LGBTQ+ Inclusion

Guide for Faculty and Staff

Welcome!

This is the SOGIE Program LGBTQ+ Inclusion Guide for faculty and staff. This guide is designed to help you provide the students you engage with a sense of worth and respect, and acknowledge their humanity.

You can visit SOGIE's website for an online version of this document that includes clickable links to everything referenced in this document.

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Introduction and Importance of this Resource

Why you as a staff or faculty member matter

As members of the JMU community, we spend a lot of time with students. As staff and faculty, we want to have a positive impact and form supportive relationships with students. Research on undergraduate and graduate student perceptions of faculty knowledge on queer issues showed that students perceive faculty to lack general knowledge or hold outdated understandings about the LGBTQ+ population (McKinney 2005). Best practices for creating a positive learning environment rests on the instructors' knowledge of concerns facing the transgender community (Wentling et al., 2008).

What are the potential academic impacts of non-inclusive practices for the LGBTQ+ population?

Research continues to show that LGBTQ+ students perceive the classroom environment as chilly (Hall & Sandler, 1982), if not cold. Particularly salient findings include feelings of anxiety and trepidation (Pryor 2015). This can lead to students masking their identity and ceasing to authentically participate with faculty and peers (Bilodeau 2009). Cisgender persons' negative attitudes will not be challenged, even though data show they can shift through experiential learning (Rye, Elmslie, & Chalmers 2007).

Since our job at SOGIE programming is to help make campus more inclusive for LGBTQ+ students, and we know that you are looking for support on what you can do, we created this guide. This guide was created from the experiences of our students and the challenges they face, research on best practices and frequently requested material from SOGIE. This guide is not an end-all, be-all. This should be a start for you to consider how you can make your spaces more inclusive. There are many resources here that you can use to continue learning in this area.

Important Concepts

Before we begin talking about ways to be more inclusive we want to be on the same page with language. In this section, review the terms described and then, if you are still confused, visit the resources section at the end of this guide for additional terms websites. A note: we intentionally did not include many definitions on specific identities in the LGBTQ+ community. There are so many ways to describe your own sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. We recognize that there are variations in defining identities depending on location. Anytime, it's important to be aware that a person might be using an identity label differently than you have heard in the past. Everyone is an expert in their own identity, so an individual's use of an identity label is always correct — don't try to change the language someone uses for themselves. If you do not understand the context in which a person is using a term, it is always appropriate to ask, in a 1:1 setting, if they would be comfortable explaining their usage of the term.

Contested Terms

- **Fag/Faggot** – A derogatory term referring to a gay person, or someone perceived as queer. Sometimes this term is used reclaimed as in-group language.
- **Hermaphrodite** - An outdated medical term used for people who were inter-sex; now considered offensive.
- **Homosexual** - A person attracted to people of their same gender. This term is considered medically and stigmatized due to its history as a category of mental illness, and can be offensive to some.
- **Transsexual (TS)** - A person who lives full-time in a gender different than their assigned birth sex and gender; to some is considered an outdated and offensive term.
- **Transvestite** - An outdated and problematic term due to its historical use as a diagnosis for medical/mental health disorders.
- **Sex Reassignment Surgery** – An outdated way to explain medical surgeries used to modify one's body to be more congruent with one's gender identity; acceptable language for this would be "Gender Confirming Surgery".

Sex, Gender Identity & Expression

- **Cisgender/Cis** - A gender description for when someone's sex assigned at birth matches their gender identity in the expected way in society. This term is used to avoid "othering" trans people.
- **Gender** - A social construction related to how a person views themselves in relation to societal norms.
- **Gender Binary** – The idea that there are only two genders: man and woman, and that a person must express themselves as one of these identities.
- **Gender Expression** - How one presents themselves to others in relation to societal expectations of gender.
- **Gender Identity** – One's deeply held personal, internal sense of their gender.
- **Intersex Person** - A person whose combination of chromosomes, hormones, internal sex organs, gonads and/or genitals differs from one of the two expected patterns.
- **Nonbinary** - An umbrella term for all genders other than woman/man.
- **Sex** - A medical term designating a certain combination of gonads, chromosomes, external gender organs, secondary sex characteristics and hormonal balances that classify a person as female, intersex, or male. Also referred to as biological sex, sex assigned at birth or physical sex.
- **Transgender/Trans** - A term describing a person whose anatomy or "sex at birth" does not align with their gender identity; also used as an umbrella term for all people whose gender identity or expression does not fit within dominant-group social constructs of assigned sex and gender.
- **Transman** - An identity label sometimes adopted by female-to-male trans people to signify that they are men while still affirming their history as female-bodied.
- **Transwoman** - An identity label sometimes adopted by male-to-female trans people to signify that they are women while still affirming their history as male-bodied.

Sexual & Romantic Orientation

- **Asexual** – Experiencing little to no sexual attraction to others; however exists on a spectrum including other identities such as demisexual (attraction only after emotional connection). Asexuality is distinct from celibacy. Some asexual people do have sex.
- **Sexual Orientation** – A means of describing who one is sexually attracted to and could potentially develop an intimate connection. This can match or differ from romantic orientation.
- **Romantic Orientation** – A means of describing who one is emotionally or romantically attracted to and could potentially develop a romantic connection.

Other Terms

- **Ally** - A term used to describe someone who does not identify as LGBTQ+ but who is supportive of LGBTQ+ equality in its many forms and through a wide variety of different expressions, both personal and private.
- **Deadnaming** - the instance of referring to a trans person (who has changed their name) by the name they were assigned at birth. Deadnaming normally occurs for one of three reasons: 1: Someone accidentally deadnames because they're used to using that name. 2: Someone purposefully deadnames to cause distress. 3: Someone purposefully deadnames because of their beliefs.
- **Heteronormativity** - The assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is the norm and anything else is "other".
- **Misgendering** - The act of referring to a person by the incorrect pronouns and/or name if a person has changed their name.
- **Queer** - 1. an umbrella term used to encompass the entire LGBTQ+ community; 2. an identity used in place of some more specific denominators as a way of stating LGBTQ+ status without specific descriptions; 3. A reclaimed word that was formerly a slur or hate term but has been claimed by the LGBTQ+ community as a term of defiant pride. As a word with a charged history, caution should be taken concerning its use by members outside the group.

A Focus on Pronouns

In our campus climate, one of the most present challenges relates to personal pronouns. Personal pronouns are words that refer to an individual person without using their name. Often, when speaking of a singular human in the third person, these pronouns have a gender implied — such as "he" to refer to a man/boy or "she" to refer to a woman/girl. These associations are not always accurate or helpful, especially if they are based on the person's appearance or name. These assumptions aren't always correct and the act of making an assumption (even if correct) sends a potentially harmful message — that people have to look a certain way to demonstrate the gender that they are or are not.

Using someone's correct personal pronouns is a way to respect them and create an inclusive environment, just as using a person's name can be a way to respect them. Just as it can be offensive or even harassing to make up a nickname for someone and call them that nickname against their will, it can be offensive or harassing to guess at someone's pronouns and refer to them using those pronouns if that is not how that person wants to be known. Or, worse, actively choosing to ignore the pronouns someone has stated that they go by could imply the oppressive notion that intersex, transgender, nonbinary and gender nonconforming people do not or should not exist.

WHAT SHOULD I CALL YOU?

Please note that these are not the only pronouns. There are an infinite number of pronouns as new ones emerge in our language. Always ask someone for their pronouns.

Subjective	Objective	Possessive	Reflexive	Example
She	Her	Hers	Herself	She is speaking. I listened to her. The backpack is hers.
He	Him	His	Himself	He is speaking. I listened to him. The backpack is his.
They	Them	Theirs	Themself	They are speaking. I listened to them. The backpack is theirs.
Ze	Hir/Zir	Hirs/Zirs	Hirself/ Zirself	Ze is speaking. I listened to hir. The backpack is zirs.

Pronoun Tips

How do I share my own pronouns? How do I ask for pronouns?

You can easily incorporate your pronouns into your introduction: "Hi, my name is _____ and I use _____ pronouns." You can ask someone "what pronouns do you use?" However, it's good to find ways to ask for pronouns that don't make it required to be public. For example, offering a written way to share pronouns, or simply by saying to a group "introduce yourself with your pronouns if you feel comfortable doing so." Remember that for some people, sharing their pronouns is basically outing themselves as trans or nonbinary, and not everyone will be ready.

What if I make a mistake?

It's okay! Everyone slips up from time to time. The best thing to do if you use the wrong pronoun for someone is to say something right away, like "Sorry, I meant (insert pronoun)."

If you realize your mistake after the fact, apologize in private and move on. A lot of the time it can be tempting to go on and on about how bad you feel that you messed up or how hard it is for you to get it right. Please don't! It is inappropriate and makes the person who was misgendered feel awkward and responsible for comforting you, which is not their job.

I keep messing up someone's pronouns — how do I get used to them?

Practice! Sometimes, you meet someone and just have a hard time with their pronouns. Or perhaps you haven't gotten used to they/them/theirs pronouns for a singular person. That's okay. Go home and practice. Take a few minutes to tell a story using the pronouns you are practicing. If it's for a specific person, hold a mental image of them in your mind. That will help you to remember the correct pronouns the next time you are thinking of that person.

What do I do if I don't know someone's pronouns? Or the class or program is too big to remember everyone's?

If you don't know someone's pronouns, or you aren't in a space where you can easily know and remember them, it's best to avoid assuming gender and use "they/them/theirs" pronouns for everyone. Change your language from things like "the woman that just spoke" to "the last comment we heard" or "I see a hand from the man in the back" to "I see a hand from the red shirt in the back."

What do I do if someone uses the wrong pronouns around me?

In most cases, it is appropriate to gently correct them without further embarrassing the individual who has been misgendered. This means saying something like "Alex uses the pronoun she," and then moving on. If other students or faculty are consistently using the wrong pronouns for someone, do not ignore it! It is important to let your student know that you are their ally. It may be appropriate to approach them and say something like "I noticed that you were getting referred to with the wrong pronoun earlier, and I know that that can be really hurtful. Would you be okay with me taking them aside and reminding them about your pronouns?" Follow up if necessary but take your cues from the comfort level of your student. Your actions will be greatly appreciated.

How to Respond If a Student Discloses to You

Chances are, at some point a student is going to disclose their LGBTQ+ identity to you — aka come out to you. Part of creating an affirming environment and relationship is being able to respond in a positive way. Here are some tips for responding:

- Thank the student for opening up.
- Ask if there are other names/pronouns they would like for you to use: "What name and pronouns do you want me to use in public, and when it's just us?"
- Ask if they are out everywhere, or if this information is confidential: "I'll keep this confidential if that's what you want." "How does out-ness work for you right now?"
- Ask, "Is there anything I can do for you?" or "how can I best support you?"
- If the student needs, suggest campus resources for support like one of our campus LGBTQ+ student organizations (Madison Equality, Shades of Pride and QUEST) or SOGIE Programming.
- **Don't** minimize the importance of what they did by saying,"It doesn't matter to me," or "I already knew."
- **Don't** over-react.
- **Don't** ask lots of invasive questions (like about their bodies or sex life). Now is a time to listen and support, not question things or quiz a person.

A Note on Coming Out:

Coming out can be a big deal and a challenging experience for LGBTQ+ people, depending on where they are in their personal identity development and previous experiences they have had coming out. Not all LGBTQ+ people choose to come out everywhere, or even at all — and that's okay. That does not make them any less queer, or their identity any less valid. Don't assume someone is heterosexual or cisgender just because they don't come out.

Suggestions to Create an Inclusive Environment

We all have space on campus. It might be a classroom, office, program space or virtual space. Regardless, there are several ways to demonstrate your commitment to support LGBTQ+ people and create a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students. Here are some suggestions for you.

Suggestions:

- Include an inclusive welcome statement in your syllabus. Examples of statements that include pronouns and names are:

  "I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records."

  "Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records."

- Don't do a roll call until students have had the chance to share if they use a name different than what's on the roster.

Suggestions:

- Introduce yourself using your pronouns, include them to your class syllabus, add them to your email signature and business cards, put them on your office door, etc.
- Don't make assumptions. Provide students with the opportunity to inform you of their name and pronouns via a short survey. Don't assume sexual orientation either.
- Avoid using gender binary language like ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls. Instead, use language like everybody, folks.
- Don't out people. If someone comes out as LGBTQ+ to you, don't disclose that information with others unless you have permission from the person.
- Address anti-LGBTQ+ comments, jokes or actions when they happen.
- If you are sharing contributors to your field, discipline or area, include LGBTQ+ people.
- Acknowledge gaps in research & areas where more information is needed.
- Distinguish between patterns that emerge based on sex (a biological category) versus gender (a social category), as well as patterns that are impacted by both of these thing.

- Be honest about what you know & do not know; some patterns & trends may be ambiguous and may require further study in order to accurately determine their biological and/or psychosocial associations.
- If you have LGBTQ+ related questions, seek out the answer yourself rather than asking a student who identifies as being a member of that community.
- Know about, talk about, add to syllabus the closest gender-inclusive restrooms (it might not be in your own building).
- Don't tokenize LGBTQ+ people by always asking them to share their views or opinions.
- If you have space to "decorate" – have some LGBTQ+ affirming things. A pride flag or art work by LGBTQ+ artists can help visibly show that your space is a safe space.

Ways to be an Ally

1. Awareness:

Explore how you are different from and similar to LGBTQ+ people. Gain this awareness through talking with LGBTQ+ people, attending workshops and self-examination.

- Remember that not everyone is heterosexual/cisgender.
- Examine your own biases — analyze and critique the negative messages you have been taught by society, media and the people around you.
- Understand your feelings, values and beliefs about LGBTQ+ issues.
- Know your organization's nondiscrimination policy.
- Notice what is happening around you to LGBTQ+ people.

2. Knowledge/Education:

Begin to understand policies, laws and practices and how they affect LGBTQ+ people. Educate yourself on communities and cultures of LGBTQ+ people.

- Continue educating yourself about LGBTQ+ identities, including what is current and in the news.
- Know where to seek help, both for yourself and others.
- Remember that different identities suffer from different types of oppression.
- Understand how oppression permeates the systems and institutions in society.
- Understand how you contribute (consciously or unconsciously) to an oppressive environment.

Suggestions

3. Skills:

You must learn to communicate your awareness and knowledge to others. You can acquire these skills by attending workshops, role-playing with peers and developing support connections.

- Prepare for what you will do to support someone that comes out to you.
- Advocate and participate in educational programs for your community, so that LGBTQ+ people live without prejudice and with the comfort deserved by all. **Be a 100% ally — no strings attached. Unconditional acceptance is a must.**
- Understand your limits in ability/knowledge. Refer individuals to get proper help.
- Help, but don't force. All people need to move their own pace.

4. Action:

This is the most important and frightening step. Despite the fear, action is the only way to effect change in the society as a whole.

- Provide a supportive atmosphere for all people.
- **Use inclusive language.** Avoid words that assume a person is straight, gendered, or married, divorced or single. "Are you seeing **anyone**?" "What is **their** name?" "My **partner's** name is..."
- Clarify that anything brought to you is confidential and keep things confidential!
- Confront anti-LGBTQ+ or bigoted jokes and comments.
- **If someone comes out to you, respond with warmth and friendship.** Coming out to someone can be very difficult for LGBTQ+ people, so be honored that someone chose to tell you.
- Form coalitions with others.
- Act collaboratively with members of the LGBTQ+ community to dismantle oppression.
- If you are a member of a privileged group, use your credibility to create opportunities to educate others about oppression and privilege.
- Be visible: Participate in LGBTQ+ events throughout the year and display/wear your support.
- Recognize other allies and acknowledge their efforts. Allies need support too!

Scenarios

Just reading through this guide is not enough — we need to put LGBTQ+ inclusive practices into action. This section is designed to give you some real situations to consider. Read through these scenarios and think about how you would respond or what could be done to help in the situation.

Student Scenario One

A student uses derogatory language to another student.

During a group assignment in the middle of a class, two students, Deborah and Josh, start bickering over who should lead their group. The instructor goes to mediate the situation, but on her way to the students' desks she overhears Josh calling Deborah a queer-related slur. Deborah stops arguing and sulks, pulling away from the group. **What, if anything, should the instructor do? How would this be different if this had happened in front of the whole class instead of a smaller group? Or perhaps just between Josh and Deborah separately? What resources from this guide might be useful?**

Student Scenario Two

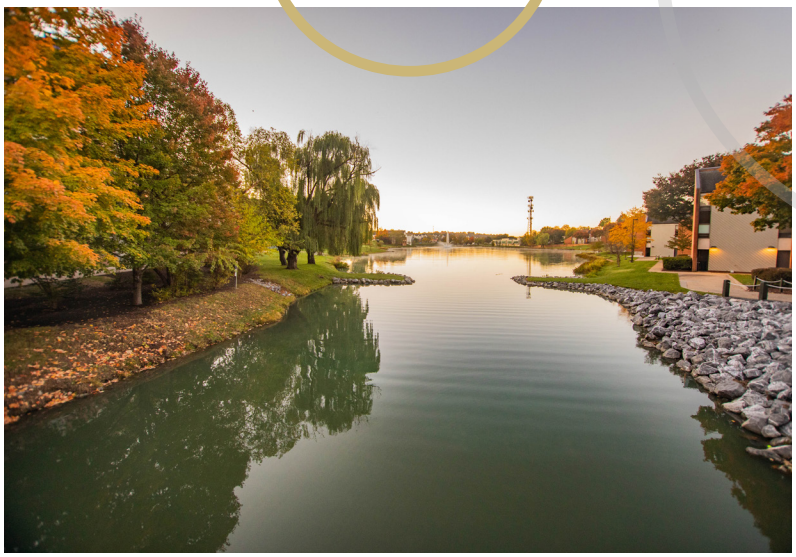
A student comes out and there is a negative response.

Carmen, a student living in a first year residence hall, identifies as trans and wants to come out to her entire hall. Carmen hangs a flag next to her door tag on her suite door. The next day, Carmen's Hall Director Steve sees that the flag is cut up on the floor, and that Carmen's name has been crossed out on her door tab. **What if anything should Steve do? What resources from this guide might be useful?**

Colleague-to-colleague Scenario One

A colleague using non-inclusive or even derogatory language to refer to LGBTQ+ people (i.e. jokes, casual references)

Jaime and Taylor are staff members working in The Union who work together on many collaborative projects. They have a decent working relationship but do not necessarily spend much time together outside of Department-based work. One evening, while procrastinating on Facebook, Jaime comes across Taylor's profile and notices a series of posts and memes Taylor posted making jokes about gay men and mocking a recent student protest on campus focused on the rights of transgender students to have access to gender neutral bathrooms. **What, if anything should Jaime do? What resources from this guide might be useful in this situation?**



Colleague-to-colleague Scenario Two

A colleague expressing that they do not believe they should be 'required' to be supportive of trans students and colleagues

The Department of Social Science is having their monthly Zoom meeting where the Department Chair, Chris, shares new information from the Provost's Office requiring that all syllabi on campus must now include a statement about using inclusive pronouns for transgender and trans-identified students. During the discussion period of the meeting, Eloise overhears two colleagues stating to each other their discomfort with this new policy and their objection to be required to support students who they feel are living a morally inappropriate lifestyle, based upon their religious views. The University does include gender and gender identity in its EEOE statement. **What, if anything, should Eloise do? Let's say that the comments were made openly in the full faculty meeting. What should the Department Chair do? What resources from this guide might be useful in this situation?**

Resources

Campus Resources:

- Contact SOGIE Programming at sogie@jmu.edu
- JMU SOGIE Programming
- Gender Inclusive Restrooms at JMU
- JMU Office of Equal Opportunity
- JMU Safe Zone

Online:

- UMD Good Practices: Inclusive Language
- UMD: Trans Good Practices
- Purdue University Tips for Creating Inclusive Learning Environments
- Vanderbilt: Teaching Beyond the Gender Binary in the University Classroom
    - » The above resources provide further education on inclusive practices and knowledge around gender identity.
- Human Rights Campaign: List of Terms
    - » This resource provides more terms than those listed in the above section.
- The Safe Zone Project
    - » The Safe Zone Project offers trainings, useful handouts, activities, and more for those who seek further development and knowledge around the LGBTQ+IA+ community.
- Diversity and Resiliency Institute of El Paso LGBTQ+ training
- My Pronouns: more information on personal pronouns
- The Safe Zone Project: Language Dos and Don'ts
- PFLAG: How to be a Trans Ally
- YouTube video: 5 Things You Can Say When Someone Comes Out To You
- How to Respond to Racial Microaggressions When They Occur
    - » This resource will also be helpful when responding to anti-LGBTQ+ comments.

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