

Nurturing an Inclusive Environment in Division 1 Athletics Programs

By Erin Simpson, Director of the Gender + Equity Center

In the past year, the Athletics Department subcommittee for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion has nurtured affirming and safe environments for LGBTQ+ student-athletes, fans, and community members. They have hosted trainings and book clubs, launched working groups aimed at inclusion, and developed a fan code of conduct that makes the values of OU Athletics explicit.

Their work was acknowledged by the [Athlete Ally](#), a national non-profit group with the mission of “end the rampant homophobia and transphobia in sport and to activate the athletic community to exercise their leadership to champion LGBTQI+ equality.”

In their 2021 national score of Division 1 athletics programs, the University of Oklahoma Athletics Department scored an 85/100, marking a 30 point increase in just one year.

Institutions are scored on the following policy criteria: policies that protect sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression; policies that protect transgender varsity student-athletes; policies that protect LGBTQ student-athletes against sexual assault; and a fan code of conduct that protects LGBTQ athletes, staff, and spectators. In addition to the policies, practices and resources are evaluated as well: departmental LGBTQ educational resources; departmental collaboration with LGBTQ campus group; and departmental training for staff and student-athletes.