



# Queer U 2011: The promise and praxis of “making it better”



As part of Outweek (Feb 7-11), Pride UBC is organizing a **student academic panel** in which students from all over the university can present their work on queer and trans issues to a broad audience. The goal of this panel is **showcase the work being done at UBC in the area of sexuality(ies) and gender(s)** in various faculties.

The recent wave of gay teen suicides in the United States has awakened a new consciousness amongst North Americans that queer children are still growing up in an heteronormative environment in which their lives are not validated and homophobic bullying is allowed to persist. In the wake of these tragedies, sex columnist Dan Savage started the “It gets better” campaign to reach out to queer teens and tell them that life gets better after high school and is worth sticking around for. This message speaks to students working in the area of sexuality(ies) and gender(s), as they are all too aware of the marginalization experienced by those who challenge heteronormative norms.

But beyond sympathy, it is our desire to see social transformation that motivates our research. Even when our academic work does not directly concern youth, we often hope that it can help make the lives of tomorrow's queer youth better. In a world where discussions of diverse sexualities and genders are still infrequent, and the invisibility of queerness participates in leaving queer people feeling isolated, solid academic research that brings these topics to the fore has the potential to make a difference. We are trying to do more than tell youth to hold on until it gets better; we are working to make it better.

Although the theme for the panel is broad and we welcome contributions from all students who do work on sexuality(ies) and gender(s), in any national context, we encourage submissions that reflect on the potential for social transformation in their work, the increasing visibility of young people in the queer community, and the role of queer research in bridging the gap between researchers and the communities that they study.

If interested, send in a short (200 word MAX.) abstract outlining the paper or presentation to [helenefd@gmail.com](mailto:helenefd@gmail.com), **no later than December 15, 2010.**

*The Queer U academic panel is open to the general public. It will take place on Tuesday, February 8 from 4-6pm and will be immediately followed by a Wine & Cheese reception (19+).*