

For Professors and Educators: How to Create Trans-Inclusive Classrooms and Campuses

Trans and gender non-conforming students often experience challenges that cisgender students do not, including difficulties having the correct name, gender marker, and pronouns on their student records; lack of access to gender-inclusive campus housing and facilities; lack of access to safe and affordable health care; a greater likelihood to be abandoned by family and be experiencing financial need; and experiencing higher rates of harassment, violence, and policing than their cisgender counterparts.

As a result, many trans and gender non-conforming students may not feel safe being out on campus or to their professors and advisers. However, trans and gender non-conforming students also show resilience to succeed and are becoming more vocal about their needs. Furthermore, trans students are protected in Iowa State's [Non-Discrimination policy](#), which includes gender identity.

Many professors, advisers, and other educators want to advocate for trans and gender non-conforming students, but they are not sure how. The following are ways to create classrooms and campus spaces that are more welcoming to and inclusive of trans and gender non-conforming students:

- Do not assume that students' names will match their student records. Do not assume that you can guess which pronouns a student uses by the way they look.
- Create opportunities for students to share their names and pronouns with you and with other students. Instead of taking roll on the first day, let students introduce themselves with the name and pronouns with which you should refer to them. Or, have students fill out information cards at the beginning of the semester. These are just two possibilities; see the resources at the end of this document for more ideas.
- In your syllabus or in a pre-semester email, include a short statement like, "I will happily refer to you by a preferred name and pronouns, even if these differ from your legal name or your University record. Please let me know how I should refer to you."
- If you teach a large lecture course and do not often have the opportunity to learn students' names, role model for students in how you introduce yourself that respecting the name and pronouns a person uses is important. For example, "My name is Dr. Lemke and the pronouns I use are she, her, and hers. I'm sharing this with you because it's important that everyone in this class be referred to by their correct name and pronouns, pronounced the correct way, and that we don't assume this information about each other. Paying attention to the name and pronouns we use is one way we will show basic respect to each other in this class."
- Do not out students. If a student shares with you that they are trans, do not disclose this to others. Allow the student to be in control of who has this information about them. If you want to highlight the experiences of trans students in professional settings, be careful about what information you include and do not share students' names or identifiable details.

- Use gender inclusive language. Avoid statements like: "Good morning, ladies and gentlemen," or "Yes, sir, with your hand up in the back" or "You guys did really great on this assignment!" More inclusive alternatives to these statements include: "Good morning, everyone," or "Yes, person in the red shirt in the back, you have a question," or "You folks did really great on this assignment!"
- Include trans authors and trans experiences in your curriculum. What have trans scholars written about the topic of your course? Are there a diversity of genders represented in your syllabus? How does the topic of your course impact the lives of trans people? If your course already considers gender, how would thinking about gender outside of a binary (i.e. men/women) change the current curriculum?
- Advocate for gender-inclusive policies at Iowa State. Be vocal about challenges or barriers that have a disproportionate impact on trans and gender non-conforming students on campus. Ask questions and advocate for students in department meetings, university open forums, organizational meetings, and so on.

For more information about creating trans-inclusive classrooms and campus spaces, see below:

- ["Making Spaces Welcoming for Trans and Non-Binary Students,"](#) UW-Madison LGBT Campus Center (PDF)
- ["What Should I Call You?"](#) Vanderbilt University Faculty Senate Gender Inclusivity Task Force (PDF)
- ["Ask Me: What LGBTQ Students Want Their Professors to Know,"](#) The Chronicle of Higher Education (video)
- ["Suggested Best Practices for Supporting Trans* Students,"](#) The Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals (PDF)