Best Practices for Supporting Trans College Students Today

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Basic Assumptions

- Where institutions themselves are asking about gender, trans students should have the option to self-identify.
- Students’ gender identities should be respected, regardless of assigned gender or transition plans/status.
- Institutional policies and resources should be trans-inclusive, regardless of the number of “out” trans students.
Benefits to the Campus

- Create a positive climate in which students can come out.
- Foster a safe learning environment for all students.
- Prepare for meeting the needs of gender-nonconforming students now, rather than deny services or respond to incidents reactively in the future.
Campus Queer: The Experiences and Needs of LGBTQ+ College Students

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Work by Yulonda Rios
How Colleges Fail Non-Binary Trans Students

1. Providing Gender-Inclusive Bathrooms
2. Recognizing that Pronouns Matter
3. Expanding Name and Gender Marker Options on Records
4. Offering Gender-Inclusive Housing
5. Raising Awareness and Education
Gender-Inclusive Bathrooms (GIB)

- “Gender-inclusive” and not “gender-neutral” (a bathroom open to people of all genders).

- Mentioned by the most interviewees: few campuses had a significant number of gender-inclusive bathrooms, and these bathrooms were not always well-marked and in convenient locations.

- Some students could give the exact number and location of the GIBs on their campus, as these were the only bathrooms they would use.
Addressing Bathrooms

Title IX requires that colleges allow trans people to use the facilities that correspond to their gender identity without regard to transition status.

Have a written bathroom policy that protects trans students from discrimination. Sample policy:

“The University of Massachusetts, Amherst strives to create and sustain a campus environment that supports and values all members of our community. One aspect of creating a supportive environment is providing safe, accessible, and convenient bathroom facilities. Students, staff, faculty, and campus guests should use the bathroom facilities that correspond to their sex or gender identity, or utilize bathrooms that are designated gender-neutral or gender-inclusive.”
Addressing Bathrooms

▼ Have single-occupancy men’s and women’s restrooms converted into gender-inclusive ones by installing locks and changing signs.

▼ Have a policy requiring at least one gender-inclusive restroom in all newly constructed or significantly renovated buildings, including residence halls.

▼ Have gender-inclusive restrooms in at least half of the administrative and academic buildings on campus (standard of the Campus Pride Index).
Addressing Bathrooms

- Have bathroom signs that do not use male and female stick figures (could just say “restroom”)
- Have an online list/map of campus gender-inclusive bathrooms.
Pronouns Matter

▼ Pronoun examples: he/him; she/her; they/them; ze/hir (not “male” or “female” pronouns).

▼ They are the pronouns that I use, not my “preferred” pronouns.

▼ Only a few colleges currently have a process to indicate pronouns on records.

▼ Almost all of the non-binary gender interviewees said that pronouns were not asked by faculty in any of their classes, including in Women and Gender Studies.

▼ Many did not feel comfortable approaching a professor with their pronouns.
Addressing Pronouns

▼ Require all faculty to attend a non-binary trans training session.

▼ Encourage faculty to have a name and pronoun policy and to have it on their syllabi.

“Names and Pronouns: Everyone has the right to be addressed and referred to by the name and pronouns that correspond to their gender identity, including the use of gender-inclusive pronouns. Class rosters have a student’s legal first name, unless they have entered a preferred/chosen first name on SPIRE. Pronouns are not included on rosters, so students will be asked to indicate the pronouns that they use for themselves whenever they are asked to share their names. A student’s chosen name and pronouns are to be respected at all times in the classroom.”
Addressing Pronouns

▼ Faculty who teach a large-sized class (where students would not introduce themselves) should avoid referring to students by assumed gender or pronouns.

▼ Meetings of committees and student groups should also have people indicate their pronouns along with their names.

▼ Have pronouns on name tags and in email signatures.

▼ Set an example to others by introducing yourself with the pronouns you use.
Name and Gender Marker on Records

▼ Few students could use their chosen first name (not “preferred” name) on campus records.

▼ Even fewer students could indicate their gender identity on campus records (which is especially important for housing, locker rooms, and bathrooms).

▼ Even where students could change the gender marker, it was only from one binary choice to the other.
Addressing Name and Gender Marker Change

- Enable students to have a name other than their legal first name on institutional documents (ID cards, class rosters, directory listings, unofficial transcripts, diplomas, etc.) and to make this change themselves online. This should be the only name that appears.

- Have more than “M/F” as choices on forms and records, including admissions applications.
Addressing Name and Gender Marker Change

Suggested wording for admissions and other forms:

Gender identity (optional; choose all that apply):
__ agender
__ androgyne
__ demigender
__ genderqueer or gender fluid
__ man
__ questioning or unsure
__ trans man
__ trans woman
__ woman
__ additional gender category/identity: please specify _____________
__ prefer not to disclose
Addressing Name and Gender Marker Change

Have an explanation of the question:

This information is used for ___________________________.
• Only (name of offices) will have access to this information
• Your responses will be kept private and secure.
• The information will not be used for a discriminatory purpose.
• You can change this information in the future by ________________.

If that is too many choices, then be sure to include:

• Trans woman
• Trans man
• Non-binary (genderqueer, gender fluid, agender, etc.)
• Another identity, please specify ________________
Gender-Inclusive Housing (GIH)

▼ Most of the campuses did not offer gender-inclusive housing (housing in which students are assigned to rooms without regard to gender) that is open to both incoming and returning students.

▼ A few campuses that offered GIH had set it up poorly, either because of a laborious assignment process or an inappropriate facility.

▼ Rarely does a campus offer GIH in all residence halls and in all types of housing (doubles, suites, and apartments).
Addressing Housing

- Enable students to indicate their gender identity on their housing application.
- Offer gender-inclusive housing that is open to both incoming and returning students.

✓ Recognize that GIH is not the same as trans housing.
✓ It should be offered in different parts of campus and, if possible, in different types of housing (doubles, suites, apartments).
✓ GIH should include gender-inclusive bathrooms/showers.
Addressing Housing

▼ Move away from having “single-sex” residence halls or floors.

▼ Offer gender-inclusive bathrooms and shower rooms beyond GIH.

▼ Require residence life staff to regularly offer activities and post educational material to raise residents’ awareness of trans experiences.
Raising Awareness

▼ Require all Student Affairs staff, Public Safety officers, and other front-line personnel to regularly attend a training session about trans topics.

▼ Incorporate gender identity topics into orientation sessions for new students, staff, and faculty.

▼ Have an online campus resource guide for new and prospective trans students.

▼ Regularly sponsor non-binary trans speakers and performers.
Additional Best Policies & Practices

Work by Yulonda Rios
Health Services

- Enable trans students to self-identify on health care forms.

- Make sure that the campus health and counseling center staff are knowledgeable about the specific needs and experiences of trans students.

- Offer a support group that assists students in the process of acknowledging and disclosing their trans identities.
Health Services

- Develop and make available a list of area therapists experienced in working with trans people.

- Offer a student health insurance policy which covers ongoing counseling, hormones, and gender-affirming surgeries for trans students who need such health care.

At least 68 colleges cover hormones and gender-affirming surgeries for students and 20 cover just hormones.
Student Activities

- Educate fraternities and sororities and other gender-segregated student organizations about the rights of trans students to participate in keeping with the institution’s nondiscrimination policy and Title IX.


- Create a Web-based campus resource guide for new and prospective trans students.

- Include trans-focused and trans-inclusive programs as part of general campus programming.
Athletics

The NCAA’s Policy: All About the “T”

- “A trans male (female to male) student-athlete who has received a medical exception for treatment with testosterone for gender transition may compete on a men’s team but is no longer eligible to compete on a women’s team without changing the team status to a mixed team. A mixed team is eligible only for men’s championships.”

- “A trans female (male to female) student-athlete being treated with testosterone suppression medication for gender transition may continue to compete on a men’s team but may not compete on a women’s team without changing it to a mixed team status until completing one calendar year of documented testosterone-suppression treatment.”
Athletics

- Develop a policy for trans students to compete in intramurals.

✓ UMass Amherst policy:

“When an activity makes a gender designation, an individual who has transitioned to a different gender can participate in the division of the individual’s current gender. If an individual is in the process of transitioning to a different gender, participation in a particular gender designated activity will be handled on a case-by-case basis.”
In the Classroom

- Do not assume that everyone in the classroom identifies as cisgender or is traditionally gendered.
- Where relevant, encourage the discussion of trans topics in your courses.
- Do not rely on trans students to initiate discussions on trans topics.
- Use trans-inclusive materials and examples in all kinds of classes, not just the Humanities.
- Correct students who use trans-exclusive language and challenge anti-trans comments.
- Encourage students to do research on trans topics.
- Show support for trans students and events.
Specific Best Policies & Practices

Campus Pride Trans Policy Clearinghouse: http://www.campuspride.org/tpc

LGBT-Friendly Campus Pride Index: http://www.campusprideindex.org

Questions?

Feel free to email me:

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