Introducing Brian Dodge, the new director of the Institute for LGBT Studies

Research, Innovation & Impact
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In July, the University welcomed Brian Dodge in his dual roles as director of the Institute for LGBT Studies in the Office for Research, Innovation and Impact and as professor of public health in the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health.

As a part of RII, the Institute for LGBT Studies brings people and ideas together to conduct LGBTQ+ research, design relevant curricula and develop programming.

Dodge was scheduled to join Sharon Collinge, the new director of the Arizona Institute for Resilient Environments and Societies, for the Sept. 26 "Convo with Cantwell." The panel discussion with Elizabeth "Betsy" Cantwell, senior vice president for research and innovation, focused on their visions for their units. register for future panels and watch previous editions on the RII website.

Dodge’s move from Indiana to Tucson started with a lesson in community when disaster struck on move-in day. It was 110 degrees when Ricky, his family’s beloved Italian greyhound, made his escape out the front door and went missing for almost 12 hours. Luckily, local friends and total strangers rallied around the family, posting to social media and distributing flyers. Finally, around midnight, a University security officer called to say he’d spotted Ricky by Arizona Stadium – he’d crossed both Speedway and Campbell – and Dodge was able to rush out the door and bring Ricky home.

"I have never seen a community pull together in such a way and we feel blessed to call it our home," Dodge says, adding that Ricky is currently in training and busy being a very good boy.

With his first major challenge behind him, Lo Que Pasa asked him four questions about his plans as he settles into his new roles.

**What is your specific area of expertise and what drew you to it?**

I focus on the health and well-being among diverse bisexual individuals and communities. For decades, we have seen disparities among sexual minority individuals relative to heterosexual individuals in rates of negative health outcomes including depression, anxiety, suicidality and a wide range of other concerns. Interestingly, when we look within sexual minority groups, we find that the disparities are often highest among bisexual individuals relative to exclusively gay or lesbian individuals. My work has focused on trying to understand the unique issues faced by bisexual individuals in terms of their health and how we might intervene to improve well-being.

**What is your vision for iLGBT?**

Having just arrived at the institute, I am still becoming familiarized with the past and present mission and vision. I am eager to continue working with the institute faculty to determine the future vision and to foster collaborative engagement among all stakeholders – faculty, students and community partners. The institute has great potential for expanding our service as a resource for LGBTQ+-related scholarly activity, education and advocacy, and I am eager to work to the best of my abilities to achieve this.

**What is your first priority for change or specific goals you are targeting in the near term?**

In addition to the global trauma from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, including isolation and disconnection, the institute has gone through a period of leadership changes. One of my first priorities is to connect with institute faculty and provide opportunities for constituents to reengage. Together, we are processing where we have been and where we are now in terms of current priorities and programming. This collaborative process will determine how we go forward, including potential new directions. This will, of course, be a long-term process that can only be accomplished with actively engaging all affiliates of the institute, as well as the broader University and local community partners.

**How can faculty partner with you?**

Interested faculty, students and community-based individuals can partner with me simply by reaching out and sending me an email – and I ask that they do! As a collaborative person by nature, I enjoy working with people across disciplines within the University setting as well as in the broader community. I am still settling into Tucson and getting to know the lay of the land so collaboration will also help me get to know the community. I am standing by and eager to connect with potential new partners for LGBTQ+ research, education and advocacy, and to collaborate or help in any way that I am able. My email address is bmdodge@arizona.edu.

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