

Gender Inclusive Initiatives 2019-2020 Update

The Gender Inclusive Initiatives at Northwestern aim to increase access to resources and support for our gender expansive students, faculty, and staff and is in direct response to the decades of advocacy and leadership of trans, non-binary, and queer members of our campus community. These initiatives are informed by the guidance and the recommendations put forth by the 2019 Gender Queer Non Binary and Trans Task Force.¹ The Co-chairs of the Task force, Drs. Sekile Nzinga (Women's Center Director and Gender Sexuality Studies Lecturer) and Héctor Carrillo (Professor of Sociology and Gender and Sexuality Studies and Director of Sexualities Project at Northwestern), presented a comprehensive action-oriented report with seven overarching recommendations to the task force's co-sponsoring units in October of 2019. They then released the report and shared their recommendations to the University community in February of 2020. In the summer of 2020, the Gender and Sexuality program, joined the Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion and the Women's Center to serve as an additional lead partner to advance the **Gender Inclusive Initiatives at Northwestern**.

The following updates highlight preliminary reports from the three lead partnering units as well as several action leaders and units from across the university who have initiated the planning and implementation stages of the report's recommendations during the 2019-20 academic year. This update does not include all of the gender inclusive initiatives that many of our undergraduate, graduate, and professional students are leading and have been leading prior to these recent efforts. Instead, this update is intended to signal to our trans and non-binary students, faculty, and staff that they are valued here at Northwestern and that we are working towards making the university more welcoming, affirming, equitable, and inclusive for all.

Women's Center & the Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion (OIDI)

Dr. Sekile Nzinga, presently serves at the interim Associate Provost and Chief Diversity Officer and is also leading both the OIDI and Women's Center gender inclusive initiatives. As the co-chair of the GQNBT Task force and co-author of the task force report, she also serves as the gathering point in this update. The Women's Center staff continue to be at the helm of the university's *Gender Inclusive Initiatives* by serving as unit level action leaders as well as offering planning/implementation support to units and other action leaders across the University. During the spring and summer quarters of 2020, Dr. Nzinga, in her joint institutional role, met with 11 units across the University to provide resources and guidance for their planning and implementation phases. She also served on the Campus Accommodations Council, led by Mark

¹ A Gender Queer Non Binary and Trans Task Force was named and co-sponsored by the Office of the Provost, Human Resources, and Student Affairs at Northwestern University during the 2018-19 academic year.

Francis, which is working on expanding all gender bathrooms and lactation rooms as well as ensuring ADA accommodations are met to increase accessibility across University buildings. Nzinga served on and worked with the Gender & Sexuality Studies Advisory Board to explore Trans Studies faculty positions and served as a LGBTQIA Ally training facilitator during the 2019-20 academic year.

As an action leader, the Women's Center is leading several initiatives:

Recommendation 3: Gender Inclusive Facilities

The Women's Center has formally proposed changing its name from "The Women's Center" to "The Center for Women and Gender Equality" to reflect its continued commitment to supporting the educational and professional careers of women as well as its deepening commitment to support trans and nonbinary students, faculty and staff as reflected in its mission to advance gender equity. The center already has two all gender bathrooms and has plans to replace the binary gendered ("Mothers' Room") signage on its Evanston and Chicago lactation rooms during Fiscal Year 2021.

Recommendation 7: Community and Connection

1. The Women's Center has committed to offering more trans inclusive programming and supports. The Center's new program manager, Sarah Brown, developed a host of trans inclusive programs in academic year 2019-20.
 - a. Fall 2020: Sarah Brown, the Center's new program manager, renamed the center's New Mothers' Support group to become the New Parents' Support Group. This group is now inclusive of new parents who may not define themselves as mothers. It also ensures participants view caregiving and affective labor as relevant across gender identities.
 - b. Winter 2020 Quarter: The Center co-sponsored the event Families in Transition, a screening of two short documentaries about the familial relationships of subjects in transition. Both film-makers were present for a post screening discussion. This program was done in partnership with the Queer Pride Graduate Student Association and Block Cinema.
 - c. Winter 2020 Quarter: The Center served as a contributing sponsor to the Queer Pride Graduate Student Association annual conference, Queertopia.
 - d. Winter 2020: staff discussion groups on the subject of Parenting for Social Justice were held at both centers. Emphasizing gender fluidity and supporting gender non-conforming children was a key topic. There is interest in expanding and/or continuing these discussions in the coming year.
 - e. Spring 2020 Quarter: The Center launched an informal affinity space, Lavender Lunch, on the Chicago campus in Winter 2020 quarter and relaunched the group in Spring 2020 quarter during the remote environment open to LGBTQ students, faculty and staff
 - f. Fall 2020 Quarter: The Center is co-hosting with OIDI and the Associate Provost of Faculty an annual welcoming reception for LGTBQ faculty beginning Fall 2020.

2. Spring 2020: The Center selected a non-binary artist and activist as its inaugural “Feminist in Residence.” Hankyeol Song will join the center’s staff in Fall 2020 and engage the university on a wide array of social justice issues throughout the academic year.
3. Fall 2020: In partnership with OIDI, the Women’s Center will create a centralized webpage for trans inclusive resources.
4. Summer 2020: The Center Director is joining the Out Network’s leadership council and will partner on programming to support trans and nonbinary staff and faculty

Action Leaders: Sekile Nzinga, Melisa Stephen, Mónica Russel y Rodríguez (OIDI), and Sarah Brown

Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion (OIDI) and Feinberg ODI

Multiple groups have historically gathered and organized LGBTQIA+ faculty and staff. Following the lead of Brent Turner and Matt Abtahi OIDI will help facilitate a formalized Evanston structure, from two entities the Gay and Lesbian University Union (GLUU) and a more informal network organized with staff support of Student Affairs. The new entity will likely have a more public facing engagement. The current GLUU website was organized by Joe Ellison, who has retired, and the current public facing page is in the planning stages. A new version may include creating a more public facing community of LGBTQIA affinity spaces.

Separately, the Feinberg ODI and key staff members, such as Eric Boberg, will continue to host the OutNetwork for the LGBTQIA+ faculty and staff in the Chicago campus.

Action leaders: Brent Turner (Campus Life), Matt Abtahi (MSA), Mónica Russel y Rodríguez (OIDI), Eric Boberg (Feinberg), Janet Olivo (ODI)

Office of Equity

The Office of Equity continues to support GQNBT students, staff, and faculty by providing accommodations and support services related to gender identity, such as ensuring that non-binary students are enrolled in courses in which they have access to a gender inclusive restroom (**Recommendations 2, 3 & 5**). For the third year in a row, in partnership with Multicultural Student Affairs and volunteer facilitators from across the university, the Office of Equity co-chaired the LGBTQIA+ Ally Training Initiative. This training provides comprehensive education for staff and faculty regarding supporting LGBTQIA+ students and colleagues, and is the only training of its kind on campus. In 2019-20, the leadership team for this project, which included staff from Northwestern University Libraries and Health Professions Advising in addition to the Office of Equity and MSA, recruited and trained an additional ten volunteer facilitators. With an expanded training team, the facilitators were able to offer on-demand department-and unit-level trainings, including specific trainings regarding gender identity, in addition to our quarterly open-enrollment trainings through MyHR Learn. In addition, the Office of Equity offers its own trainings on creating gender-inclusive spaces and supporting non binary colleagues. (**Recommendation 2: Creating a Gender-Inclusive Learning and Working Environment**)

Facilities Management

Facilities launched its all gender bathroom initiative in Winter Quarter 2020 in response to **Recommendation 3: Ensuring Gender-Inclusive Facilities** and the Illinois State All Gender Mandate that went into effect on January 1, 2020.

1. **Single stall-** Facilities has almost completed the re-signing of the single-stall bathrooms that could be used as all-gender bathrooms. Facilities has an estimate regarding the all gender restroom in Annenberg.
2. **Multi Stall-** Providing an all-gender multi-stall bathroom has been complicated by the misalignment of the building codes, the Federal ADA laws, and the multigender law. Facilities has met with the Evanston officials and they are waiting for guidance on the code misalignment.
3. Please note that the University has deferred the majority of its facilities projects due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Action Leaders: Mark Francis and Carrie Jo West

NUIT, Registrar, and Human Resources

NUIT, Human Resources, and the Registrar's Office launched their Gender Inclusive Initiatives in Spring Quarter, 2020 in line with **Recommendation 1: Respecting and Affirming Names and Identity**. These partners have a long-term goal to offer one identity system for students and university employees. The focus for Spring and Summer 2020 was to update pronoun options in CANVAS.

1. IT engaged in a project to ensure all users of CANVAS (staff, student, faculty) will be able to select a pronoun pair (e.g. they/them, they/she, she/her, him/they, etc.) for their profile. This update went live for CANVAS users on August 10, 2020.
2. Melisa Stephen, of the Women's Center, provided an extensive pronoun list that was imported into CANVAS. They also alerted IT's implementation team and produced educational materials to communicate that pronouns are not used by everyone and many people of all gender identities and expressions use/alternate multiple pronouns. Melisa Stephen is also developing communications to educate the university community as they interact with others, that some people use "all pronouns said respectfully". These communications will also convey that some people also change their pronouns all the time and can use different pronouns depending on how they are experiencing their gender, gender identity and/or gender expression at a particular moment.
3. Users can currently select from the prepopulated pronoun pull-down men in the current edition of CANVAS. Drew Clower, who is a LGBTQIA Ally trainer, a member of the Women's Center advisory board, and served on the GQNBT Task force, participated in the testing phases to ensure the functionality of the pronoun update within CANVAS.
4. The Registrar and IT are also planning to participate in a Gender 101 Training as part of their professional development to increase their fluency with the identity based needs of trans and non-binary students and University employees.
5. HR-upgrades to identity systems for employees will be included in resource planning for FY21.

Action Leaders: Kris O'Brien (IT), Sean Reynolds (IT), Jaci Casazza (Registrar), Manuel Cuevas-Trisán (HR), and Melisa Stephen (Women's Center)

Wildcard Office

To further support, the task force report Recommendation 1: Respecting and Affirming Names and Identity, in Fall Quarter 2020, the Wildcard Office will print new first year trans and nonbinary students' and transfer students' chosen names on their Wildcard. The office is also working to ensure all faculty, staff, and students can change their names on their Wildcards. This Respecting and Affirming Names and Identity effort was in collaboration with Associated Student Government (ASG) led by Campbell I. Schafer, Chair of Academics, Juan Zuniga, current Executive Vice President and Adam Davies, outgoing Executive Vice President.

Action Leaders: Tyler Ratkowski (Wildcard Office) and Associated Student Government (ASG)

Office of Global Marketing and Communications

OGMC is an essential partner for the Gender Inclusive Initiative because the evolution and appropriate use of language supports **Recommendation 5: Increasing University Resources** and is closely aligned with inclusivity. OGMC has a plan to create an Inclusive Communications Style Guide that serves as a resource to all of OGMC, as well as for all communicators, webmasters and content creators across Northwestern to ensure the University adopts more inclusive practices in our oral, graphic and written communications. This effort also helps support more inclusive interpersonal communications between members of the campus community.

Style Guide on Inclusive Communications

1. In Summer 2020, OGMC convened a work group to create a style guide on inclusive messaging.
2. The team is in consultation with the GQNBT task force co-chair, Sekile Nzinga, and staff from OIDI and the Women's Center to develop a resource to educate and align communicators on inclusivity in communications and how to avoid communications barriers to better fortify communications pertaining to and in communication with underrepresented or historically marginalized members of our community.
3. The style guide is being conceptualized as a living document as language and communications, just like constructions of identity, are ever evolving.
4. The guide is being developed in phases, with the first phase available for use by the University community by the end of 2020.

Action leader: Jeri Ward (OGMC)

Gender and Sexuality Studies Program

Both GQNBT co-chairs serve on the Gender and Sexuality Studies (GSS) Advisory Board. Additionally, GSS-affiliated students, faculty members, and staff members made this transformative initiative a priority. The GSS Advisory Board named two faculty members as their unit level action leaders who presented a program level plan of action. The GSS Advisory Board voted on adopting the recommendations in Spring 2020. Below are excerpts from GSS's comprehensive plan as an aligned academic unit to bolster Recommendation 2 of creating a Gender-Inclusive Learning and Working Environment.

1. Welcoming Spaces: GSS will ensure that its offices are marked as welcoming spaces for all trans and gender non-conforming students, faculty, staff, and visitors, and for supportive

discussion of issues related to those identities and have volunteered as consulting partners in designing such signage.

2. Website Resources: GSS will aggregate and maintain a list on its website of campus-based spaces and resources of particular value to trans and gender non-conforming folks and groups, and of Evanston- and Chicago-area resources that exist in support of such people and movements. The program will seek campus partners to help design and maintain a visually appealing and information-rich page.

3. Meeting Space: GSS will gladly take requests to use its seminar room, Kresge 1-525, as one possible venue for discussions, reading or study groups, organizing sessions, or other formal or informal events centering the needs of trans and nonbinary people and allies. At moments when physical meetings are impossible or ill-advised, GSS remains willing to help facilitate online sessions with the same goals, with the best security the unit can manage.

4. Community Collaborations: GSS faculty and affiliates will ramp up existing efforts to advertise and solicit collaborative conversations and workshops with trans, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming people at Northwestern, as well as their allies. The first such event, in Fall 2020, will invite GSS-affiliated graduate and undergraduate students, staff, and faculty to discuss the Task Force Report itself as well as this official response, and to brainstorm actionable ideas for future events, campaigns, curricular additions, etc. Staff, students, faculty, and other campus colleagues not affiliated with GSS will also be invited to such events, except when they are designed specifically to solicit impressions and/or debate changes that pertain most directly to GSS students, staff, and faculty.

5. Co-Sponsorships: GSS will continue to invite co-sponsorship requests for events, yearly colloquia, performances, etc., that center trans and nonbinary identities, participants, themes, or scholarship, whether held in person or online. In the climate of heightened support fostered by the Task Force Report, even as it coincides with budgetary cuts, GSS decision-makers will take particular note of requests that foreground trans ideas and identities — including their intersecting attention to sexuality, race, class, and other vectors of power and experience to support such proposals.

6. Programming and Hosted Events: In tandem with the section above on “Community Collaborations,” GSS has committed to remaining cognizant — especially in the wake of the Task Force Report — of the need to design, host, and fund its own events, distinct from co-sponsored functions, that explicitly take up trans and gender-expansive ideas, causes, identities, and experiences. This academic program sees the need for events that place all of the above at their unambiguous center *as well as* the need for trans and gender-expansive lenses, ideas, identities, and scholarship to bear meaningful presence and influence in other events and discussions.

GSS additionally names areas where it has self-identified as a potential action leader and collective ally beyond the GQNBT Task force report recommendations. Those actions include:

- A. **Designated Program Officer:** The GSS Program will designate one faculty member to serve each year as a “point person” on intellectual, pedagogical, and communal issues related to trans, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming people and issues. This new position also recognizes the previously unmet needs within the GSS Program related to trans, non-conforming, and nonbinary ideas and identities. This faculty member will play a key internal role, making themselves available to consult with other faculty about (for example) adjusting or expanding syllabi to manifest more engagement with trans and nonbinary ideas and materials, and coordinating relevant events. The GSS website and other student-facing materials will name this officer to students, who can seek them out singly or in groups for conversations related to gender-expansive ideas and experiences. These can include voicing favorable or unfavorable impressions of how trans, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming people, texts, and experiences currently appear (or do not) in GSS-sponsored courses and events; floating new ideas for events or courses; and asking questions about how the Program can best be an ally on these issues.

Externally to the program, this faculty member will prioritize availability to collaborate with other campus colleagues working to implement Task Force recommendations or to seek related changes. Ideally, they will amplify relationships with the Gender & Sexuality Resource Center (GSRC), the Women’s Center, Campus Inclusion and Community (CIC), Multicultural Student Affairs (MSA), the Institute for Sexual and Gender Minority Health (ISGMH), and other campus offices and affiliated personnel that represent crucial resources for trans, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming students, staff, and faculty. By no means should the creation of this designated office imply that *only* this faculty member will take up the kinds of work described above. GSS pledges the opposite to be true.

- B. **Nomenclature:** In accordance with the very first footnote in the GQNBT Task Force Report, at the bottom of its cover page, GSS accepts the recommendations for “trans and non-conforming” and “all-gender” as the nomenclature that staff, students, and faculty on the Task Force recommended for general use. GSS’ research and teaching in gender and sexuality perpetually demonstrate the likelihood, even the inevitability of labels and associated politics and preferences shifting in the future. GSS pledges to remain attentive to those future shifts and to maintain evolving best practices.
- C. **Respecting and Affirming Names and Identities:** GSS volunteers its consulting participation in the creation of such an efficient, affirming, and easy-to-use system, including through the appointed officer described above. Amid the absence of such a system, GSS faculty will take steps to ascertain and employ the correct names and pronouns of all of our students, staff and faculty colleagues, and other campus partners, and to clarify our own names and pronouns in return. Even within trans and nonbinary communities, no consensus exists for how (or even whether) pronouns should always be solicited. GSS faculty will actively seek input, share best practices, and explore different models for collecting and offering pronouns; all such models have vital but complicated politics and are themselves subject to debate and change over time. Allowing for elasticity and variable preferences must not equate, however, to disrespect and failures of affirmation, especially when they persist despite stated desires.

- D. **Curricular Expansions:** GSS will develop more courses centering trans and non-conforming scholars, vocabularies, experiences, and materials. The program plans to also ensure their wider incorporation in classes that shine less obvious spotlights in those areas. Partly in response to GSS student activism that preceded and coincided with the Task Force, the program has built a 2020-21 curriculum that includes more trans- and nonbinary-centered courses than in any prior year, including two 200-level and two 300-level courses explicitly devoted to these areas. (Three of these are first-time offerings.) At least four other courses include multiple weeks' worth of trans- and nonbinary-centered texts and discussions. Beyond just adding and offering the courses, GSS will add a page to its website that emphasizes their content, materials, and teaching methods. This page will also indicate elements of other year-round courses that enfold more trans, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming materials than may be obvious from CAESAR descriptions. GSS will encourage faculty whose syllabi do not stress these materials (much as ratios of explicitly feminist, queer, masculinity-focused, race-specific, and class-specific readings vary from class to class) to offer transparent and nuanced rationales for those relative absences, and to invite nonetheless intellectual exchange and suggested readings from those directions, in sync with the course's topics and concerns.
- E. **Future Hiring:** At yearly moments when WCAS solicits GSS's goals for future faculty hiring, and at other strategic moments across the year, the program will reiterate extant requests for new faculty lines that stress trans and nonbinary histories, identities, and scholarship, as filtered through any discipline or range of disciplines. Many faculty are already boosting parts of the program's scholarly agendas and teaching portfolios that stress trans, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming communities and topics. Still, the unit believes that neither the program's classrooms nor its research culture nor our social community can achieve full and necessary transformation without recruiting, supporting, and retaining colleagues whose interests center in this area. The capacities of GSS, as an academic Program, are more limited than those of Departments, since it has fewer faculty lines and typically need to join with other units to conceive, fill, and support them. GSS' campaign to hire in trans and nonbinary studies, then, is simultaneously will be a campaign for discipline-specific autonomy over our own hiring. In continuing to make the case for this type of hire, the program will stress that multiple hires in trans and nonbinary studies are preferable to one; that fluency in these literatures and experiences is an asset in *any* hire, whether or not framed around that field; and that, while scholars' own identities must never be presumed as coterminous with their objects of study, the program believes the University stands in deep need of hiring and retaining more trans, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming faculty *regardless of their field or discipline*. GSS pledges itself to all such efforts, including by making available its own core or affiliate faculty whenever possible as external members of hiring committees in other units.
- F. **Reading/Working Groups:** The Gender and Sexuality Studies Advisory Board will continue to discuss best strategies for adding new reading and working groups that might bring faculty, graduate students, staff, and well-equipped undergraduates

together in collaborative discussion of key field trends and urgent issues in the world—including, of course, topics related to trans and nonbinary people, communities, and ideas. GSS plans to continue to seek new partners, resources, and available energies to convene and sustain such groups. The program plans to include their graduate students as valuable partners in pursuing and meeting these goals.

Action Leaders: Amy Ruth Partridge and Nick Davis

Student Affairs

Units across the Division of Student Affairs have begun planning and implementing a host of recommendations and have served as leaders on initiating a host of identified action areas prior to and since the release of the GQNBT task force report. Campus Inclusion and Community and Multicultural Student Affairs along with trans, non-binary and queer student leaders have worked to ensure Northwestern is a supportive and affirming learning environment for gender expansive students, staff, and faculty.

Recommendation 1: Respecting and Affirming Names and Identity:

- a. Multicultural Student Affairs (MSA) consulted on the aforementioned ID card name modification for NU Wildcard
- b. MSA is also working with Kellogg around pronoun implementation.
- c. Health Services prominently offers students who are checking in for care the option to wear their “preferred name or pronoun” label, and staff are also encouraged to identify their own preferred pronouns. Staff ask students upon check-in what their chosen name or pronoun are and offer support on accessing Caesar to make this identity information more durable.

Recommendation 2: Creating a Gender-Inclusive Learning and Working Environment

- a. Student Affairs also worked to include gender-inclusive language in Student Affairs Assessment surveys
- b. Student Affairs dedicated additional funds through the Office of the Provost, The Graduate School, and Student Affairs for GQNBT programming for the 150 years of womxn at Northwestern.
- c. MSA convenes a LGBTIQA Advisory board with undergrad and graduate students. This group created the student GQNBT Survey centering student experiences.
- d. MSA took a delegation of students to Creating Change conference and centered program attendance around GQNBT Task Force Recommendations.
- e. Worked with student leaders and co-chairs of 150 years of womxn at Northwestern to increase language awareness on the website and encouraged more submissions for website profiles.

Recommendation 3: Expanding Gender-Inclusive Facilities:

MSA created a bathroom location and description map on their website and has plans to update the map further once Facilities has completed the all gender restroom conversion and provided a final list of all gender bathrooms.

Recommendation 4: Expanding Health Services and Supporting Well-Being

- a. MSA provided a workshop on Affirming Healthcare to all of Searle Health Service staff
- b. MSA worked with NUSHIP on Trans Advocate through Atena
- c. MSA provided an affirming healthcare series centered around Trans, non-binary and genderqueer folk.

Recommendation 5: Increasing University Resources

- a. MSA meets with parents and talks through options for housing, healthcare, and psycho-social support
- b. MSA provides website resources for LGBTQIA students
- c. MSA hosts supporting your LGBTQIA+ Student during Wildcat Welcome and Parent/Family Weekend and offers one-on-one supports for trans students and non-binary students and their families
- d. MSA provides resources and content at the Gender and Sexuality Resource Center tabling events and online to support trans and non-binary students.
- e. MSA has developed Wildcat Welcome events with the New Student and Family Programs Office: In 2019 the PFO event for families of LGBTQ students was hosted by MSA. This is being planned again for 2020 along with a Trans and Non-Binary Student Affinity Space.

Recommendation 7: Strengthening Community, Connection, and Collaboration

- a. MSA convenes a LGBTQIA Advisory board with undergrad and graduate students- this group created the student GQNBT Survey centering student experiences.
- b. MSA is working with Brent Turner from Campus Life to continue building out the LGBTQIA+ Staff Affinity space
- d. MSA offered programs for Trans Day of Remembrance and Trans Day of Visibility.
- e. MSA co-Programs with Trans and Non-Binary students and supports Trans and Non-Binary vendors for programming.
- f. MSA offers Queer & Trans empowerment month programming with specific programs centering Trans students

Action leaders: Matt Abtahi (MSA), Daviree Velázquez Phillip (MSA), and Lesley-Ann Brown-Henderson (CIC)

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