

# Best Practices for Supporting Transgender & Gender Non-Conforming Students

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UNC is committed to serving students across many identities and social groups (<https://policies.unc.edu/TDClient/2833/Portal/KB/ArticleDet?!D=131717>). There is a need for increased recognition of transgender and gender non-conforming students. Introducing yourself with and encouraging all students to introduce themselves with their pronouns and including pronouns on nametags acknowledges that one's gender identity cannot be assumed based on appearance. Importantly, these practices reduce the risk of misgendering and communicate to students that you respect their self-determination and that their identities are recognized and valued. This establishes trust between students and professors and underscores UNC's dedication to creating a supportive and inclusive academic community for all. When students feel supported and included, they are more likely to thrive academically and socially.

As a faculty member, you can set the tone for validating your students' identities so that they can feel comfortable in their learning environment. What exactly does this look like?

## Classroom

Syllabus: Have your pronouns in parenthesis next to your name in the syllabus. Also include a statement about inclusivity and your commitment to cultivating a respectful learning environment (example below). This will make transgender, non-binary, and students with other marginalized identities feel safer in your classroom.

Maps to gender-neutral bathrooms: Transgender and gender non-conforming students often need gender neutral bathrooms. Providing restrooms that aren't segregated by gender allows people to use the restroom that may align with their gender and/or will allow them to use restrooms without being challenged or harassed. Here is a map to [gender neutral restrooms](#) at UNC. You can identify the closest gender-neutral restroom to your office and post it outside your office and identify the closest gender-neutral restroom to your classroom and post that in your syllabus.

Introductions: When you introduce yourself to the class, include your pronouns. When you invite students to introduce themselves, also invite them to share their pronouns if they feel comfortable doing so. Introducing yourself with your pronouns and requesting pronoun disclosure from everyone helps normalize the concept and alleviates any potential anxiety experienced by transgender and gender non-conforming students. However, it's essential to offer this as an option, as some students may still be exploring their gender identity or may not feel comfortable disclosing their identity within their learning environment.

In team-taught courses, coordinate with the other faculty to use these practices whenever class introductions will be made.

Handling Instances of Misgendering: If you notice that a student is misgendering another student, politely correct them. This signals to your students that you will uphold respect in your classroom. For example, you could repeat/rephrase what the person said but use the correct pronouns. If a student

continues to be misgendered, it may be helpful to have a private conversation with them to inquire about ways to better support them.

If you misgender a student, correct yourself (thank the individual that corrected you if applicable), offer a sincere apology, and then quickly move on as not to draw attention to their identity. For example, you may say, “I’m sorry, thank you for correcting me. [Repeat original statement with the correct pronoun].” Afterward, take a moment to reflect on why the mistake occurred to ensure that you can avoid repeating it in the future.

If a student consistently misgenders another student and makes no effort to correct themselves, you can call them into a conversation about how their actions may be affecting the other student. You can remind them of the class agreement surrounding respect. You can also attempt to separate the students.

Representation: Can you include materials or discoveries from transgender or gender non-conforming individuals? If you use case studies, you can include more gender diversity within your examples.

## Events

Nametags: When gathering participant information for events, collect their name and pronouns for inclusion on nametags. This practice ensures that individuals have the opportunity to express their gender identity authentically and have any changes in their chosen name or pronouns properly recognized and respected. Moreover, having pronouns on everyone's nametags promotes inclusivity and avoids singling out transgender or gender non-conforming students who might otherwise feel compelled to manually add their pronouns or risk feeling marginalized as the only ones doing so. By consistently gathering and displaying pronoun information, event organizers demonstrate their commitment to creating a welcoming and affirming environment for all participants.

These questions can be used in registration forms:

- Preferred first name (what would you like us to put on your name tag?) [open text box]
- What pronouns, if any, would you want listed on your name tag? (ex. she/her, he/him, they them, she/they, any) [open text box]

Gender-Neutral Bathrooms: When choosing a venue for a school-sponsored event, it is crucial to factor in whether the location provides gender-neutral bathrooms to accommodate transitioning and gender nonconforming students. These students may experience discomfort and feelings of unsafety when using gender-segregated bathrooms that do not align with their gender identity. By prioritizing venues with gender-neutral bathrooms, the event organizers create an environment where all attendees can access facilities that promote safety and comfort. Additionally, this decision sends a clear message to transgender and gender non-conforming students that their identities are not only acknowledged but also valued and respected, contributing to a more inclusive and welcoming atmosphere at the event.

UNC lists the gender-neutral bathrooms on campus here:

<https://facilities.unc.edu/resources/planning/gender-neutral-restrooms/>

## Websites

Similar to the syllabus, with written media like websites, also include pronouns in parenthesis next to names.

## General Best Practices

In any space, when introducing yourself, introduce yourself with your pronouns. Your Zoom handle and email signature are also important places to include your pronouns. Include your pronouns next to your name with any written material, including on your PowerPoints. Before you know someone's pronouns, use their name or if you don't know their name use they/them pronouns. Once you know someone's pronouns, continuing to use their name or they/them pronouns is misgendering. Never make pronoun disclosure mandatory, this should always be optional.

## Gender Neutral Language

1. Use "they" or "them" as singular pronouns. For example: "Each student should bring their own book." Use "one" or "the individual." For example: "One should always strive for personal growth." Instead of "he" or "she"
2. Use "person" or "individual." For example: "Each person has the right to express themselves." Use specific terms when applicable, such as "adult," "child," "human," "individual," or "people." Instead of "man" or "woman."
3. Use terms like "partner," "spouse," or "significant other" instead of "husband" or "wife." For example: "Their partner supported them throughout their career." Instead of gender-specific relationship terms.
4. Use "chairperson" instead of "chairman" or "chairwoman." Use "spokesperson" instead of "spokesman" or "spokeswoman." Instead of gender-specific pronouns in job titles.
5. Use neutral expressions like "best person for the job" instead of "best man for the job" or "humanity" instead of "mankind." Instead of gendered expressions.
6. Use neutral greetings like "hello," "hi," or "good morning" instead of gender-specific greetings like "hello, sir" or "hi, ma'am." Instead of gendered greetings.
7. Use neutral language in reference to biology: Use "menstruation productions" instead of feminine productions, "menstruators" instead of women. "People with prostates" instead of men.

Learn more about gender inclusive language: <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/gender-inclusive-language/>

## For Administration

- Officially state that, within the institution's framework, an individual's gender is determined by their self-identification. Consequently, employees should anticipate receiving treatment consistent with their self-identified gender. Establish and enforce explicit policies prohibiting harassment, which encompasses deliberate misgendering.
- Hiring committees should recognize that curriculum vitae (CVs) and certificates might feature multiple names or genders across different documents and publications.
- Work on getting gender neutral bathrooms and having pronouns included with staff directories.

- Be sure to follow up to-date best practices on requesting information surrounding gender when collecting demographic data. Consider the purpose of the data collection and how it will be used. When collecting demographic data on gender, it's crucial to provide options that reflect the diversity of gender identities. Examples (allowing students to check multiple boxes): Female, Male, Cisgender, Transgender, Two-Spirit, Nonbinary, Agender, Gender non-conforming, Gender expansive, Genderfluid, Genderqueer, Androgyne, Bigender, Demigender, I use a different term [Open text box], Don't know, Prefer not to answer
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## **Example Inclusivity Statement**

### **Inclusivity Statement:**

Welcome to [Course Name]! Our learning community is committed to fostering an inclusive and respectful environment where all individuals, regardless of background, identity, or experiences, feel valued and heard. Embracing diversity enhances our ability to learn and grow, preparing us to engage with the complexities of the world.

### **Commitment to Inclusivity:**

In this class, we recognize and celebrate the richness that comes from the diversity of our students, including differences in race, ethnicity, ancestry, national origin, citizenship status, age, veteran status, marital status, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability status, religion and more. We believe that the unique perspectives each of you brings contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter and the world at large.

### **Pronoun Respect:**

Respecting each other's gender identities and pronouns is a fundamental aspect of our commitment to inclusivity. We encourage you to share your pronouns, and we will make every effort to use the correct pronouns for all members of our community. If you are unsure of someone's pronouns, asking respectfully is encouraged.

### **Respect and Open Dialogue:**

Respectful communication is essential for creating an inclusive learning environment. We encourage open dialogue and the sharing of diverse viewpoints while maintaining a commitment to kindness, empathy, and understanding. Everyone's experiences and perspectives are valid and deserving of consideration.

### **Reporting Concerns:**

Should you ever feel uncomfortable or witness behavior that contradicts our commitment to inclusivity, please don't hesitate to reach out to me. We are dedicated to addressing concerns promptly and ensuring that our classroom remains a safe and welcoming space for everyone. If you feel like your performance in the classroom is being impacted by your experiences outside of school, please let me know. I am here as a resource for you and am committed to your success and well-being both in and out of the classroom.

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If you would like to learn more about the importance of using the correct pronouns here are some research articles:

- School Factors Strongly Impact Transgender and Non-Binary Youths' Well-Being - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9599998/>
- Chosen Name Use is Linked to Reduced Depressive Symptoms, Suicidal Ideation and Behavior among Transgender Youth - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6165713/>
- Affirmation and Safety: An Intersectional Analysis of Trans and Nonbinary Youths in Quebec - <https://jeunestransyouth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/1Affirmation-and-safety-Pullen-Sansfacon-et-al-2021.pdf>

Pronoun Items for Events

- Pins
  - <https://www.etsy.com/listing/1538775623/bulk-pack-of-pronoun-pins-1-inch25mm> (combo options, neopronouns, Latinx pronouns included)
  - [https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0B5X3FS2K/ref=ppx\\_yo\\_dt\\_b\\_asin\\_title\\_o00\\_s00?ie=UTF8&th=1](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0B5X3FS2K/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_asin_title_o00_s00?ie=UTF8&th=1) (he/him, she/her, and they/them only)
- Nametags
  - <https://www.etsy.com/listing/1577812111/name-and-pronoun-labels-printable-fits>
  - [https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0C6FC3FL4/ref=ppx\\_yo\\_dt\\_b\\_asin\\_title\\_o00\\_s00?ie=UTF8&psc=1](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0C6FC3FL4/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_asin_title_o00_s00?ie=UTF8&psc=1)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHrVPe4fmK0>



FAQ:

**What to do when someone uses two different pronouns like she/they?**

- Typically, when someone uses two different pronouns this means you use the first one more frequently. In this case, you may refer to them using she/her pronouns 60-70% of the time and they/them pronouns 30-40% of the time. If you feel comfortable doing so, you can ask the student privately their preference for how frequently they prefer each pronoun to be used.

**Does having nametags or nametents with a spot for pronouns force students that don't want to include their pronouns to include them?**

- No, including sections on nametags and nametents for pronouns sets the standard and reminds students that this is important information to introduce themselves with. Students should never be forced to include their pronouns. If a student leaves this section blank, use their name to refer to them.