an entirely separate group, 500 Queer Scientists found inspiration and a natural ally in the nonprofit 500 Women Scientists, whose mission is to make science open, inclusive, and accessible. With shared goals focused on giving scientists from underrepresented groups a louder, more powerful voice, these two groups have informally partnered to amplify each other’s efforts to change public perceptions about who works in science now, and who can lead a stronger, more inclusive science future.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremy B. Yoder & Allison Mattheis (2016) Queer in STEM: Workplace Experiences Reported in a National Survey of LGBTQA Individuals in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Careers, *Journal of Homosexuality*, 63:1, 1–27, DOI: 10.1080/00918369.2015.1078632

<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Campaign (2018) <http://www.hrc.org/state-maps/employment>

<sup>3</sup> Bryce E. Hughes (2018) Coming out in STEM: Factors affecting retention of sexual minority STEM students. *Science Advances*, 4:3, eaao6373, DOI: 10.1126/sciadv.aao6373

<sup>4</sup> GLAAD (2018) Accelerating Acceptance Report. Available at <https://www.glaad.org/publications/accelerating-acceptance-2018>