Subject: FW: Students' names and pronouns: preparing for spring term classes

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From: Monique Brickham

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Attachments: UWMadisonPronounguide.pdf

From: David Burrows < david.burrows@lawrence.edu>
Date: March 23, 2016 at 5:54:57 PM GMT-4
To: FACULTY-L < FACULTY-L@lawrence.edu>
Subject: Students' names and pronouns: preparing for spring term classes

Dear Colleagues,

Please see below an important statement from the President's Committee on Diversity Affairs and the Gender Studies Steering Board.

Thanks,
Dave

As Lawrence continues in its efforts to be a more inclusive community, this memo provides information about trans identities, including information about names and pronouns, basic definitions, and strategies for creating a safe and respectful learning environment for students of all gender identities and expressions. This memo is especially important to read prior to meeting with your new classes at the beginning of the term. Attached you will also find a guide from UW Madison for more information, including a chart outlining the grammar of some gender neutral pronouns currently in use. Note: Definitions of terms can be found at the end of this memo.

1.   Names and pronouns.

While some students who identify as trans (for example, transgender, gender nonconforming (GNC), genderqueer, gender neutral, or gender creative) may use the binary pronouns he/him/his and she/her/hers, some may also or instead use non-binary pronouns. *They* (for an individual) and *ze* (long e) are common examples of non-binary pronouns in use, but there are others as well. Because English, like many other languages, is both binary and gendered, people with non-binary gender identities have had to create pronouns that accurately describe them. In addition, some students with fluid genders may prefer to be referred to using a variety of pronouns – for example, *she, he*, or *they* used interchangeably. *They*, in particular, is an increasingly popular choice and is no longer considered an exclusively plural pronoun. Indeed, there are numerous examples in English's earlier history of such use of "they" to refer to generic (i.e., no gender specified) singular subjects.

Furthermore, even students who may make a binary transition in the future (e.g., from she to he) may not be able to do so while in college for a variety of reasons, including legal hurdles, parental approval, and medical costs. State laws differ, as do families and

individuals, and therefore a person's legal name (if it is clearly gendered) may appear to you to be at odds with their gender expression and pronouns. It is also possible that a student may change their pronouns and/or name within a term.

2. *Use of pronouns and names in the classroom.*

Unfortunately, the class roster in Voyager is not yet the best guide for accurately documenting students' names and gender pronouns, though various administrators and staff members at Lawrence are currently working to find solutions. For now, instead of using the roster in Voyager, you can use the information gathered through the methods listed below to create your class roster, and use the names and pronouns provided by students instead of making assumptions based on appearance or legal name. It is also possible that a student may only be out as trans to certain people, and they may request that you refer to them using one pronoun in class and another one-on-one. Here are various strategies you can implement to allow students of all gender identities and gender expressions to feel welcome, safe, and respected in your classroom:

- Send an email to your registered students introducing yourself with your own pronouns and request that students contact you directly about their name and pronouns.
- On the first day of class, have students fill out cards asking them to provide information including their name and pronouns. Collect the cards and use students' names from the cards instead of from your registration list.
- Set up a private place on Moodle for students to submit their name and pronouns to you. Again, you may want to introduce yourself similarly.
- In certain classes, it may be appropriate to have students introduce themselves and provide their pronouns to the whole class. However, in most cases, it is better to avoid this approach because doing so may cause students to feel pressure to out themselves as trans.
- If you do not arrange something before the first class or if students have not yet responded to your email or Moodle, it is easiest to take attendance using last names only from the class list on Voyager. Tell students to let you know privately what their name and pronouns are via email, after class, on a private place on Moodle, or during office hours. This strategy may be especially useful for limited enrollment classes with wait lists.
- Consider adding a statement to your syllabus that you welcome students of all gender identities and expressions and that they should feel free to inform you of their name and/or pronouns, especially if these change over the term. You might also mention that they can and should correct you gently if you get it wrong.
- If you do misgender or mispronoun a student, apologize and correct it.

An important step is for you as the course instructor to introduce yourself with your pronouns. By doing so, you acknowledge gender diversity and include all students instead of singling out students who "look trans" or whose gender seems different from their biological sex. Even if you know the sex someone was assigned at birth, you may know little about their gender identity.

3. *Definitions.* The following are basic definitions for understanding gender identity and expression.
Trans or trans* (adj): an inclusive term for transgender and gender nonconforming identities (GNC), including (but not limited to) transgender, genderqueer, genderfluid, agender, and non-binary. These terms should be used as adjectives, not nouns. Correct:

Transgender students do not want to be deadnamed. Incorrect: Transgenders do not want to be deadnamed.

Cisgender (adj): not transgender. Cisgender describes someone whose gender identity corresponds to the biological sex they were assigned at birth.

Deadname (verb and noun): As a verb, to deadname means to use the birth name of someone who has changed their name. It is most commonly used by trans people. When a trans person has changed their name, one should not ask what that person's "real" name was or to deadname them, even if this information appears on your class roster.

Gender binary (noun): the classification of sex and gender into two distinct forms—male and masculine as distinct from female and feminine. He/him/his and she/her/hers are considered gender binary pronouns.

If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact Helen Boyd Kramer (GEST), Alison Guenther-Pal (PCDA & GEST), Karen Hoffmann (chair of PCDA), Terry Gottfried (chair of the GEST Advisory Board) or other members of these committees.