

ACTIONS TO FOSTER INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, NON-BINARY AND QUEER (LGBTQ+) STUDENTS

Recognize that LGBTQ+ students are everywhere. Making an effort to create inclusive learning environments is important no matter what you teach or the size of your class.

Be proactive in setting expectations and showing respect via your syllabus. State that you are committed to a classroom environment free of discrimination and harassment, including harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. When conveying your expectations, include expectations that everyone learn to pronounce one another's names correctly and use the correct pronouns for all students in the class. See the [Fall 2017 issue of Praxis](#) at page 3 for suggestions.

At the beginning of each quarter, allow everyone to self-identify the name and pronoun they use. Respect this name and pronoun consistently. Some students, particularly transgender students, may use a first name other than the one on your class roster. (Through the [Registrar's Office](#), students may indicate a first name to be used in lieu of their legal first name, but not all students are aware of this option.) Recognize that a student may change the name and/or pronouns they use part way through the quarter.

In classes where introductions are feasible, invite everyone to introduce themselves by sharing the name they go by, their pronouns, and some fun fact that begins building class rapport. Explain why sharing pronouns is important: "We can't know someone's gender just by looking at them. Sharing our pronouns allows us to be sure we respect each person's gender identity." Model how you are inviting students to introduce themselves: "I'm Professor Bhandary. I use she/her pronouns. This summer I visited family in California, and also enjoyed some amazing hikes in the North Cascades."

In classes too large for student introductions, you can still send a signal of inclusion by sharing your pronouns when introducing yourself to the class. To learn what pronouns students use, give each student a notecard. Ask students to write on the notecard the name they go by, the pronouns they use, and any other information you think it would be helpful to know (e.g., what excites you about this class?).

Avoid language and actions that assume everyone is heterosexual or identifies within a gender binary. As relevant, use examples that include LGBTQ+ people: “Mark and his partner, José ...” or “Maria’s parents, Rebecca and Tina” Avoid calling on people in a way that assumes their gender: say “the person in the red hat” instead of “the guy in the hat.” Don’t divide the class or break into groups by gender; some people do not identify as women or men.

Speak Up. As necessary, enforce expectations you set early on about harassment and respect. Address biased or harassing language, including comments taking the form of jokes. Contact the [Equal Opportunity Office](#) with questions or concerns.

If you use the wrong pronouns for a student, correct yourself. If someone else uses incorrect pronouns for a student, correct them and model using the correct pronouns: “Micah uses they/them pronouns. I’m looking forward to their presentation in class on Monday.”

Provide information about gender neutral restroom locations and breaks long enough to access them. You can [print and display signs](#) to share the [gender neutral restroom locations](#) closest to your classroom and office. If you provide a short break during the class period, provide a reasonable amount of time for students who need to access a gender neutral restroom. Students may need to travel to another floor, or another building, to access a one. [Gender neutral restroom resources are available online.](#)

Be aware of campus resources for LGBTQ+ students. Relevant student organizations include the [Queer Resource Center](#), [Womxn’s Identity Resource Center](#), T.A.G. Team (for transgender and gender non-conforming students), Queer and Trans People of Color, Queer Club, Western Aces, and Queer Writers Club. Relevant offices and academic programs include the [Equal Opportunity Office](#), [Counseling Center](#), [LGBT Advocacy Council](#), the [Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies Program](#), and the Queer Studies minor.

Learn more! Attend a workshop on Fostering Inclusive Learning Environments for Transgender, Genderqueer and Non-Binary Students to be offered Winter quarter. Training dates will be posted at training.wvu.edu.

Watch the short video [“Ask Me: What LGBTQ Students Want Their Professors To Know,”](#) produced by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and Campus Pride. There are many great organizations to learn from as well, including the [Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals](#), [GLAAD](#), the [National Center for Transgender Equality](#), [Southerners On New Ground \(SONG\)](#), [Sylvia Rivera Law Project](#), and the [National LGBTQ Taskforce](#).