

Gender Isn't Binary: Do Universities Recognize This?

Julia R. Johnson, Dean of the College of Liberal Studies, UW-La Crosse and

Leanne Doherty, PhD, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, Simmons College

Overview

- Definitions and Manifestations
- Strategies for Creating More Inclusion
- Case: Admissions at Simmons College

Definitions (vary with historical and cultural context)

- **Transgender** – Umbrella term – gender identity and assigned gender are incongruent
 - *Transsexual* – persons who often seek surgical or chemical modification to live as the sex with which they identify
 - *Gender non-conforming/non-binary*– persons who identify as neither women nor men, a mixture of the two, or something else entirely
 - *Trans** - shortened version of transgender – adjective that references entire transgender community, including non-binary individuals
- *Note* – social identities intersect and these intersections influence how identity is experienced and understood. A trans* persons race, documentation status, social class, sexual orientation, ability status (and more) all impact how they are treated and understand themselves

Common Experiences for Transgender Faculty, Staff, and Students

- National Perspective (Higher Ed Focus)
 - 1 in 4 experienced sexual assault (AAU Campus Climate)
 - Abuse, including harassment, bullying and/or physical assault (Injustice at Every Turn)
 - Denial of
 - campus housing
 - gender appropriate housing
 - appropriate bathroom facilities
 - Microaggressive treatment, including misgendering (Nadal, Skolnik, & Wong)
 - Active and passive resistance to transitioning

Micro-aggressions: Bias in Action

- Interruptions
- Talked over
- Translations
- Called the wrong name or have your name repeatedly mis-pronounced
- Excluded by others
- Ideas discounted
- Target of staring
- Ignored

Typical Microaggressive Behaviors

○ **Statements:**

- Why don't you ever wear dresses?
- Are you a woman or a man?
- Shemale, tranny, he-she.
- I just don't understand why you'd want to mutilate your body.
- When referring to a person who identifies as transgender saying things like "She, he, it. Whatever."
- Have you had THE surgery?

○ **Behaviors:**

- Misgendering
- Hostility in restrooms ("predator" or "easy target")
- Staring or glaring
- Accusing trans* identified persons of being defensive or unjustifiably angry for addressing microaggressions
- Overt physical scrutiny coupled with comments such as: "Look at her face and she has breasts. That's not a man."

UW-L Work for Trans* Inclusivity

- Fall 2013 Task Force (Provost and VC of Student Affairs) – Overall evaluation
- Fall 2014 – Trans* Task Force Steering Committee formation with sub-task forces
 - Athletics
 - Education, Training, and Printed Materials
 - Health Care and Counseling
 - Name Usage/Inclusive Pronouns
 - Residence Life
 - Restrooms and Locker Rooms

Trans* Inclusive Policies Generated

- Gender Inclusive Housing
 - Returning students (1 Hall)
 - First years have to make special request and halls = more \$\$
- Restrooms
 - 1 gender neutral restroom per building, minimum
 - Consistent wording for gender neutral restrooms – All Gender Restroom
 - REC center provides gender neutral shower space in former “Family Changing Room”

Trans* Inclusive Policies Generated, cont.

- Admissions
 - Gender identity included on applications
- Preferred Names & Pronouns
 - Names – include preferred names in PeopleSoft
 - Pronouns – Student Affairs regularly state or ask PGPs (They/Them; She/Her, etc.)
- Medical Services
 - University Health Center administers pre-prescribed hormones
 - Counseling and Testing can provide students with a letter to begin hormone treatment, name change or surgery
 - Training with gender-inclusive medical professionals for Counseling and Testing staff

Resources (cited and/or for future)

- Association of American Universities (AAU) https://www.aau.edu/registration/public/PAdocs/Survey_Communication_9-18/Final_Report_9-18-15.pdf
- Campus Pride: Trans Policy Clearinghouse: <https://www.campuspride.org/tpc/>
- Colleges and Universities that Allow Students to Change the Name and Gender on Campus Records: <https://www.campuspride.org/tpc/records/>
- Colleges and Universities that Cover Transition-Related Medical Expenses Under Student Health Insurance: <https://www.campuspride.org/tpc/student-health-insurance/>
- Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey: http://www.transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/resources/NTDS_Report.pdf
- Lambda Legal Defense Fund: <http://www.lambdalegal.org/know-your-rights/transgender/in-college-faq> and <http://www.lambdalegal.org/know-your-rights/transgender/supporting-trans-students>
- Nadal, K.L., Skolnik, A., & Wong, Y. (2012). Interpersonal and systemic microaggressions toward transgender people: Implications for counseling. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling*, 6, 55-82.
- National Transgender Discrimination Survey: <http://www.transequality.org/issues/resources/national-transgender-discrimination-survey-full-report>



Transgender Policies at Simmons College: A Case Study

Dr. Leanne Doherty, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences



- Simmons College is a women-centered, liberal arts school located in Boston, MA
 - 1750 undergrads
 - Five co-educational graduate schools
 - Since its inception, single sex at the undergraduate level
-



-
- Admissions practice was not codified and Simmons did not have an official policy to guide applicants, counselors, and decisions
 - As private women's college, denying admission to men is protected legally
 - Simmons Charter does not preclude the admission of men
 - Trans men were currently (and still are) matriculated students in undergraduate community
 - Gender identity and expression in Simmons non-discrimination policy*
 - MA policy protects gender identity in employment and housing*
-



- Students led discussion (was a major issue for women's colleges at the time)
 - President Drinan called for taskforce on issue Spring 2013
 - Co-Chairs Dean of Student Life and Director of Undergraduate Admissions
 - Included representation from faculty, staff, students, general counsel, trustees, and students
 - Committee met over summer and presented to board in Fall 2013 a draft policy
-



Important Areas of Focus for Best Practices

1. Student records and documentation
 2. Student Harassment and Grievance Procedures
 3. Housing
 4. Restrooms
 5. Counseling, Health Care, and Health Insurance
 6. Classroom
 7. Athletics
 8. Career services
 9. Professional development for faculty and staff
-



Result of the task force

Institutionalized transgender admissions policy

- All applicants to the undergraduate program who were assigned female at birth and/or applicants who self-identify as women are eligible to apply for admission
 - No government issued documentation necessary
 - Once enrolled, any student who completes the College's baccalaureate requirements will be awarded a Simmons degree regardless of gender identity or expression
 - All grad programs are co-educational and thus open to applicants of all genders.
-



Resources in place to support formal admissions policy

- Single point of service for inquiries regarding name change/email/preferred name
 - Housing application that enables individuals to check off whether “it is important that my room is an LGBTQA safe space”
 - Counseling and health center staff trained to provide comprehensive care to students who identify as transgender, including those transitioning
 - Student health insurance which includes transgender health benefits
 - Single stall/gender neutral restrooms on academic and residential campus
-



Take Aways

- Change like this needs buy in from top, bottom, sides, etc
 - Students make the difference in these discussions
 - Largest first year class ever in Fall 2015
-