Tips for Creating Trans-inclusive Classroom Environment

**Inform students** about Kalamazoo College’s [Preferred Name Policy](#). Explain that they can enter a preferred name to the registrar to replace their legal name on most of the College’s documents.

**Collect Information** from all students about names and pronouns they use. If students fill out cards with major, etc., have them all add preferred name and pronouns. Model how to share your name and pronouns with your own introduction e.g. “My name is Toby Jones, please call me Professor Jones, and my pronouns are she/her/hers.”

**Use preferred names as listed on roster or last names** if necessary to take attendance verbally before you know the students. If available, K class rosters will include preferred names in parentheses. When addressing a student with this notation, use the preferred and not the legal name. Confirm with the student that this is still the preferred name, as this may change as they matriculate and not be updated on the roster. Avoid titles such as “Mr.,” “Mrs.,” and “Ms.”

**Adopt inclusive language**, avoiding binaries such as “men and women” and “ladies and gentlemen.”

**Check your assumptions.** Gender identity and pronouns are not always obvious. When in doubt, ask.

**Correct yourself and others** when someone is misgendered (called by incorrect pronouns). Be kind about misunderstandings. What seems like a learning opportunity for some students may be disturbing for trans students. Minimize hurtful and derogatory speech in your classroom.

**Be respectful and nonjudgmental** if students share information with you about their trans identities. Focus on providing educational support. Resist sharing opinions and advice that don’t pertain to their education.

**Address bullying and harassment** of trans (or any other) students when it rises. Refer ongoing behavior to the Office of Student Conduct and gender-related harassment to the Director of Gender Equity.

**Recognize trans diversity.** Not all trans students openly share their experiences or embrace the label “trans”. Some deliberately reject the categories male and female. Transitioning, fluid, or questioning people may identify differently over time and in different contexts. Transitions may occur during or between terms. Some trans students will disclose to a professor but may not disclose to their peers. When in doubt about a student’s public identity, ask privately.

**Don’t assume** transgender people are mentally unstable due to gender identity or expression. Do make Student Concern referrals.

**Take steps** to make online learning inclusive.

This document seeks to familiarize Kalamazoo College faculty and staff with ways to provide inclusive education to trans and gender nonconforming students. The suggestions reflect the White House guidance ([Dear Colleague Letter](#), May 13, 2016) and the [College’s non-discrimination policy](#) as well as input from Queer/Trans students, faculty, and staff.
You Can Make a Difference

Small efforts go a long way toward conveying to the entire Kalamazoo College community that trans and gender nonconforming students are welcome here. Simple steps to be more inclusive in your language and classroom procedures will improve the campus climate for all.

Terminology
Trans is a gender identity based on self-definition, not biological or physical markers. A variety of identities fit under the designation of trans, and you may want to read up on transgender terminology to be conversant with current terms, such as transgender, transmasculine, transfeminine, cisgender, nonbinary, genderqueer, gender nonconforming, and gender creative. Note, for example, that many in the trans community avoid past-to-present distinctions (such as male to female, or MTF), references to surgery (pre-op transsexual), and terms with bio or biological in them (“biological sex” or “bio woman”).

Pronouns
Besides she/her/hers or he/him/hers, there are some additional pronouns in use by trans people and their allies. Some people use gender-neutral pronouns, such as they/them/theirs. Using plural pronouns to reference an individual takes some practice! Keep in mind that it shows respect when you make an effort to acknowledge someone’s pronouns, even when you make mistakes or feel uncomfortable doing so.

Basic Principles for the Classroom (based on Title IX federal guidance)
- Treat students consistent with their current identity, even if their education records or identification documents indicate a different sex
- Use pronouns and names consistent with a transgender student’s gender identity
- Take reasonable steps to protect students’ privacy related to their transgender status, including their legal name or sex assigned at birth

Resources
Resources for LGB and Gender Variant, Gender Fluid, and Transgender Students developed by the Office of Student Development
The Counseling Center
- Trans Support Group (every Fri. at 4pm, 1st-10th Week in the Counseling Center)
The Director of Gender Equity - Ellen Lassiter Collier
- K has a responsibility to provide a safe and nondiscriminatory environment for all students, including transgender students. Please contact this office for information about reporting an incident of discrimination and support services.
Office of the Registrar
- Manages the College’s Preferred Name Policy.
Office of Student Conduct
The Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership
- Offers “Understanding Trans Identity” training annually.
- Offers Queer Terms/Definitions document on website’s Resources page

This document was adapted from Western Michigan University’s Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgender Student Services (LGBT) “Tips for Creating a Trans-inclusive Classroom Environment.”