

AFFIRMING AND INCLUSIVE SUPPORT FOR TRANSGENDER STUDENTS

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Presented by:

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SOME THINGS TO NOTE

- This presentation will be given from the lens that no one in the audience is transgender themselves (which absolutely may not be true)
- Judgement-free safe space – What is said here, stays here
- Challenging your world view can be uncomfortable – keep an open mind
- If someone asks a question that appears offensive please assume the best intentions – we are all here to learn and mistakes may happen
- I speak in support of this community not for them

BY THE END OF THIS PRESENTATION YOU WILL...

- Gain familiarity with some commonly used terms and comfortability using them
- Have some strategies for what to do if a student approaches you about preferred names and pronouns
- Leave with a few tips for being an effective trans* ally and some free resources you can share with students

“Advisors have a central role to play
in creating campus environments
that can support the complexity of
people’s experience.”

– NACADA

IS THIS A TREND?!

- Apparent explosion of labels regarding gender non-conformity and sexual orientations in our current college age population – aren't we all just people?
- International Day of Trans Visibility March 31st (est. 2009)
- National Transgender Day of Remembrance November 20th (est. 1999)

SO WHAT DOES TRANSGENDER MEAN?

- It's an umbrella term that covers anyone who does not conform to typical gender societal norms. Also known as **gender non-conforming** or **gender-variant**.
- Most people typically picture a white, middle aged man who feels he was “born in the wrong body” and wants to get surgery to physically turn into a woman. You don't have to do any hormone treatments or surgeries to be transgender!

BIOLOGICAL SEX

- **Sex**– Biological classification assigned at birth based on genitals and chromosomes. This is usually seen as a binary – just male and female even though there are variations! Picture it as a spectrum.
- **Intersex**– individuals born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. **(1 in 100)**

GENDER

- **Gender**– A socially constructed state of being male or female (typically used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones). This is also typically seen through a binary lens – one that assumes there are only two genders. There are actually a wide range of genders!
- **Non-binary** –Refers to people with a gender that blends elements of being a man or a woman, or a gender that is different than either male or female.

GENDER

- **Agender** – No gender.
- **Genderfluid** – Gender changes and is not set.
- **Genderqueer** – This term is used by people who want to identify as having a non-normative gender of some kind, but don't wish to be specific about it.

GENDER

- **Gender Roles** are the behaviors expected of a person as the prevailing cultural norms deemed appropriate.
- **Gender Identity** – A person's inner sense of being masculine, feminine, or other/non-gendered regardless of physical characteristics. **NOTE:** Non-binary people are typically not intersex: they're usually born with bodies that may fit typical definitions of male and female, but their innate gender identity is something other than male or female.

GENDER

- **Gender Expression** – The way a person outwardly demonstrates their gender identity. May differ based on if the person is “out” or not. Usually measured on that binary scale of masculinity/femininity.
- **Androgyne** – A person appearing androgynous, as neither man nor woman, presenting an indeterminate gender either mixed or neutral.

GENDER

- **Cis/ Cisgender** – Someone who feels comfortable with the gender identity and gender expression expectations based on sex assigned at birth (which was due their external physical sex characteristics).
 - Origin is from the Latin-derived prefix cis-, meaning "on this side of", which is the opposite of trans-, meaning "across from" or "on the other side of". This usage can be seen in the cis-trans distinction in chemistry.

I THOUGHT TRANS MEANT TRANSITIONING!

This a term primarily used to refer to the process a gender variant person undergoes when changing their physical appearance to either be more congruent with the gender/sex they feel themselves to be and/or to be in harmony with their preferred gender expression. **It is important to note that just because a person is trans* does not mean they are seeking to transition.**

- **FtM or MtF** – These are abbreviations for female to male or male to female transitions.
- **AFAB & AMAB** – Assigned female at birth; Assigned male at birth

TRANS* FLAG

Now the Pride Flag should make more sense!

Traditional color for boys

Traditional color for girls

Intersex, transitioning, or neutral or undefined gender

**Whichever way you fly it, it is always correct
signifying finding correctness in their lives**

THESE ARE NOT REAL TERMS

- **TRANSGENDERS**
- **TRANSGENDEREDS**
- **TRANSGENDERISM**

And people are not “a transgender”. Instead of saying “I have a transgender in my class” it would be “I have a transgender person in my class”.





TRANS* WORDS TO AVOID

- **TRANVESTITE** is an outdated term that was used for people deemed to have a mental disorder because they cross-dressed.
- **TRANSEXUAL** is also outdated and referred to a person who emotionally and psychologically felt they are a different sex than the one they were assigned at birth – often seeking to align their gender identity and physical sex through **genital affirmation surgeries**. (No longer called “**sex changes**”)
- **TRANNY**, “HE/SHE”, “SHE-MALE”, “SHIM” and “IT” are derogatory terms for a transgender person.

*(Also – **Hermaphrodite** is an old term for Intersex)*

NOT SYNONYMS! (BUT CAN BE TRANS* PEOPLE)

These terms are not ones to necessarily be avoided, but need to be clarified:

DRAG QUEEN/KING is a person who uses clothing and makeup to imitate and often exaggerate gender signifiers or gender roles in a temporary, deliberate performance of gender for entertainment purposes.

CROSSDRESSER is usually used (but not always) to refer to cisgender, heterosexual men who wear clothing and accessories that are considered feminine or associated with women. It is done for fun, political motives, sexual reasons, or to entertain.

JUST TO CLEAR THINGS UP...

If someone identifies as trans*, that is completely irrelevant to their **sexual orientation**. There are many complex layers to every individual identity!



SO WHY IS THE "T" IN LGBT IF IT'S NOT TECHNICALLY A SEXUAL ORIENTATION?!

- Approximately 65 to 75% of the transgender population identifies with a sexual orientation that is non-heteronormative, so there is quite a bit of overlap.
- Transgender people were a big part of the historical gay rights movements of the 60s and 70s.
- Unfortunately, those who discriminate against people based on visible gender expressions that violate societal norms often do not know the difference between "LGB or T" people. This lead to a commonality in oppression that sexual orientation and gender minorities share.

PRONOUNS

	Subject	Object	Pronoun	Pronunciation
Gender Binary	she	her	hers	as it looks
	he	him	his	as it looks

These pronouns immediately assign a gender to the person you are speaking to or about.

Even if you are fairly confident that you can “tell” what pronouns someone uses based on their appearance, provide an opportunity for them to explain their correct pronouns. In fact, even someone you know well may have changed theirs since you last saw them!

GENDER NEUTRAL PRONOUNS

As of September 2019 “They” has been officially recognized as a grammatically correct singular pronoun!

Listen carefully to hear how a student refers to themselves. If you struggle to remember their pronoun, the next best thing is to simply call the student the name by which they wish to be known. It comes down to respecting them, not your own comfort.

	they*	them*	their*	as it looks
Gender Neutral	ze	hir	hirs	zhee, here, heres
	ze	zir	zirs	zhee, zhere, zheres
	xe	xem	xyr	zhee, zhem, zhere
	<i>*used as singular</i>			

WAYS TO BE AFFIRMING AND INCLUSIVE

- Introduce yourself and provide your preferred pronouns "Hi, I'm Dr. Smith and I use the pronouns he and him." This sends the message that you are not making assumptions about anyone's gender, and that people are free to self-identify.
- If you have to call out names for attendance, use last names only.
- Know where the gender-neutral or single stall bathrooms are on campus and point them out in your syllabus or at the start of your workshop etc.
- Give students the opportunity to fill out a form on paper or online that asks them for preferred name and pronouns. Make note so you can remember – even if they have chosen not to change their name officially with the college. Do NOT require anyone to say their pronouns out loud in front of a group – they may not be out.

WAYS TO BE AFFIRMING AND INCLUSIVE

- In a group setting, address the room with inclusive terms:
 - Hello Everyone! or Hi Folks! vs. Hey Guys!
 - Welcome, it's great to see so many people here! vs. Welcome Ladies and Gentleman!
- Assume there is a transgender person in every group of people – there is no way to “tell”.
- Identify people by articles of clothing instead of using gendered language. For example, the "person in the blue shirt," instead of the "young lady in the front." Similarly, "Sir" and "Madam" are best avoided.

WAYS TO BE AFFIRMING AND INCLUSIVE

- Use inclusive language when asking about relationships the student may have – your advisee might not be trans*, but a loved one is!:
 - Guardian not Parent
 - Sibling not Brother/Sister
 - Special Someone not Boyfriend/Girlfriend
- This also sets the stage for the future in case they end up coming out as trans* later in their college career – you have shown yourself to be welcoming!
- Include your pronouns in your email signature.

WAYS TO BE AFFIRMING AND INCLUSIVE

- Have some items up in your office that would indicate you are an ally – a trans flag in addition to a rainbow flag can really put a student at ease. You can use the trans* visibility flyer!
- Review your office's forms and remove questions about gender unless they are absolutely necessary to ask.
- **Don't over protect** or give them special treatment – support and facilitate their academic journey.

BEST PROTOCOL IN A COMING OUT CONVERSATION

- Thank them for trusting you with this information.
- Don't tell them that you'd "have no idea" or they "look so beautiful/handsome". A person's value should not come from how successfully they "pass" as cisgender. Some people don't want to fit into those boxes.
- Ask if they have a preferred name and/or pronouns they would like you to use
 - Instead of saying "I don't care what pronouns you use" you can say "I'm happy with all pronouns". I don't care = apathy/tolerance not acceptance.

BEST PROTOCOL IN A COMING OUT CONVERSATION

- Don't discuss other trans* people you may know with a trans* student who has just come out to you. That doesn't establish trust.
- Ask them if they would like you to correct others who have misgendered them or not.
- Ask who else they are "out" to so you make sure to keep their status confidential from the right people
- Don't ask how they figured out they were trans*, if they are trying to transition, or anything about their genitals.

BEST PROTOCOL IN A COMING OUT CONVERSATION

Asses their distress level during the conversation:

- **NONE/LOW** – Ask if there is anything you can do to help them feel supported
- **MEDIUM** – Suggest one of the off campus resources on the handout
- **HIGH** – If they need to be walked over to the counseling center and follow your campus protocol for high risk situations



Allyship is not an identity.

Allyship is a moment-by-moment doing.

You are momentary allies.

You get things right in specific instances.

You aren't broadly allies all the time.

Allyship is not a noun.

Allyship is not a social construction like race or gender.

Allyship is a verb.

One cannot say "I am an ally".

One can say "I do allyship to the best of my ability. Which means I get it right sometimes and I get it wrong sometimes".

Your allyship is NEVER determined by YOU the "ally".

It is ALWAYS determined by the person/group most marginalized.

-Zerandrian S. Morris

HOW TO DO ALLYSHIP EFFECTIVELY

- Know that you don't need to be an expert or perfect every time you attempt to be more inclusive – your efforts are appreciated.
- Use the name they have asked you to use – you wouldn't insist on calling a divorcee by their old married name just because you met them that way!
- Don't overemphasize masculine or feminine traits like saying “HEY GIRLFRIEND!!!” whenever you see them.

HOW TO DO ALLYSHIP EFFECTIVELY

- **Speak up** if you hear transphobic remarks even if there isn't a trans* person in the room (to your knowledge)
- If you have been given express permission to reveal their trans* status to others, sneak their pronouns and name choice into the conversation when introducing them. **"This is Joe - he is one of my favorite advisees and about to do an exciting internship this summer!"**
- Continue to educate yourself on this topic as well as other areas of diversity. **"There are so many terms I can't keep up"** is not an excuse.

HOW TO DO ALLYSHIP EFFECTIVELY

- Treat every student as an individual with a unique identity, not as a representative for "all" members of their particular community.
- Don't assume that LGBT issues are all they ever want to discuss!
- Feel free to ask questions as long as they aren't invasive – they will appreciate your willingness to learn.

Always remember that if you are a cisgender person,
regardless of your ally status,
you are not a part of the transgender community
and cannot speak for them.

You can, however, be a part of the solution to the
challenges they face!

Your support is always welcomed!

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Ask Me: What LGBTQ Students Want Their Professors to Know

<https://youtu.be/rnbnF8QAnsY>

Pronoun Round Etiquette: How to Create Spaces That are More Inclusive October 22, 2016

West Anderson <https://thebodyisnotanapology.com/magazine/pronoun-round-etiquette/>

Is Your Trans Allyship Half-Baked June 22, 2015 Sam Dylan Finch

<https://everydayfeminism.com/2015/06/6-common-mistakes-trans-allies/>

NACADA: Advising Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender students in Higher Education

March 26, 2013

<https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Advising-Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-and-Transgender-Students-in-Higher-Education.aspx>

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMMITMENT TO MAKING ALL STUDENTS FEEL WELCOME!

Questions can be emailed to me if we didn't have time for Q & A or if you weren't comfortable asking during the workshop.

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