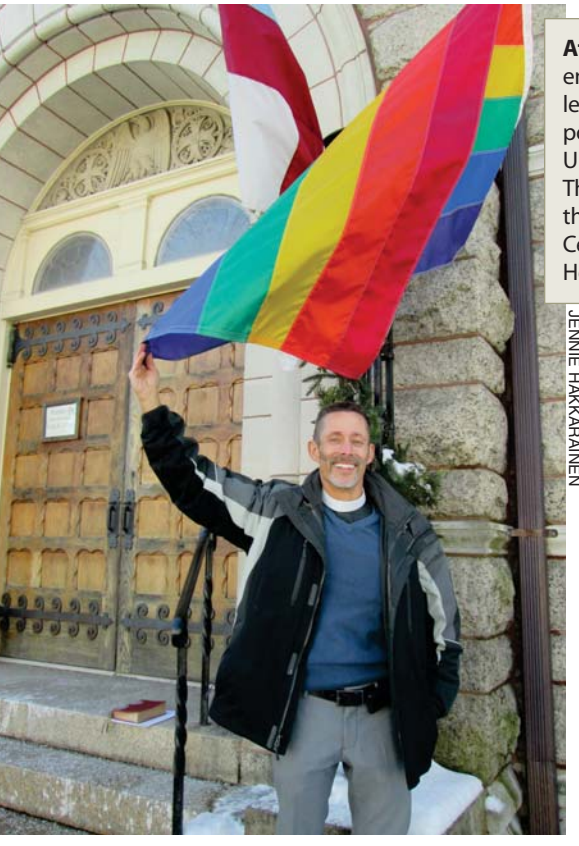

JENNIE HAKKARAINEN

After experiencing unwelcoming environments, Michael Ramsey-Musolf left three tenure-track and tenured positions before arriving at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. The openly gay nuclear and particle theorist is director of the Amherst Center for Fundamental Interactions. He is also an Episcopal priest.

whether their university or company offers benefits to partners, and what their health insurance provides. Some employers offer health plans for pets but not for same-sex partners. Long notes that only 32 US colleges offer transgender-related health care for employees. Many plans won't pay for treatments for transgender individuals, even for health issues unrelated to their transition.

On a policy level, the most important issue for LGBT physicists is employment discrimination, Long says. Other issues range from obtaining visas for same-sex partners from other countries to ensuring a work environment is friendly to LGBT employees. For trans people, problems can arise in seemingly simple things like handling name changes on publications and finding bathrooms they can comfortably use.

One problem that a lot of LGBT people face, says Tim Atherton, an assistant professor at Tufts University who is serving on the APS committee, "is that they are carrying their identity as LGBT, and maybe also as a minority or a female, in one basket and identity as a physicist in another basket. They need to be properly integrated for one to be most productive." Life is stressful, Atherton continues. "Research funding is terrible for everyone. I have no time for the added stress [of not being out]. And I am at a supportive institution. What [LGBT physicists] are asking for from everybody is empathy and recognition that some people have had negative experiences. Maybe we can collectively be a bit nicer."

Michael Ramsey-Musolf, a theoretical physicist at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, says he puts a rainbow flag on the first slide of every talk he gives. "It is a small but concrete action we can take to enhance visibility and raise awareness." For his and other personal stories of LGBT physicists, see the Singularities department on PHYSICS TODAY's website.

The committee invites readers to send comments, suggestions, and concerns to lgbtcontact@aps.org.

Toni Feder

news notes

Teaching high school physics. An estimated 27 000 teachers at US high schools taught at least one physics course in the 2012–13 academic year. That's remained flat in recent years, but is up 10 000 from 25 years earlier.

The education level of high school physics teachers has inched up in that time. In 1987, 37% had a bachelor's as their highest degree, compared with 31% in 2013, but for master's and PhD degrees those numbers grew, from 59% to 63% and 4% to 6%, respectively. Among the 27 000 teachers, about 8000 hold a degree in physics or physics education and most of the rest hold a degree in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics or in a related education field. The proportion of female high school physics teachers has grown steadily, from 23% in 1987 to 37% in 2013.

Those and other data were collected by the Statistical Research Center of the American Institute of Physics in a survey of 3500 high schools across the US (Hawaii opted out). More details can be found in two recent reports, *Who Teaches High School Physics?* and *What High School Physics Teachers Teach*, available online at http://www.aip.org/statistics/highschool. **TF** ■