



## Interview Questions for Current Campus Organizers

### Part I: Getting Acquainted

**1. Can you introduce yourself with your name, pronouns, and class year?**

Autumn Johnson, they/them, 2025.

**2. What do your queer identities mean to you?**

More than anything, they mean community. One of the most powerful things about queer communities is their ability to care for one another. I think the shared understanding of suffering and endurance and of being othered ignites such a strong reaction of spiteful resilience and joy. I love my family and they support and accept me, but my queer found family is able to see and celebrate me in a way that I know they would never understand.

### Part II: Campus Life

**1. What impact does being at Barnard have on the way you understand and/or explore your identities?**

I was definitely intimidated at first. I'm from a small town where everybody knows each other and families have lived there for generations, so coming to the city for college allowed me anonymity to an almost overwhelming extent. I was constantly going back and forth between feeling insecure in loneliness and confident in being independent, which I think is an almost universal college experience.

Everything changed when I met my friend group. I don't have the words to describe what it was like to meet them and, in hearing about their experiences, instantly identify a piece of myself that had been dormant for so long. They're all Columbia students- which is an insignificant detail that I mention only because I believe they're the kinds of students that Barnard would benefit from. Some of them had even expressed an interest in applying to Barnard instead of CC/SEAS, but were deterred by the infamous CommonApp "verify that you consistently live and identify as a woman" checkbox.

### Part III: Organizing

**1. What kind of organizing are you involved with on campus?**

**a. How does your organizing intersect with queerness/transness on campus?**

**2. What work needs to be done to strengthen the queer community at Barnard?**



I think that, generally speaking, the queer community at Barnard is lacking the sense of care that I had mentioned before. In my experiences, it very much feels like there is a specific queerness that people are willing to tolerate/expect you to conform to. It seems like even within the queer community, the more white, woman-aligned, thin, and/or affluent you are, the more palatable and accepted you will be in social circles. I recall someone who I interacted with during my freshman year, who just so happened to check all of the previously mentioned boxes, scoffing when they heard that someone who identified as a lesbian used he/him pronouns. That just felt really gross. We need to be looking out for each other, not creating internal divides.

**a. Within your circles on campus, how do conversations around queerness navigate non-cisgender identities?**

A majority of my friends are trans/nonbinary, so any conversations we have around queerness reflect this. I know a lot of them label their sexualities as t4t. Very broadly speaking, I think the queer community at Barnard has a habit of being very accepting towards different sexualities while shying away from non-cis identities. For example, if someone were to say that they identified as a lesbian nobody would bat an eye- if they were to identify as a nonbinary lesbian, though, I'm certain that it would turn some heads.

Part IV: Joy

**1. How, if at all, does the term 'queer joy' resonate with you?**

Queer joy is my friends and I experiencing all of the cheesy high school cliches in college because we finally have people to share them with. It's being able to share fundamental truths about yourself without being met with a flinch or a frown. I don't know. It's also a lot of little things. Looking in the mirror and smiling because your hair is sitting just right, saying something and liking the sound of your voice.

**2. Can you tell me about a time you've experienced queer/trans joy during your undergrad experience? (This experience does not have to have to be directly affiliated with Barnard.)**

Haha, yes. I was in Pret a Manger with my friend Leo. We were sitting and waiting for our drinks when somebody came in to fundraise for a local basketball team. After asking Leo, the man turned to me and asked, "What about you, buddy?" It sounds so silly, but I think what was really affirming about that experience was that I totally wasn't expecting it. I hadn't made a conscious effort to present more androgynous/masculine that day. It was really just about a stranger perceiving me in a way that I was comfortable with without me having to put effort into achieving it.