Gender Identity and Expression

- Trans* 101 -

at SMCM
gender identity - the gender a person expresses and would like other people to recognize them as

gender expression - the manner in which someone outwardly relates to their gender identity

trans(*)gender - a person whose gender identity and/or expression does not match the gender they were assigned at birth.

cisgender - someone whose gender identity matches the gender they were assigned at birth
So…what does that mean for students?

- many trans* students face difficulty in their home environment, with emotional struggles relating to being trans*, healthcare, and other students and faculty
- all trans* students’ difficulties don’t necessarily stem from their gender identity
- however, being aware of and sensitive to these factors can help you be aware of classroom conduct and better understand your student’s background and work
Keep in mind…

Students may be going through…

• physical transition
• coming out to friends, family, and other faculty/staff
• harassment or alienation by peers
• questioning their identity
• pressure to “pass” and/or be “stealth”

Students may come to you with…

• trouble with the way other students are gendering/reacting to them
• housing, family, friend, and/or healthcare issues
• request to cover a gender or body-related topic or assignment differently in class or than assigned
Awareness/Think About…

• Always and only use preferred name and pronouns
  (when in doubt, ask!)
• Ask “what”, not “why”
  (don’t question or argue with a student’s identity)
• Let the personal stay private
  (don’t tell anyone about the student’s identity or ask invasive questions)
• Watch your binary!
  (try to avoid jokes and comments that perpetuate stereotypes)
And in the classroom (Being proactive!)

- think about being trans* inclusive (or at least respectful) in any lecture/discussion covering gender, sex, and/or gender-related healthcare

- be aware of student comments that might be disrespectful or harmful of trans* students and issues, and use them as a teaching moment

- just like discussions of abuse, violence, and mental illness can be triggering for some students, prolonged/graphic discussions about trans*/homophobia and gender/sex related body acceptance and health can be triggering for trans* students

* There’s no way to know if you have a trans* student in your class. And even if you don’t, doing these things anyway promotes awareness and respect!
Resources at SMCM

- There are currently 5 gender neutral bathroom locations on campus:
  - Glendenning Annex
  - WC entrance
  - Margaret Brent
  - Art Annex (brick building next to PS)
  - outside St. Mary's Hall
- Open (gender neutral) housing (lower and upper class) is available for all undergrads; minors must have parent permission.
- Students can have their name changed on their e-mail and One Card without having it legally changed. This can be done through tech services and/or the Registrar.
- Legal name and gender marker changes can be taken to the Registrar to be changed in Portal.
- the WGSX department, STARS, Meghan Root in Counseling and Health Services, and LGBTQ Student Services provide options for help and support for trans* students.
Want to do more?

• let students know that you are an available and safe resource (You can do this by putting up a sign or symbol on your office door, verbally, or in a note on your syllabus)

• look up academic and/or non-academic literature, blogs, groups, etc. to learn more about the trans* community, current commentary on gender theory, variety of identities, and other challenges facing the trans* community today

• consider ways to challenge students’ perceptions of gender

• try to use “they” when talking about a theoretical person or someone of who’s gender identity you aren’t 120% certain
Thanks!

Remember – just like all students (and people, for that matter), trans* individuals are diverse. What works for one person and their identity might contrast with someone else. When in doubt, ask.

feel free to contact me for resources/questions/etc.:

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