

A Guide for the Faculty

Creating an Inclusive Classroom Environment



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Dear Faculty,

As members of the Bates community, we understand that Bates Faculty members strive to be supportive and inclusive of *all* students, including those of gender, sexual, and romantic diversity. However, as individuals and a campus community, we realize that there might be barriers which inhibit us to be up-to-date on best practices and policies. As part of the continual work of the Active Ally program, we have created this guide for the faculty. The document includes information that we feel will benefit the educational endeavour by nourishing a respectful student-faculty relationship. We hope this helps you build a more inclusive classroom environment for your students.

- Lexie Mucci, Assistant Director, OIE
- SPARQ! Peer Mentors, 2017-2018

The Terminology this document will use:

- GSM: Gender and Sexual Minorities. It's a catch-all phrase that refers to anyone who identifies as something other than cisgender or straight.
- Trans: An umbrella term, encompassing anyone who identifies as something other than cisgender.
- Cisgender: An identity where individuals' experiences of their own gender agree with the sex they were assigned at birth.

- Rankin's (2010) campus climate data in 2010 showed that 31% of GSM students felt their campus was homophobic.
- Rankin (2010) found that GSM students have decreased rates of college persistence. 33% of LGBQ, and 38% of Trans students respondents seriously considered leaving their institution due to the challenging climate. However, it's important to recognize that this figure does not include students who couldn't be surveyed because they had already left their institution of higher education
- Rankin (2010) found that 13% of LGBQ students and 43% of Trans student feared for their physical safety on their college campuses. Rankin also found that 43% of LGBQ students and 63% of Trans students concealed their identity to avoid intimidation.
- According to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), 20% of college students fear for their physical safety due to their gender identity or their perceived sexual orientation.
- An NGLTF study found that 29% of students did not feel that their curriculum adequately represents contributions of GSM individuals.
- According to the College Equality Index, only four institutions of higher education currently have a GSM Major.
- The College Equality Index reports that only 14 colleges (out of 4500+) are considered to be "Trans-friendly," meaning that the school has gender identity inclusive non-discrimination statements, gender neutral housing and gender neutral restrooms. Among these schools are Brown University, New York University and Carnegie Mellon University.

Don't make assumptions. Never make assumptions about anyone's sexual orientation, romantic orientation and/or gender identity. If you need to know, ask. Rely only on self-identification via that specific individual.

Ask for chosen name and pronouns. We can create a more inclusive and safe environment for all students by allowing them to express and identify themselves in a way that makes them comfortable. One way that we can begin to do this is by indicating what personal pronouns one would like others to address them by. By using the correct name and pronouns for individual's we not only allow for an individual to identify themselves as they are comfortable, but we also show avoid misgendering or 'outing' individuals. Please make sure you respect people's pronouns.

There are a wide variety of pronouns that people use, such as: he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/them/theirs (singular) and ze/hir/hirs. It's not just about the binary he/she pronouns.

Some best practices when asking for names and pronouns are:

- 1) Pass a piece of paper out on the first day of class that includes general information (name—including chosen name, email, cell number, favorite thing, etc.) and add a question about everyone's pronoun. This way, you will not be 'outing' trans students while still respecting their right to self-identify.
- 2) If you are comfortable, ask students to share their pronouns during introductions. The best way to do so is by asking for their pronouns in the *middle* of an introduction sequence. For example: *"Please share your name, where you are from, pronouns, and a superpower you would love to have."* By doing so, you normalize the use of pronouns. In addition, be mindful *not* to point out when a student skips the pronouns. This may be due to lack of knowledge/exposure to the concept, *or* that the student identifies or is questioning their identity, and is not yet ready to come out.

Ask for chosen name. For trans students, as well as others including some international and cisgender domestic students, their legal name is not always the name they go by. Using incorrect names, similar to incorrect pronouns, can be uncomfortable, at best.

Please note: *This year, class rosters should only reflect an individual's chosen name for **first year students**. Upper class students may have a nickname or legal name listed, as they have not had the opportunity to input chosen names into the system yet. Please be mindful to check your roster for only chosen names and use them to address your students. If you notice student's chosen name is not reflected on the roster, please notify the registrar's office and ask the student for the appropriate name.*

Here's a suggestion: On the first day, when conducting roll call, use students' last names. You can, then, ask them for their first name. Write it down and use this name moving forward. Another suggestion is to perhaps email the class before it starts to ask for student's chosen names.

Be responsive. Establish guidelines for respectful classroom dialogue. This can be noted in your syllabus. In addition, you can do a group exercise in class to create these guidelines in order to create an open dialogue and individual student investment. This will then allow you to interrupt inappropriate language, correct heteronormative assumptions, stop insensitive jokes, and address inappropriate behaviors.

Be wary of gender stereotypes. Understand that there is a lot more to gender than the traditional female/male. Don't judge a student for 'presenting' in a way that differs from the stereotypes surrounding their gender or demand that a student dress a particularly "gendered" way for a presentation. Also, never use general statement about a particular gender. Statements like 'all girls like...' and 'boys do...' can be uncomfortable for students.

Build an inclusive classroom environment. Be inclusive to all people. You might want to review the terminology in the GSM community. For example, you could use gender neutral terms such as partner instead of husband or wife, or parents instead of mom and dad; place ally/resource materials in your classroom, office, and on your syllabus; mention LGBTQIA+ issues when appropriate -- make it visible; include prominent historical and cultural figures who identify as a GSM or LGBTQIA+ in your field of study throughout your classwork.

Be open and accepting of correction. Misgendering, using insensitive language, assuming heteronormativity, and so on happens to everyone. It's okay. It's important to realize that there's a myriad of ways to identify within the GSM community. You won't always know and/or understand the terminology used. Encourage your students to speak up if they're uncomfortable, and be, yourself, open to corrections.

Respect GSM students wishes of confidentiality. Even if a student is 'out', it's important to respect their level of comfort. Unless you're certain they don't mind it, don't refer to a students' sexual orientation/gender identity in class.

Don't undermine a student's experience. If they choose to, give the students space to discuss their experience with gender identity/sexual orientation. The GSM community's struggles may be drastically different. Don't undermine their experiences.

Maintain confidentiality within the confines of your professional responsibilities. It's a great when a student trusts you enough to talk about their problems. Listen, and be sensitive about the issues they might be facing. However, if you suspect a student is harming themselves, or facing a serious mental issue, always direct them to those who can better help.

Stay informed on resources available to students. Know the type of services available to GSM students on your campus. Be sure to direct a student properly, if their questions/concerns are beyond what you can do. Visit bates.edu/lgbtq for more information.

Self educate. Be an Active Ally. Again, there's a lot of ways to identify within the GSM community. The terminology changes almost daily. Do your own research, and stay informed.

Be a Visible Ally. Take the initiative and make visible that you are supportive of GSM students by modeling supportive and affirming behaviors, including your choice of language and inclusion of GSM literature in your office. Also, consider participating in SPARQ! programming - Bates' LGBTQIA+ Initiative, attending Out2Lunch Discussions, and become a *certified* Active Ally. Please visit bates.edu/activeally to learn more.

Office of Intercultural Education

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Health Services

Email: healthservices@bates.edu

Phone: 207-786-6199

Emergency Phone: x6111

Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS)

Phone: 207-786-6200

Bias Incident/Hate Crime Anonymous Reporting

<http://www.bates.edu/security/incident-reporting-form/>

Sexual Assault Anonymous Reporting

<https://secure.ethicspoint.com/domain/media/en/gui/43139/index.html>

Lewiston Family Planning

Provides Transgender Health Care & Reproductive Health Services

<http://www.maine-familyplanning.org/page/958-881/transgender-health-care>

Phone: 207-626-3243

Document adapted from LGBT Certificate Program at Arizona State University.

