Trans-friendly pedagogy panel summary

12/6/18

*Color code:*

***Questions***

*Replies (from different participants)*

**Student Panelists from TaNGO**: Hillary, Rian, Emma, Magdalena, Danny, Teddy

**How do ask about pronouns without being intrusive?**

- Some professors talk about pronoun preferences in general and then ask everyone in the class to share pronouns.

- [other panelists disagree with this approach pretty strongly] Some students might not want to make their pronouns public or are still thinking on it—a subtler approach would be to include a question about pronouns on a survey given to students on the first day of class.

**How do we make our syllabi trans-friendly?**

It helps to have professor’s pronouns listed there (along with gender orientation and expression) to make it more normal. This is a warm and welcoming sign.

Be willing to put your pronoun info there and make it clear that you’re someone who is receptive to that information.

**How would you like professors to respond when classmates do not use your preferred pronouns?**

It depends on the person…I would ask.

*[Follow up]* **Should we correct these types of errors?**

You don’t need to do that for them necessarily. It might be appreciated, but the professor doesn’t need to be the “knight in shining armor.”

Also, if you slip up and use another pronoun by accident, make a small deal in the moment but actively change it going forward. Make a point to restate pronouns correctly soon after.

If a prof misgenders me, sometimes I don’t say anything.

Once another student acknowledged the misgendering and asked me if I wanted them to correct. That was welcome.

Check in first, and don’t do it for them without checking. Making yourself accessible this way is good.

Or, when someone is sharing their preferred pronouns, you can ask them if they would like you to correct others on their behalf.

**Another suggestion**: Make it part of the culture to include pronouns in signature line of emails. Make it less niche. Normalize it.

**When students design a survey that includes a question about gender identity, what choices should there be?**

“Transgender” should not appear since it is not a gender.

Less is more: male, female, other.

Other options could be “non-binary,” “non-conforming”—but many don’t connect with these terms.

From a data perspective, maybe “other” is too broad, so you could add with an opening to fill in.

Maybe include “prefer not to respond.”

Maybe “intersex”; some people prefer to be considered intersex.

**What things made you feel more open or welcome here at WAC? What are the good things?**

The club TaNGO

A lot of classes have brought in pronouns, mention gender nonconformity, and normalize it.

The college’s medical forms included pronouns and that was very welcome.

Many surveys from the school include 3rd or fourth option for gender.

Openly LGBTQI faculty and staff are readily available.

The fact that people talk about it at all; if you are making an effort, you’re golden and I’m more than willing to help correct and answer pronouns.

A lot of students ask my pronouns and seem to be aware of trans issues.

**What could the college and the faculty be doing better?**

More gender-neutral bathrooms. Some of this costs money, but it is a constant issue especially for someone who is strictly gender-non-conforming. It can feel a punishment not to have appropriate bathrooms to use.

If a course is in gender studies, the prof needs to be well versed in gender stuff.

Professors should warn students if they plan to use slurs in the lesson plan.

**What if the topic of study is not inclusive? For example, in my class we consider studies of women (int’l studies) that don’t include research into trans people because that research is not being done. Should a professor attempt to break material down even further?**

An acknowledgement of the datasets and what they include and not include is helpful. Particularly in an intro course, it’s good to point out analytical bias based on certain notions of how gender works.

**If I see a student looking for a bathroom, can I refer them to resources that they might appreciate like a gender-neutral bathroom without making them uncomfortable?**

If you can do it discretely.

I would suggest that you don’t have that conversation in the bathroom. Wait until another moment.

Another idea would be to announce the locations of bathrooms in the building to the entire class/group, including the nearest gender neutral bathroom.

**Are there any documents that tell people where gender neutral bathrooms are?**

If it’s there, it hasn’t been published as far as I know. It would be a nice thing to have.

[There is an app called Refuge for when you’re out and about.]

The gender neutral bathrooms on campus are Cromwell upstairs, Miller library, Gibson, Lit House.

It would be helpful to have a map of all the gender neutral bathrooms to help identify opportunities.

**Dean Sarah Feyerherm offered the following update on bathrooms:** The College has now committed to all new construction having gender neutral bathrooms. From a Student Affairs standpoint, we have been pro-active about assuring that this occurs.

Professors should be aware that sometimes it’s hard to get the bathroom or plan time around bathroom. These students have different needs/issues of access. This can be more difficult if someone is transitioning; this may require more time or space or comfort. Sometimes the only time that they can do this comfortably is during class time when bathrooms are less crowded.

**How can we get the word out about how to flexible about bathroom time during class?**

Colleague to colleague.

Be aware of it.

Dean Feyerherm talked about ongoing work with data collection: We collect information on names and gender all over campus, in too many places, so we’re looking to streamline. In some cases, we’re also communicating this information externally, so we’re trying to be more mindful of how we communicate to parents.

Form letters should be broadly gender neutral; you cover bases with they, them.

Some concern: if students change name, parents might find out when the students don’t want to share that information.

In some cases, other students have to ‘deadname’ friend—that is, use their friend’s previous name in front of friend’s parents.

It’s helpful to know what name parents might use with a student in case the parents call or contact professors. This could also be included on a survey at the beginning of class.

**Are there any resources from people who’ve worked with critical disability studies, general materials re: trans-identities, or other things we should be reading?**

Genderbread

[There was a promise to follow up on this question.]