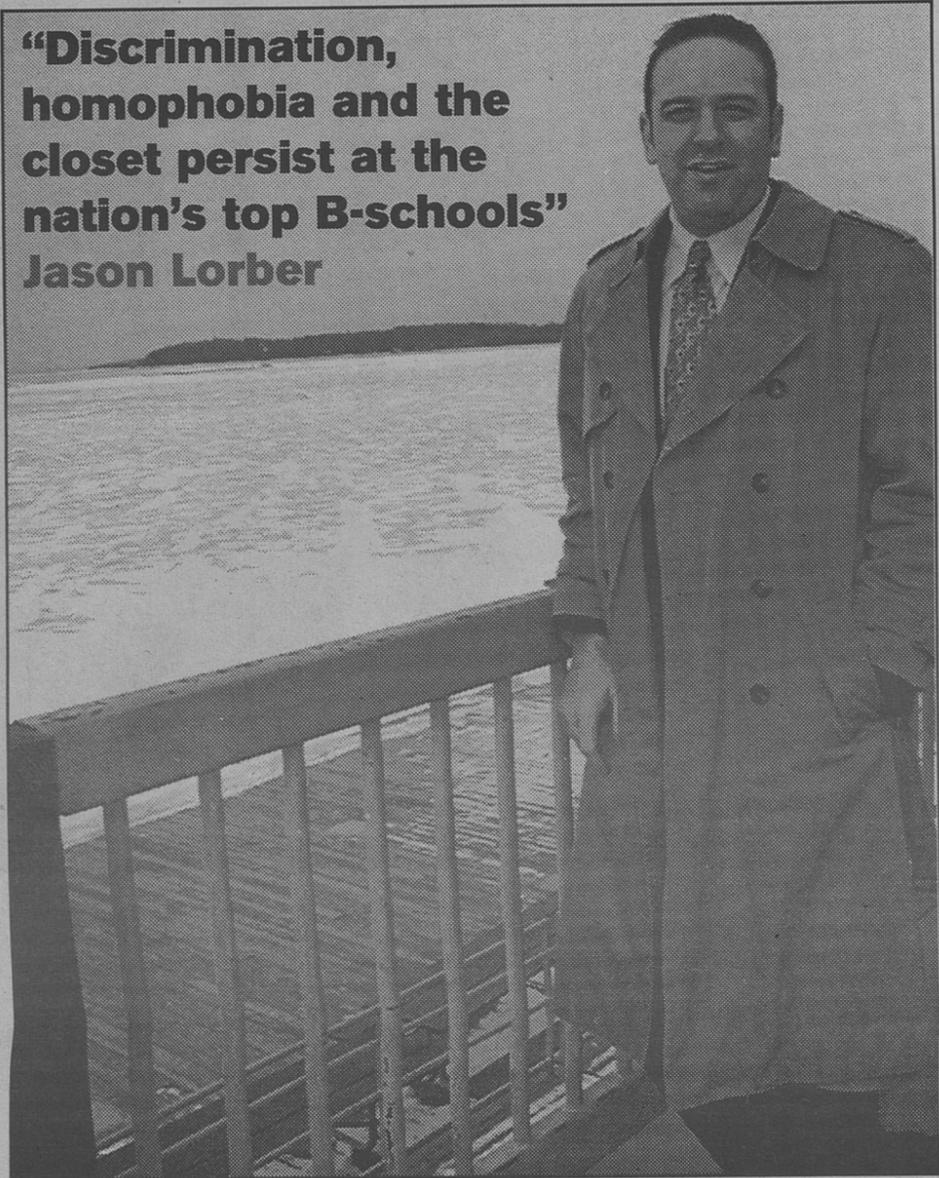


**“Discrimination, homophobia and the closet persist at the nation’s top B-schools”**  
Jason Lorber



## Buying Into Diversity

Consultant Jason Lorber teaches business schools to reap the benefits of gay recruitment

BY EUAN BEAR

Jason Lorber is a man with a mission, a gay man with a mission to show business schools why it’s in their best interests to make their schools glbtq-friendly and recruit glbtq students. He doesn’t wear a cape and tights – well, not during business hours – but he carries the ultimate in weapons: market research.

“I was not just a business major, I wanted to create change,” Lorber said in a recent interview over lunch in Burlington. “I was going to use the fact that I was a gay man at a top business school [Stanford] to dispel the myths and stereotypes – that gay men are all hairdressers and florists or truck drivers.”

He wanted to take a different approach, he said. “How can I get *The New York Times* to report on gay and lesbian issues beyond AIDS and the annual parade,” he asked himself in 1994.

After considering and rejecting a few other ideas, he reasoned that ranking business schools would work, because it makes use of the competitive impulse. But it would be a “business-minded, factual ranking,” not just a survey of how accepted gay students “feel” at their schools. He wanted his project to be a tool that activists could

use, enabling them to ask, “Other schools have these procedures, why don’t we?”

Now, as of December 2002, Lorber’s own national research and consulting firm, Aplomb Consulting – with offices in South Burlington and San Francisco – has updated his original 1995 study to reflect today’s realities. And, while B-schools may never be a warm and fuzzy place for queers, the top schools have improved their glbtq friendliness – at least as measured by the criteria Lorber used.

In 1995, only three schools rated an “A” or an “A-”: Harvard, Stanford, and Yale. In 2002, eight more schools joined them: Pennsylvania’s Wharton (prior grade: B+); Dartmouth’s Tuck (C); Northwestern’s Kellogg (B-); UCLA’s Anderson (B-); Columbia (B-); MIT’s Sloan (D+); UC-Berkeley’s Haas (B-); and the University of Chicago (C-).

Lorber’s 1995 study identified Perdue as the least gay-friendly business school. Perdue’s B-school dean insisted that his school was not anti-gay. “We don’t discriminate against anybody,” the dean was quoted in a 1995 *Business Week* article on the study.

In 2002 Perdue didn’t make the list. The new goat is the Kenan-Flager School of Business at the University of North Carolina. Carnegie Mellon and

Cornell both slid to a D, worse than their previous grades in the study.

Other schools in the 2002 study included Indiana (B+), NYU (B+), Michigan (B), Texas (B-), Duke (C), USC (C-), and Virginia (C-). The University of Vermont’s business school, with 70-75 students, was not surveyed.

The study examined schools and awarded points based on ten criteria: whether the school had a sexual orientation nondiscrimination policy (45 points), an lgbtq business school student organization (10 points), specific lgbtq job recruiting opportunities (10 points), domestic partner benefits for staff and faculty (5 points) and for students (5 points), whether lgbtq information was included in admissions materials (7.5 points), if there were any openly lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender professors (5 points), if an undergraduate lgbtq student organization existed on campus (5 points), whether there was a business school lgbtq alumni organization (2.5 points) or general university lgbtq alumni organization (2.5 points), and whether transgender people were included in policies or represented on campus (2.5 points). A perfect score would be 100 points.

The “A”-list schools all scored at least 93.75 points, with the highest score being 97.5 (Harvard, Stanford, and the University of Pennsylvania). MIT’s Sloan School made the biggest move upward, rising from a D+ grade to an A.

According to UVM School of Business Administration Dean Rocki-Lee DeWitt, UVM doesn’t specifically recruit lgbtq students. “We’re the university,” she

university supports the Center for Cultural Diversity, where glbtq students – primarily undergraduates – find a welcome. Admissions materials for UVM’s undergraduate colleges include mention of lgbtq issues and policies, but the online admissions materials for the business school do not.

Accordingly, UVM’s small business school would appear to score a 67.5 on Lorber’s survey, a D+.

DeWitt suggested that perhaps some of the policies and procedures listed in the survey could be instituted, given time, but the business school has just begun the process of raising a \$15 million endowment fund and does not want to alienate potential donors by emphasizing lgbtq-friendly policies.

Lorber makes the case that major corporations – Deloitte, Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan Chase, Motorola, and Hewlett-Packard, among others – are looking to hire the best lgbtq B-school students. Target marketing beyond booze and cigarettes has at last come to recognize the gay market as a lucrative one, with brand-loyal consumers. Likewise, some *Fortune* 500 companies recognize the power of affinity groups among employees to increase employee satisfaction and production. According to the 2002 Aplomb report, 71 percent of the business schools surveyed had hosted employers who were specifically recruiting lgbt students.

Are we there yet? If “there” is absolute equality, the answer is no. Some schools offer health or life insurance, tuition assistance, or housing only to heterosexual student spouses. Out professors and students make up less than 2 percent of the population at any given business school. Or as Lorber writes, “discrimination, homophobia and the closet persist at the nation’s top B-schools.”

But are we getting there? That answer, says Lorber, is a qualified yes. As more lgbtq students and faculty are comfortable being out at their schools, more of us – and more schools – will recognize opportunities in business careers and demand lgbtq-friendly policies, benefits, and opportunities. In order to compete, schools will have to evaluate their own standing and make changes to catch up.

If “there” is Lorber’s personal goal of getting national press and the leverage to pressure top business schools to move toward lgbtq-friendliness, the answer is definitely yes.

“And with capitalist competition to fuel the flame,” concluded Lorber, we should “expect the trend toward increasing lgbtq-friendliness to gain momentum.” ▼

### Top 10 GLBTQ-friendly Business Schools:

- ▼ Harvard
- ▼ Stanford
- ▼ Yale
- ▼ Pennsylvania
- ▼ Dartmouth
- ▼ Northwestern
- ▼ UCLA
- ▼ Columbia
- ▼ MIT
- ▼ UC-Berkeley
- ▼ Chicago.