

Gender Inclusivity in the Classroom

Under *Title IX* and the *CSU Policy Prohibiting Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Misconduct, Sexual Exploitation, Dating Violence, Domestic Violence, Stalking, and Retaliation*, (hereafter called “Nondiscrimination Policy”) Gender and Sex are considered protected statuses. Therefore, regardless of their gender identity or gender expression, students have the right to learn in a healthy and safe classroom environment. This means using the name and pronouns provided by the student, even if they differ from what is on your class roster or listed in Canvas.

Within this guide, you will find definitions for words related to this topic and suggestions on how to best support all your students within your learning environment. For the Nondiscrimination Policy in full, [click here](#).

Recommendations

Classroom Guidelines and Standards

Set the tone of the classroom beginning with respect and inquiry. Establish guidelines that the classroom will be set in a respectful environment where everyone can participate without fear or hesitation. Everyone should be referred to by the name the student provides you and their personal pronouns.

Roll Call

On the first day of class, consider allowing students to introduce themselves instead of calling roll. Some students will share a different name and personal pronouns with their faculty, others feel they shouldn't disclose their gender identity in the classroom for safety or other reasons, or even avoid telling professors to use a different name altogether. Each student should be able to make the choice themselves when, and if, they disclose a different name or want a professor to use different pronouns.

If you require attendance for your classroom, please pass along the attendance sheet. Avoid making assumptions that the name they prefer is on the roll sheet already. They may not have realized how to change their name or list pronouns in myHumboldt, or there may have been an error within some of the systems.

Pronouns

Allow students to disclose pronouns to use inside the classroom. During class introductions, consider if it is appropriate to have students share pronouns. Some students find this helpful to share their pronouns; some students find this process puts them before they are ready to disclose (or they may not want to disclose at all). Please use the student's name and personal pronouns the student gives you.

If you aren't sure of a person's pronouns, ask, or refer to them by their name only. Assuming someone's pronouns can lead to possibly misgendering students, further ostracizing them. One way to ask is: “I use he/him/his pronouns, how do you like to be addressed?” This often may be very difficult at first, but it is important to respect all gender identities.

Previous Names

If a student has a previous name and/or pronoun that you are aware of because you have had the student before or because the name is different on the roster, do not reveal this information to others. It will unnecessarily draw attention to the student and may cause discomfort in the classroom. For example, if you knew a student last semester with a different name, use the name the student gives you for new semester.

Identification Cards

If you must require identification after an exam, please be aware that some students' identification may not match their name on the class roster. Please be respectful of this matter and talk to the student privately if you have questions or concerns. This can be very stressful for students to go through. Please be aware and cautious when asking for identification.

Address Mistakes

If you make a mistake about someone's pronouns, correct yourself, apologize and carry on the conversation. Please do not focus on the issue entirely; it may cause problems or make the situation worse. This also saves the student from correcting an incorrect pronoun in front of the classroom.

Correcting Others

Whether it be in office hours, speaking with other students, professionals, or staff, when someone makes a pronoun mistake, correct them. It is important and polite to provide the correct information whether the student is present or not. Allowing the mistake to go untreated can cause repeated offenses and uncomfortable interactions.

Respect Boundaries

Avoid asking students about personal info, such as: medical care, their birth name, status, name/legal marker changes status, sexual orientation, or even other related inquiries. These questions can be considered inappropriate and are irrelevant to your relationship to this student unless they voluntarily share this information with you or the classroom. It is a student's choice whether or not to disclose in class. Please don't rely on the student to educate the class or speak for the Trans, Gender Non-Conforming, and Non-Binary community.

Inclusive Language

There are many students at Cal Poly Humboldt who identify outside of the gender binary of woman/man. Students may identify as genderqueer, genderfluid, or a number of gender identities. The reference to only women and men in the classroom can be misleading, unwelcoming, and discouraging to students. Be aware of language, and try to use inclusive language within the classroom:

- Use "individuals of all gender identities" or "students" instead of "men and women" or "ladies and gentlemen."
- Use "partner" or "significant other" instead of "boyfriend" / "girlfriend" or "husband" / "wife."
- Avoid titles such as "Mr.," "Mrs.," "Ms.," "Ma'am", and "Sir."

Taking it Further

- Include gender identity topics on your syllabus and help your students learn to talk about issues of gender respectfully and understand the importance. Important gender identity topics can be found in housing, healthcare, employment, criminal justice, education, public benefits and legal protection.
- State on your syllabus that discrimination will not be tolerated within the classroom and everyone's gender identity is valid. Include the [Non Discrimination Statement](#) on the syllabus which includes gender identity.

Related Policy Definitions

Adverse Action:

- An action engaged in by the Respondent that has a substantial and material adverse effect on the Complainant's ability to participate in a university program, activity, or employment.
- An adverse employment action is any conduct or employment action that is reasonably likely to impair an employee's job performance or prospects for advancement or promotion.
- Minor or trivial actions or conduct not reasonably likely to do more than anger or upset a Complainant does not constitute an Adverse Action.

Discrimination:

- An adverse action(s) against a Complainant because of their Protected Status.
- If Adverse Action is taken because of a Complainant's Protected Status, that means that the Complainant's Protected Status is a substantial motivating reason (but not necessarily the only reason) for the Adverse Action.
- An allegation that an Employee is receiving unequal pay because of their Protected Status (for example, under the California Equal Pay Act) constitutes a Discrimination Complaint under this Nondiscrimination Policy.

Gender:

- Means sex, and includes Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Stereotyping. Sex includes, but is not limited to pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding or any related medical conditions.
 - Gender Identity means a person's identification as female, male, nonbinary, or another gender different from the person's sex assigned at birth.
 - Nonbinary is a general term for people whose gender identities fall outside of the binary conception of male or female. Nonbinary people may or may not identify as transgender.
 - Transgender is a general term that refers to a person whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth. A transgender person may or may not medically transition and may identify as male, female, or nonbinary.
 - Gender Expression means a person's gender-related appearance or behavior whether or not stereotypically associated with the person's assigned sex at birth.
 - Sex Stereotype means an assumption about a person's appearance or behavior or about an individual's ability or inability to perform certain kinds of work based on a myth, social expectation, or generalization about the individual's sex.
- Gender is a Protected Status

Harassment:

- Unwelcome verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct engaged in because of an individual Complainant's Protected Status.
- If a Complainant is harassed because of their Protected Status, that means that the Complainant's Protected Status is a substantial motivating reason (but not necessarily the only reason) for the conduct.
- Harassment may occur when:
 - Submitting to, or rejecting, the verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct is explicitly or implicitly a basis for:
 - Decisions that adversely affect or threaten employment, or which are being presented as a term or condition of the Complainant's employment; or
 - Decisions that affect or threaten the Complainant's academic status or progress, or access to benefits and services, honors, programs, or activities available at or through the university.
 - OR**
 - The conduct is sufficiently severe or pervasive so that its effect, whether intended or not, could be considered by a reasonable person under similar circumstances and with similar identities, and is in fact considered by the Complainant as creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work or educational environment that denies or substantially limits an individual's ability to participate in or benefit from employment and/or educational, services, activities, or other privileges provided by the CSU.
- Harassment includes, but is not limited to, verbal harassment (e.g., epithets, derogatory comments, or slurs), physical harassment (e.g., assault, impeding or blocking movement, or any physical interference with normal work or movement), and visual forms of harassment (e.g., derogatory posters, cartoons, drawings, symbols, or gestures.). Single, isolated incidents will typically be insufficient to rise to the level of harassment.