For Instructors: Navigating Gender Identity in the Classroom

Recommended syllabus statement:

“Class rosters and University data systems are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name and gender identification. I will gladly honor your request to address you by a preferred name and/or gender pronouns*. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.”

Things to consider:

- Have all students fill in their preferred first name and preferred gender pronouns on the first class on a blank roster. Do not use the class roster to read off names. This may unintentionally “out” a transgender, genderqueer and/or transitioning student.

- Be careful not to assume the gender that you perceive in a photo or in person is how the student identifies.

- Avoid projecting a class roster, class photos, or other related forms that may unintentionally list a student’s legal name to the entire class on a screen, etc.

- Be careful not to assume that a person’s gender identity equates to their sexual orientation or biological sex identity.

- Consider information that a student shares about their gender identity (or other social identities) as confidential. Do not tokenize or expect that student to educate you or the class about their identity(ies) or the identities of others.

**Asking and using a student’s preferred gender pronouns is a way to create a safer environment for all students. Most languages, including the English language system, use gender pronouns to refer to individuals – ex. He, she, him, her, his, hers. For transgender, genderqueer, gender questioning and/or transitioning students, misuse of preferred pronouns can be impactful and alienating to the student.**
Other ways that students might identify beyond traditional binary pronouns (he/she, etc) is by preferring the singular use of the pronoun “they” or by preferring that they are referred to by name only, not with a pronoun, or by use of gender neutral pronouns (hir, ze, etc). More information on gender neutral pronouns can be found at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender-neutral_pronoun.

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