

## Supporting Transgender Students in the Classroom

Adapted from the article by [Sherry Zane, PhD](#)

<http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-classroom-management/supporting-transgender-students-classroom/>

Below is a list of strategies I use in my classrooms to support gender diversity. I hope they can help you shape more gender-inclusive spaces where you teach.

### Set the tone

Create guidelines in your syllabus and communicate them on the first day of class:

- Syllabus: Write your name and what pronouns you use.  
EX: WGSS 1105 Gender and Sexuality in Everyday Life  
Dr. Sherry Zane  
She/her/hers
- In class: Introduce yourself and state what pronouns you use.  
EX: “My name is Dr. Sherry Zane, and I use “she, her, hers.”
- Syllabus: Include your school’s community mission and principles and connect those to written requests that students practice civility and inclusion of all perspectives, which includes students’ names and correct pronouns. All students should be referred to by the names and pronouns they use (e.g., she, he, they, ze).

### EXAMPLE SYLLABUS STATEMENTS: Name & Pronouns

I will gladly honor your request to address you by your chosen name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this at any point in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

OR

If I accidentally use an incorrect gender pronoun when addressing you, please feel free to let me know, in whatever manner makes you comfortable, what pronouns you use so that I can make every effort to correct that error.

- Find out where the gender-neutral bathrooms are in your building. List them in the syllabus and point out their locations during the first class.

### Model desired behavior

To support our gender-variant students, we need to rethink roll call, become familiar with the importance of names and pronouns, and be willing to be advocates:

- Avoid taking attendance aloud until you have given students a chance to contact you with their correct names in case different names appear on the roster. Instead, pass out index cards, handouts, or a seating chart and ask the students to fill out name and pronoun information. You can also provide a form on your Learning Management System electronically if you do not want to do it in person

Name on the roster:

Name you use:

Pronouns you use:

Major/minor:

Commuter: Yes or no

What are some of your favorite activities?

- If you have to take attendance verbally on the first day, use last names. Avoid making assumptions based on what the roster indicates or a student's appearance. Oftentimes, a student who uses a name that differs from the roster will contact you via email or in person to let you know. The student will not want to experience any uncomfortable situations such as being "outed" in the classroom or misgendered by the instructor or peers.
- There will be times when you hear people make name/pronoun mistakes. Please correct them in a polite manner, even if the person being referring to is not present. For example, "I believe Sam uses 'they, them, their' pronouns."

**Preserve confidentiality** A student might have revealed a previous name and/or pronouns to you before changing it, or you might know what it is because you saw it on the roster. Do not reveal it to others. Comments such as "I knew Lisa when she was Dan" can be damaging to the student and also make the student vulnerable to possible ridicule.

- It is never appropriate to disclose to anyone the gender identity or sexual orientation of another person without the explicit permission of that person. If you do, it can be considered a violation of Title IX.
- Refrain from asking transgender students any questions you would not ask anyone else. For instance, you would never ask seemingly cisgender persons (people whose gender identity matches their biologically determined sex) personal questions about their anatomy.

### **Adopt more inclusive language**

Incorporate new, more inclusive phrases to your vocabulary:

- Instead of using references to "men" and "women," try "individuals of all gender identities" or simply "people."
- Use "partner" or "significant other" instead of "boyfriend/girlfriend" or "husband/wife."
- Avoid titles such as "Mr.," "Mrs.," and "Ms."- or if you must use titles, include the option for the gender neutral "Mx."
- Instead of calling the class "guys," use "folks," "everyone," "you all," or "you."
- Acknowledge the limits of the texts and research you use: "This study only focuses on cisgender heterosexual men and women" or "This study only focuses on cisgender women."

Finally, if students talk to you about their gender identities, listen in a respectful and nonjudgmental way. Try not to show skepticism and/or disapproval. Instead, support the students by listening to what they have to say, especially when they may be offering constructive feedback for your classroom. It can be challenging to train ourselves to use new names and pronouns, but it is important to make a concerted effort and even make mistakes. Let students see you make mistakes, and then apologize and correct yourself. If students see that you are comfortable with being uncomfortable, they will learn to be, too!

