Understanding Experiences and Identifying the Needs of Transgender, Gender Non-Conforming, Genderqueer, and Gender Non-Binary Students: A Needs Assessment at a Private Urban Liberal Arts University

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Trans* (transgender, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, and gender non-binary) students face unique challenges and have historically been an underserved population within higher education (Nicolazzo, 2017). The purpose of this inquiry was to understand the campus climate that exists for trans* students and their specific needs, challenges, and obstacles they encountered based on their gender identity. The inquiry was situated within a private urban liberal arts university setting and was guided by three questions: (1) what is the trans* student perception of campus climate around gender identity?; (2) what are the challenges and obstacles trans* students encounter while they adjust to and persist through college; and (3) what are the academic, social, and physical needs of trans* students at the University. The inquiry used a needs assessment framework that involved a comprehensive examination of qualitative data from nine trans* student and alumni interviews, six focus group participants, and 24 institutional documents. Through thematic analysis, using inductive coding methods and code mapping techniques, inquiry findings revealed that the campus climate is not trans* affirming or inclusive. Furthermore, key findings suggest that trans* students have unique needs as a student population, and they encounter a variety of gender identity-based obstacles while enrolled at the University. In sum, the inquiry indicated that trans* affirming support and care is lacking, generating a need for an institutional commitment to developing student support resources and services for trans* students. Based on the needs assessment framework, the inquiry concludes with a discussion of implications for practice and

practical solutions that could be applied and implemented to address the needs of trans* students

and the gaps that exist within the inquiry setting.

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Preface

This dissertation and my doctoral education were a labor of love that could not have happened without the help of many people. I am beyond appreciative and grateful to everyone who aided in this endeavor, especially the following individuals:

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1.0 Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this study is to better understand the campus climate that surrounds gender identity and expression for transgender, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, and gender non-binary students. Specifically, this study will address the perceived challenges and experiences of transgender and gender non-conforming students as they adjust and persist at one private liberal arts university. Throughout this inquiry, "trans*" will be used as an umbrella term to encompass those individuals who identify as transgender, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, gender non-binary, or whose gender identity differs from their biological sex assigned at birth (Garvey, Chang, Nicolazzo, & Jackson, 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017; Trans Student Educational Resources, n.d.). The collegiate environment is an ideal context in which to explore the experiences of trans* students because a lack of knowledge, education, and training exists in this area for professionals, and institutional resources for students (McKinney, 2005; Nicolazzo, 2017; Renn, 2017). Conducting a needs assessment would identify the types of programs, services, and support mechanisms from which they would benefit. From this needs assessment, the following will be identified: (a) experiences and challenges trans* students face and (b) the type of institutional services and policies they feel are needed to create a campus culture that is inclusive and affirming for their gender identity and expression.

1.1 Problem Area

Students face a myriad of social, emotional, and psychological challenges and obstacles as they not only adjust to, but persist through college (Chickering & Schlossberg, 2002; Morrow & Ackerman, 2012; Ostrove & Long, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). The personal obstacles students encounter, coupled with the rigors of collegiate study, make college a challenging time for all students. Absent or unsupportive social and family support networks, difficulty managing physical and emotional wellness, lack of or decreased finances, and inadequate time management are proven factors that can influence a student's personal and academic adjustment and persistence (Astin, 1993; Chickering & Schlossberg, 2002; Morrow & Ackerman, 2012; Tinto, 1993).

While college is historically perceived as a challenging time for all students, trans* students face additional obstacles and challenges in comparison to their cisgender peers (Goldberg, Beemyn, & Smith, 2017; Grant, Mottet, Tanis, Harrison, Herman, & Keisling, 201l, Nicolazzo, 2017). Trans* student experiences are adversely impacted by issues ranging from inadequately designed student housing, restroom, and locker room facilities to a lack of access to trans* affirming health and counseling services (Garvey et al., 2018; Grant et al., 2011; Nicolazzo, 2017). These negative experiences are reinforced by the lack of gender inclusive policies and limited student services and resources that exist to support and affirm trans* students during their collegiate years (Nicolazzo, 2017). Trans* students also experience harassment and discrimination and are exposed to incidents of violence and abuse at higher rates on campus than their cisgender peers (Grant et al.; 2011). Students who identify as trans* are often victimized by being misgendered or referred to by an incorrect pronoun, lack of use of their affirmed name, policies and programs that reinforce the gender binary, and adverse interactions, which can include

bullying and physical or sexual assault. Their experiences impact their perception of college and whether they can overcome the challenges and obstacles they encounter to adjust and persist.

Like other marginalized groups, trans* students and their experiences are affected by government policies, regulations, and mandates. Trans* rights have been a highly contested issue among the nationwide populace throughout the 2010s, and federal policy and legislation have also shifted regarding the responsibilities of colleges and universities to protect their students' trans* rights. The current lack of government mandates, along with decreasing federal protections for trans* individuals, amplifies the challenges trans* students navigate in comparison to their cisgender peers.

The additional challenges and obstacles trans* students face have the potential to impact their adjustment and persistence through college adversely. Trans* students, like their cisgender peers, are looking to not only become academically and socially integrated, but also develop a sense of belonging (Nicolazzo, 2017). Studies show that sense of belonging directly correlates with academic progress, academic achievement, and social acceptance (Morrow & Ackerman, 2012). Negative experiences, such as being bullied, harassed, or victimized, force trans* students to question and doubt their self-worth, purpose, and value. Decreased sense of belonging increases the likelihood trans* students will battle depression, anxiety, and gender dysphoria, and has negative implications for adjustment, persistence and retention (Nicolazzo, 2017).

Trans* students are at a greater risk of dropping out of college than their cisgender peer group, with a recent study finding that as high as 38% of its trans* student participants reported they had considered leaving college due to negative treatment they received from peers, faculty, and staff (Goldberg, 2018; Grant et al., 2011; Rankin et al., 2010; Nicolazzo, 2017). Their social and academic experiences are further exacerbated by the limited student support services that exist,

as well as lack of training, education, and awareness on transgender issues among cisgender peers, faculty, and staff (Beemyn, 2003; Dugan, Kusel, & Simounet, 2012; McKinney, 2005). As a result of the lack of support systems in place, the trans* student population also has higher rates of mental health issues, sexual assault, depression, and attempted suicide than the national average (Goldberg 2018; Grant et al., 2011; James, Rankin, Keisling, & Anafi, 2016).

Colleges and universities need to examine the needs of their trans* student population. Trans* students face additional challenges due to a lack of social, institutional, and federal support during a critical time when they are already encountering the same challenges and stress their cisgender peers face daily. Therefore, colleges and universities need to assess the campus climate for trans* students, address the problems they face, and adopt student services and inclusive and affirming policies aimed at supporting their success, adjustment, and persistence.

1.2 Inquiry Context and Researcher Positionality

The inquiry will be set within a small, private not-for profit liberal arts university located in western Pennsylvania. To protect the anonymity of the institution and the confidentiality of study participants, the institution will be referred to as "the University" throughout this dissertation. The University offers graduate and undergraduate degree programs in arts, sciences, sustainability, business, and health sciences. It enrolls approximately 2,000 students (as reported on the University's website). Once women-only, the University transitioned into a gender-inclusive institution due to declining enrollment, enrolling men in its undergraduate academic programs in Fall 2015. The year prior to the transition, university enrollment consisted of 500 degree-seeking undergraduates, which included three men enrolled in an online degree program

not part of the traditional undergraduate college (see Appendix A). At the start of the Fall 2015 semester, undergraduate enrollment consisted of 611 undergraduates (80 men and 531 women) and represented a 22.2% increase in degree seeking students (see Appendix B). From 2014 to 2018, the number of undergraduate students has increased each year and at the start of Fall 2018, university enrollment consisted of 994 undergraduates (287 men and 707 women) in degree seeking programs (see Appendix C). The significant growth that occurred from 2014 to 2018 has resulted in a 98.8% increase in undergraduate students.

While data exists that documents the University's growth in enrollment, one limitation is that institutional research lacks the number of trans* students enrolled. The University records demographic data based on the parameters of the common data set initiative, which is a nationwide college and university enrollment reporting mechanism. The common data set is limited to biological sex and records students as either men or women. It does not allow for any variation that would recognize a student as trans*. Enrollment data is also collected based on student self-reported race and ethnicity, but no reporting mechanism in the common data set exists for students to self-report gender identity. While the "Common Application" and "Universal College Application" allow students to record their gender identity during the admissions process, gender identity is not tracked or recorded by institutional research (Jaschik, 2016). Based on these limitations in demographic data, no university-wide empirical research has been conducted on the challenges trans* students encounter there, nor their specific needs as a student population.

Trans* rights have not only been a highly contested issue among the nationwide populace, but also on college and university campuses, including the University in this study. This national contention has led to federal policy changes both expanding and limiting rights, which have set off a chain of events that have directly affected the University. In May 2016, under President Barack

Obama, the Department of Education and Department of Justice released a "dear colleague letter"—official letters of state announcing proposed legislative changes—announcing that gender identity would be classified as a protected class under Title IX, which addresses discrimination based on sex in educational settings (see Appendix D). That fall, a report was disseminated to the University's campus community outlining the results of an undergraduate research project that analyzed gender inclusive language in institutional forms and policies there. It provided evidence that gender inclusive language and policies were lacking (see Appendix E). Individual departments were then charged with implementing the changes recommended, such as updating the student handbook to ensure gender inclusiveness. The largest institutional change stemming from the content analysis was the addition of gender identity and expression to the University's non-discrimination policy.

In February 2017, under President Donald Trump, a second dear colleague letter was released that removed gender identity as a protected class under Title IX and rescinded the previous federal mandates (see Appendix F). In October of that year, the University's vice president of student affairs and dean of students formed the Gender Inclusive Task Force and charged the group with examining and developing recommendations for policies, programs, and services geared toward supporting trans* students. In my professional capacity at the University, I was asked to serve on the task force and worked with colleagues to develop a set of recommendations based on best practices in trans* student services and feedback from trans* students. To ensure the recommendations were addressing the concerns of trans* students, the task force presented the recommendations to students who self-identified as trans*. I was asked to lead this review process and received feedback through one-on-one meetings, emails, and a preliminary one-hour focus/discussion group.

After revision, the task force presented a recommendation report to the University's Diversity and Inclusion Council in October 2018 (see Appendix G). It was then revised again and submitted for final review by the president's council and was taken under consideration for review and implementation. During the same time, the Diversity and Inclusion Council's Gender and Sexual Violence Prevention Committee also submitted a request to revise and adopt gender inclusive affirming policies related to class rosters and email naming conventions for trans* students (see Appendix H).

Meanwhile, federal legislation was being proposed that would define gender as a biological condition comprised of an individual's sex assigned at birth (Pettit, 2018). Trans* individuals across the country began staging protests and adopting the mantra "we will not be erased." In response to the proposed federal changes, the University's Diversity and Inclusion Council issued a statement of support for trans* individuals, indicating the University did not and would not discriminate based on gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression (see Appendix I). Trans* students and allies at the University also held a protest and demanded that the University further develop policies, practices, and services that were supportive and affirming for students who identify as trans*. The trans* students cited incidents where they encountered discrimination, which ranged from non-inclusive policies to institutional practices by faculty and staff that resulted in misgendering and being identified by their dead name.

Among all of this, the University applied to be listed as a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ)-friendly campus through the Campus Pride Index. The Campus Pride Index is a national benchmarking tool for colleges and universities that allows institutions to apply to be rated as LGBTQ-friendly on a five-point scale. The University was included in the Campus Pride Index in 2019 and received a 3.5 out of 5 rating. While the rating highlighted the

ways in which the University was currently addressing the needs of LGBTQ students, it also demonstrated that there was room for improvement.

In June 2019, the Gender Inclusive Task Force was given authority to develop some of the trans* affirming policies, training, and resources that were recommended and that previously did not exist or hadn't been adopted institution wide (see Appendix J). This resulted in the creation of an affirmed name policy and registration process (see Appendix K), an all-gender restroom list, and the publication of educational literature on gender identity and pronouns in student, faculty, and staff handbooks and standalone documents. The affirmed name policy was the first time an institutional policy has been written that recognized the importance of identifying students by their affirmed name over their legal name. By August 2019, trans*-related gender inclusive training sessions were conducted with new and returning faculty, dining services staff, and student leaders, such as resident assistants and orientation leaders. Additionally, a new online feature was launched in Fall 2019 that allowed faculty to download a class roster that would include a student's affirmed name, if registered.

The changes implemented were done to address the concerns of trans* students, however the University has continued to miss the mark in many areas. Evidence of this manifested itself in October 2019 when a group of trans* students and allies submitted an open letter to the University president. The letter acknowledged the work that had been done, but stated significant changes still needed to occur, especially in the areas of faculty training, student and peer education, transphobic incident response, student records management, facilities, and healthcare (see Appendix L). Furthermore, the letter demonstrated that trans* students perceived the campus climate to be inadequate and unwelcoming. As a result of the letter, the affirmed name policy has been adapted to allow students to change their email naming convention to reflect their affirmed

name versus their legal name. All gender restrooms have expanded with two new all-gender restrooms being added to the library and an academic building where they previously did not exist. Despite these changes, the open letter demonstrates that a student need still exists for increased development and adoption of gender inclusive policies, practices, and services for trans* students.

In my role at the University, I serve in a variety of positions that provide exposure and access to trans* students. As director of residence life, I work with new and returning trans* students one-on-one to assign them housing. These interactions allow me to develop a rapport with them and an opportunity to discuss their needs as it relates to their gender identity and expression. I also serve as advisor to the Queer Straight Alliance (QSA), a student group that advocates for LGBTQ rights on campus, implements programming, and provides opportunities for social interaction amongst the LGBTQ community. Through my work on the Gender Inclusive Task Force, I have been publicly involved in recommending and developing trans* affirming policies and educational initiatives. Because of these three levels of exposure to students, I have developed a reputation as an advocate and ally for trans* students. Trans* students regularly come to me when they have questions or encounter discrimination or harassment on campus.

Due to my increasing exposure to trans* students, I am in a unique position as both a researcher and practitioner. I have positional and institutional authority to examine and address the needs of the University's trans* student population and develop policies and practices that are trans* inclusive and affirming. As part of our university strategic plan, the first and primary strategic priority is to enhance the student and academic experience for all students, which includes our trans* students (see Appendix M). Based on the tasks accomplished by the Gender Inclusive Task Force, and because of student protests, the institution's leadership is receptive to better understanding and examining the trans* student experience.

While no formal needs assessment has been conducted in the past, the formation of the Gender Inclusive Task Force has allowed anecdotal data to be collected on the trans* student experience. The feedback received from the preliminary focus group and individual student meetings has helped shape the formation of the University's current affirmed name policy and provided justification for the development of trans* affirming educational and training initiatives. Therefore, a formal needs assessment will address the lack of formal pre-existing research and further provide the University with a better understanding of the challenges and needs of trans* students, as well as empirical evidence that expands, reinforces, or refutes the anecdotal data collected through previous institutional methods.

1.3 Stakeholders

The primary stakeholder group for this study are the students who self-identify as trans* and are enrolled either full- or part-time at the University. To qualify to participate in the study, trans* students must be degree-seeking and enrolled in either an undergraduate or graduate degree program. Trans* students are the primary stakeholder group for the study as they are the population whose experiences are being examined and needs are being assessed. The intended outcomes of this study are to address and improve the experiences and services provided for trans* students at the University. Because the study will be conducted through a needs assessment approach, the trans* student stakeholder group will exist as the focal point for this study and are the primary demographic that the principal investigator is interested in researching and engaging.

Trans* alumni are another stakeholder group that will be engaged in this study. Gaining the perspective and experiences of trans* alumni will allow for a historical understanding and

comparison point of the needs of trans* students, both past and present. Alumni traditionally have an invested interest in the growth and development of their alma mater. Through alumni involvement, we will be able to identify potential systemic issues within the University that impact the trans* student experience. Trans* alumni will also provide a unique perspective on the types of resources and services that would benefit trans* students both within and outside the University as they transition from college to the workforce environment. The criteria for trans* alumni participants will be bounded to a one to three-year post-collegiate graduation date. Trans* alumni who graduated prior to 2016 will not be eligible for participation. This limitation is to ensure that participants are not significantly removed from their collegiate experience and that they attended the University during the years it has been gender inclusive. Prior to 2016, most alumni applied and were admitted to a much smaller, single gender university and the experiences would be significantly different.

The secondary stakeholder group are the individuals who aren't expressly involved in the study, but through their engagement with trans* students have a significant impact on their experiences. These include cisgender students whose gender identity aligns with their biological sex assigned at birth (Goldberg, 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017). Cisgender students make up the peer group that the trans* student population has the most interaction with. They are also the group that can most positively or negatively impact a trans* student's experience as they adjust and persist through college. The third stakeholder group is comprised of the University leadership and administration. These are individuals within the organization that have the most influence to implement change and directly impact institutional policies. Throughout the study, the term "Presidents Cabinet" is used to apply to individuals who serve in key leadership roles at the University, which includes the president, vice presidents, associate or assistant vice presidents,

deans, and the athletic director. President Cabinet members need to be involved in this study because they will receive the outcomes and respond to the findings.

1.4 Problem of Practice

As previously mentioned, trans* students are a marginalized and historically neglected population in higher education (Dugan, Kusel, & Simounet, 2010; Renn, 2017). The lack of trans*-friendly, inclusive, and affirming policies and support services at colleges and universities negatively impact a trans* student's adjustment and college experience. Even though the campus climate for trans* students is better than it was 15 years ago, progress is not consistent across institutions, and trans* students continue to receive limited institutional support and resources (Nicolazzo, 2017; Renn, 2017). The lack of knowledge, education, training, and understanding of trans* issues increase the marginalization this student demographic encounters and enable campus cultures that reinforce cisgender policies and practices that adversely affect learning, college persistence, sense of belonging, and personal well-being (McKinney, 2005; Nicolazzo, 2017; Renn, 2017).

Based on my role and experience at the University, I do not believe trans* students have necessary institutional resources and support services due to a lack of understanding, awareness, and empirical research on trans* student needs and challenges. Specifically, and locally, to better support our trans* student population, it is critical we gain an increased understanding of their experiences, needs, and challenges. The University, like many others, has limited anecdotal research on trans* students and their experiences in comparison to other student demographics. Institutional policies, practices, and student services reinforce and favor the cisgender,

male/female binary because of this lack of knowledge and decreased physical visibility of the trans* student population. Therefore, a comprehensive needs assessment must be conducted to examine the experiences of the University's trans* students and obtain empirical evidence on the challenges and obstacles faced and specific needs required as they adjust and persist through college.

1.5 Inquiry Questions

The purpose of my inquiry is to determine the unique obstacles and challenges trans* students encounter at the University and what student services and programs they perceive will benefit them as they adjust to and persist through college. Information will be gathered to identify the campus culture and systems that exist around gender identity and expression for trans* students, as well as what services, policies, and practices exist or are lacking. Best practices around trans* student services exist and continue to be developed, but it is critical for institutions to understand the specific needs and challenges of their trans* student demographic (Nicolazzo, 2017). To examine this problem of practice, the inquiry focuses on the experiences, challenges, and needs of trans* students and the campus climate that exists around gender identity and expression at the University. The inquiry questions that guide this study are:

1. What is the trans* student perception of campus climate around gender identity?

- How do university policies and practices influence a trans* student's experience at the University?

- How do interactions with cisgender faculty, staff, and students impact a trans* student's experience?

2. What are the challenges and obstacles trans* students encounter while they adjust to and persist through college?

3. What are the academic, social, and physical needs of trans* students at the University?

   - What types of services or programs do trans* students need to feel included and affirmed?

   - What are the policies and practices trans* students identify as critical to increase their sense of belonging on campus?

2.0 Chapter 2: Review of Supporting Scholarship and Professional Knowledge

College is a time of intellectual growth and rewarding experiences, when students are not only academically and socially engaged but are part of a community that embraces diversity and difference. A perception exists that colleges and universities are safe and inclusive environments for all students. However, this is not a reality. Trans* students, for example, have a different perception, reporting they encounter hostile and unsafe campus climates, which include incidents of violence, harassment, bullying, and discrimination (Beemyn, 2003; Beemyn, Curtis, Davis, & Tubbs, 2005; Garvey et al., 2018; Goldberg, 2018; Grant, Mottet, Tanis, Harrison, Herman, & Keisling, 2011; Nicolazzo, 2017; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010; Renn, 2017; Seelman, 2016).

The challenges and obstacles trans* students face impact not only their perception of college, but also their overall mental health, retention, and ultimate degree completion (Goldberg, 2018; Grant et al., 2016; James, Herman, Rankin, Keisling, & Anafi, 2015). Transgender students are threatened, attacked, and made to feel excluded not only by their peers but also by their faculty and campus staff members at rates higher than their peers. Such harassment is based solely on their gender identity (Beemyn, 2003; Beemyn et al., 2005; Goldberg, 2018; McKinney, 2005; Nicolazzo, 2017; Rankin et al., 2010). Due to the levels of harassment they encounter during their college experience, trans* students are more likely to drop out than their non-transgendered peers and less likely to return to complete their degree (Goldberg, 2018; Grant et al., 2016; James et al., 2015).

Though we know that marginalized groups often experience higher rates of discrimination in comparison to non-marginalized groups, learning more about the transgender population is

difficult. Studies comparing this group to other marginalized communities are limited, namely because the transgender population maintains low visibility for fear of their safety due to higher exposure to violence (Grant et al., 2010; Griner, Vamos, Thompson, Vazquez-Otero, & Daley, 2017; James et al., 2016; Nicolazzo, 2017). Transgender students will often hide their identity because they perceive the campus climate as hostile and unsafe (Nicolazzo, 2017; Rankin et al., 2010). Historically, when transgender students have reported discrimination and harassment, they have encountered a negative institutional response where they are either not supported, dismissed from campus, or further victimized (Nicolazzo, 2017; Rankin et al., 2010). As a result, transgender students report feelings of institutional discrimination maintained through policies and practices, as well as beliefs that faculty and staff lack the training and understanding to address or understand their needs (Goldberg, 2018; McKinney, 2005; Nicolazzo, 2017).

The following review of scholarship and knowledge is organized to provide a better understanding of the trans* students' college experience by examining how discrimination and harassment shape the campus climate and by examining the challenges, obstacles, and needs of this student community. In the first section, information about the difference between gender identity and biological sex—along with the definitions of terms and language utilized when discussing gender and sex—is outlined to help clearly define this specific population. The second section presents information about transgender students' college experiences and will highlight the adjustment issues and challenges they encounter. The third section examines federal, state, and local policies and regulations around transgender rights and how these influence college and university policy. Lastly, the fourth section presents information about transgender student campus services and support and then outlines best practices for responding to these students' needs. This review of scholarship and knowledge will conclude with a summary of how this literature has

shaped my understanding of the level of discrimination and harassment transgender students encounter in the University's campus environment.

2.1 Gender Identify versus Biological Sex

A more recent and substantial challenge facing educators in the United States (as well as the general public) is how to understand and conceptualize what it means for someone to identify as transgender, gender non-conforming, and genderqueer (Dugan Kusel, & Simounet, 2012; Garvey et al., 2018). This confusion results from a misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the terms gender identity and biological sex. Throughout Western culture, these two terms have become interconnected and interchangeable (Diamond, 2002). The socially accepted presumption is that someone identifies as either male or female and that this identity corresponds with their physical, biological sex with which they were born. Gender identity and biological sex, however, are not synonymous (Diamond, 2002; Dugan, Kusel, & Simounet, 2012; Nicolazzo, 2017). This section will present the difference between gender identity and biological sex, define gender identity, explain why gender as a construct is a complex issue, and examine how gender has been understood and conceptualized through literature and research.

2.1.1 Biological Sex

Biological sex is a designation that medical physicians assign to individuals at birth. This designation is determined solely by the physical genitalia the individual has when born (Diamond, 2002; Garvey et al., 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017). If a child is born with a penis, they are classified as

male, and if they have a vagina, they are designated a female. Physicians determine the child's biological sex during their initial examination, recording it on the child's birth certificate, a legal document. While most parents understand and expect that their child will be either male or female, physicians also have an option to designate a child as intersex (Diamond, 2002; Garvey et al., 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017). *Intersex* is a classification reserved by physicians who determine that a child is born with characteristics (such as genitals, chromosomes, and hormone levels) that fall outside the typical definition and understanding of either the male or female gender binary (Diamond, 2002; Garvey et al., 2018; Greenberg & Stam, 2012; Human Rights Campaign, n.d.; Nicolazzo, 2017). Nicolazzo (2017) notes that, while intersex exists as a less commonly known designation that physicians can select, there is "intense pressure from medical practitioners to operate on intersex babies to modify their sex assignations so they align within the binary of male/female" (p. 169).

2.1.2 Gender Identity

While biological sex is easily defined and socially understood, gender identity is more complex. Diamond (2002) notes that historically, gender identity and biological sex are culturally viewed as meaning the same thing. The term gender identity, however, refers to how someone perceives themselves and allows for individuals to self-identify as either male, female, both, or neither (Diamond, 2002; Garvery et al., 2018; Goldberg, 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017). A person's gender identity may be the same or different than their biological sex assigned at birth. That is, gender identity is self-determined and can change or stay the same with an individual's perceptions, experiences, and beliefs (Garvey et al., 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017). Unlike biological sex, which has three classifications (male, female, or intersex), gender identity is a multidimensional

spectrum that includes individuals who identify as cisgender, transgender, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, gender fluid, and gender non-binary.

As we unpack gender identity as a social construct, we need to understand what each of the dimensions that fall under gender identity means and how they are connected and interrelated to one another. *Cisgender* is a term used to refer to individuals whose gender identity aligns with the biological sex they were assigned at birth (Beemyn, 2003; Beemyn et al., 2005; Diamond, 2002; Garvey et al., 2018; Goldberg, 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017). Individuals who identify as cisgender are the dominant culture in society and experience inherent privilege through cisnormativity (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Cisnormativity is a false perception that only two genders exist, gender is not interchangeable, and our physical attributes at birth define our gender (Goldberg, 2018, Nicolazzo, 2017; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Cisnormativity dismisses the idea that an individual's gender identity is self-determined or that it can be different from their biological sex.

Transgender is a term utilized to refer to individuals whose gender identity is not the same as the biological sex assigned at their birth (Beemyn, 2003; Beemyn et al., 2005; Diamond, 2012; Garvey et al., 2018; Goldberg, 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017). For example, an individual whose biological sex was female, but who identifies as male, and vice versa, may self-identify as transgender. Historically, the term transgender has been used and socially accepted as an umbrella designation for individuals whose current gender identity does not align with their biological sex (Beemyn 2003; Beemyn et al., 2005; Garvey et al., 2018; Goldberg, 2018; Human Rights Campaign, n.d.; Nicolazzo, 2017; Pryor, 2015). Though transgender is a broad category, not all persons whose gender identity and biological sex do not align identify as transgender.

A common misconception of the cisgender narrative is that a transgender individual has to—or wants to—partake in surgery to re-align their body to match their gender identity (Nicolazzo, 2017). That action is called *transitioning*, and while some transgender individuals undergo surgery to transition, others do not (Grant et al., 2011; Human Rights Campaign, n.d.; Nicolazzo, 2017). The term transition can include social transition, when an individual dresses according to their gender identity and adopts a name and pronouns aligned with that identity with the aim of being recognized as a gender different than their biological sex (Budge, Adelson & Howard, 2013; Grant et al., 2011; Human Rights Campaign, n.d.; Pryor, 2015). In this case, individuals choose to transition socially while maintaining their physical birth attributes and genitals. This shows that transitioning is not only a physical alteration. Therefore, just like being transgender is multidimensional, so is the concept of transitioning, as it can mean that transgender individuals are transitioning socially, physically, or both.

Those individuals who do not identify as transgender or who identify with multiple gender identities may classify themselves as *gender non-conforming*, *genderqueer*, *gender fluid*, or *gender non-binary*. While each of these terms has differences and similarities, they all commonly exist to denote individuals who do not conform to the male/female gender binary or their biological sex assigned at birth. Individuals who identify as gender non-conforming, genderqueer, gender fluid, or gender non-binary view gender as a spectrum that exists as a social construct. *Gender expression* is an individual's ability to communicate their gender identity through their appearance and behavior (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.; Nicolazzo, 2017). One common factor impacting trans* individuals is they do not always feel free to express themselves and their gender identity due to fear and societal pressure to conform. Trans* persons often cite that they face discrimination and harassment when their gender expression does not conform to the societal expectations and

behaviors that have become associated with "acting" male or female (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.; Nicolazzo, 2017).

Gender non-conforming is a term used to refer to individuals who do not conform to the societal pressures and expectations of gender and the behaviors associated with that gender (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.; Nicolazzo, 2017). Additionally, gender non-conforming can refer to individuals whose gender expression does not align with the traditional confines of the male/female gender binary (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.; Nicolazzo, 2017). *Genderqueer* refers to individuals who reject the notion that one needs to identify with one single-gender identity; they often perceive both gender identity and sexual orientation as fluid (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.; Nicolazzo, 2017; Richards, Bouman, Seal, Barker, Nieder, & T'Sjoen, 2016). *Gender fluid* is similar to genderqueer in that it is a term that applies to an individual who does not identify as a single gender or whose gender is unfixed (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.; Nicolazzo, 2017; Richards et al., 2016). *Gender non-binary* is also similar and constitutes individuals who identify as both male and female or don't identify as anything at all. This group of people may also be commonly referred to as *agender* if they chose not to align with any gender (Goldberg, 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017).

Many scholars and researchers, including in the LGBTQ community, have engaged in significant debate about the terms used and their associated definitions (Nicolazzo, 2017). Though 'transgender' is used as an umbrella term, more recently the term *trans** has appeared in literature to inclusively represent all individuals whose gender identity differs from their biological sex, essentially establishing a gender identity spectrum (Garvey et al., 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017; Trans Student Educational Resources, n.d.). The use of the asterisk stems from Boolean searches on computer databases, in which individuals would enter a part of a word and end it with an asterisk

to conduct a broad search on a specific topic (Nicolazzo, 2017; Trans Student Educational Resources, n.d.). However, 'trans*' has been contested because of the perceptions that it erases individualistic experiences, as well as fails to recognize intersectionality within the transgender community (Nicolazzo, Trans Student Educational Resources, n.d.). Still, the use of trans* has been adopted by many to represent inclusion and as a way to recognize the multifaceted and multidimensional complexity of the transgender community (Nicolazzo, 2017).

The complexity of gender as a construct transcends beyond how individuals want to identify, also comprising how they want to be formally recognized. One of the most significant points of contention between the transgender community and the rest of society is the proper use of pronouns (Galowich, 2018; Garvey et al., 2018; Goldberg, Beemyn, & Smith, 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017). Pronouns are used to signify how an individual identifies and how they are referenced (Goldberg, Beemyn, & Smith, 2018; GLSEN, n.d.; Nicolazzo, 2017). Pronouns serve as an honorific and are interpreted as a sign of respect and acceptance because they are how individuals recognize and affirm someone's gender identity and expression in both formal and informal settings (Galowich, 2018; Garvey et al., 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017). Utilizing the correct pronoun when referencing an individual acknowledges their gender identity and can reaffirm their feelings of acceptance, inclusion, and respect based on their gender identity and expression. For example, common pronouns include, but are not limited to, he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/them/their, and ze/hir/hirs (GLSEN, n.d.; Nicolazzo, 2017). He/him/his are pronouns used when referencing someone who identifies as male, whereas she/her/hers are pronouns when addressing someone who identifies as female. They/them/their or ze/hir/hirs are examples of pronouns used by individuals who do not identify as either male or female but instead identify as an individual outside the male/female gender binary. Pronouns are cited as an area where transgender individuals

face opposition and outright discrimination, noting a lack of respect and unwillingness by cisgender individuals to recognize or use the pronouns transgender individuals identify with and openly disclose (Galowich, 2018; Griner et al., 2017).

As this section has indicated, the difference between gender identity and biological sex is a contested and complex issue that often incites misunderstanding. One's understanding of gender identity is subjective to their individual experiences and influenced by the culture in which they live (Dugan Kusel, & Simounet, 2012).

2.2 Trans* Student Experiences

Like many college students, trans* students encounter a variety of challenges when they arrive on campus. Their negative experiences, however, are often exacerbated because of their trans* identity. Research on college student adjustment indicates that college is positive and challenging for all student demographics, but trans* students face high rates of negative incidents from transphobic policies and peer interactions that impact the positive experience (Clark, Schwitzer, Paredes, & Grothas, 2018; Rankin et al., 2010; Rankin & Beemyn, 2011; Renn, 2017; Seelman, 2016). This section of the review will examine the experiences trans* students encounter in college, specifically focusing on college adjustment and their collective and individualized experiences.

2.2.1 College Adjustment and Persistence

Extensive research has been and continues to be conducted on student adjustment and persistence within the collegiate environment. The literature demonstrates that while the college experience is portrayed as an exciting time, it is also a stressful, overwhelming, and transitional period that requires adaptation for all students (Chickering & Schlossberg, 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993). While both academic and non-academic factors contribute to college adjustment, one of the leading factors is how connected students feel to an institution and their overall sense of belonging within that environment (Astin, 1993; Chickering & Schlossberg, 2002; Morrow & Ackerman, 2012; Tinto, 1993; Ostrove & Long, 2007). The intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamic of "belonging" is a concern for many college students, but particularly those who belong to marginalized groups that are at a higher risk of dropping out of college (Chickering & Schlossberg, 2002; Gebhard, 2012; Goldberg, Beemyn, & Smith, 2017; Ingala, Softas-Nall, & Peters, 2013; Ostrove & Long, 2007; Tinto, 1993).

Colleges and universities historically combat the marginalization of specific student demographics. For example, colleges have developed programs and support services to assist students belonging to underrepresented and minoritized student groups, such as students of color, international students, and students with disabilities to help manage the challenges and adjustment issues they face (Clark et al., 2018; Ostrove & Long, 2007). While the services provided on college campuses for many marginalized groups have improved, trans* students services are still lacking (Beemyn 2003; Beemyn et al., 2005; Clark et al., 2018; Dugan, Kusel, & Simounet, 2012; Goldberg, 2018; Grant et al., 2011; Nicolazzo, 2017; Parker, 2021). Most colleges and universities offer limited services specific to their trans* student population (Beemyn, 2003; Dugan Kusel, & Simounet, 2012).

Trans* students are grouped with lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) students, and while they may have some similar experiences, trans* student needs and challenges are different than their LGB peers who identify as cisgender (McKinney, 2005). Personal narratives and quantitative data demonstrate that trans* students are exposed to higher levels of bullying, violence, physical and emotional abuse, and social stigmatization compared to LGB peers (Grant et al., 2011; Erbentraut, 2017; Meerwiik & Sevelius, 2017; Nicolazzo, 2017). These experiences can range from being ostracized because their appearance or behavior does not conform with societal expectations of biological sex to being misgendered by faculty and peers in and outside of the classroom. One of the most significant challenges trans* students face is increased fear and anxiety around their safety when it comes to living in student housing and using public restrooms because both areas are often structurally designed to favor and reinforce the cisgender binary (Erbentraut, 2017; Griner et al., 2017; Rankin et al., 2010; Rankin & Beemyn, 2011; Pryor, 2015).

As a collective group, trans* students are also challenged by having decreased or non-existent family and social support networks (Budge, Adelson, & Howard, 2013; Goldberg, 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017). While not the case for all trans* students, the majority of trans* students enter college from a home environment that was either unsupportive or hostile towards their trans* identity or gender expression (Budge, Adelson, & Howard, 2013; Grant et al., 2011; Herman, 2011; Klein & Golub, 2016; Nicolazzo, 2017). The lack of support trans* students receive from family has the potential to negatively impact their college adjustment and persistence as they do not have the emotional or financial support that most students expect to receive from their family during this time. In place of family support, many college students look to their social peer networks to provide support and assistance. However, for many trans* students, their cisgender peers are not able to provide consistent support, nor relate to the experiences that a trans* student

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encounters. Cisgender individuals, which include students, faculty, and staff, often do not understand the needs of trans* individuals and, in some cases, help to perpetuate gender identity-based harassment (Beemyn et al., 2005; Nicolazzo, 2017). Due to this level of harassment and discrimination faced before and during college, the trans* student population has historically looked to each other for support versus utilizing institutional support mechanisms (Nicolazzo, 2017).

The most significant dilemma with understanding and examining college adjustment for trans* students is the lack of research and literature on the topic. Limited studies have been conducted on the trans* student experience and their college adjustment process as a student group (Garvey et al., 2017; Griner et al., 2017; Nicolazzo, 2017; Parker 2021). While numerous studies have been conducted to examine the needs and experiences of other minoritized communities in higher education, the trans* student community has historically been an underrepresented and understudied population. Much of the pre-existing research focuses on the extent of victimization and abuse trans* students encounter, so while we can contextualize and understand that trans* students encounter discrimination, bullying, and harassment, the findings fall short of understanding specific trans* student experiences and needs (Garvey et al., 2017; Griner et al., 2017; Nicolazzo, 2017). Therefore, limited literature exists to inform my understanding of the specific factors that impact trans* student college adjustment.

2.2.2 Marginalization, Discrimination, and Harassment

In comparison to the limited amount of literature that exists surrounding trans* student college adjustment, significant studies have taken place on the level of marginalization trans* individuals face in society (Dugan, Kusel, & Simounet, 2012; Grant et al., 2011; Nicolazzo, 2017).

Like many marginalized groups, trans* students face discrimination and harassment of multiple forms, such as bullying, physical violence, sexual assault, exclusive policies, and alienation, to name a few. They often perceive the campus environment to be hostile and unwelcoming through their interactions with institutional systems and faculty, staff, and students (Kosciw, Greytak, Giga, Villeana, & Danischewski, 2015; Grant et al., 2011; Rankin et al., 2010; Renn, 2017; Seelman, 2016). Compared to other marginalized student groups, trans* students cite more often that this discrimination and harassment is the primary deciding factor when deciding to withdraw from a college or university (Rankin et al., 2010; Seelman, 2016). Therefore, to better understand trans* student issues on campus, we need to identify and understand the specific types of discrimination and harassment they encounter.

As stated previously in this literature review, trans* students exist with a level of fear, specifically towards their safety and general well-being. Trans* students encounter environments where they are called derogatory terms such as "fag," "tranny," and "queer"; receive threats against their safety; and interact with cisgender peers who are hostile towards their gender identity and expression (Beemyn, 2003; Nicolazzo, 2017). Research indicates that the fear trans* students live with is not unfounded, as trans* individuals have a higher rate of exposure to physical harm and sexual assault than their cisgender peers (Aparicio-Garcia, Diaz-Ramiro, Rubio-Valdehita, Lopez-Nunez, & Garcia-Nieto, 2018; Astor, 2017; Grant et al., 2011; New, 2015). Recent findings indicate that trans* students are at a higher risk than any other student demographic of experiencing sexual assault and one in four trans* students experience sexual assault in college (Dastagir, 2018; Griner et al., 2017; Human Rights Campaign, 2018; James et al., 2016; New, 2015). The Human Rights Campaign (2018) released a report that documents that the level of violence trans*

individuals are facing should be considered a national epidemic, citing that between 2013 and the report's publication, 128 trans* individuals were killed because of their trans* identity.

The discrimination they encounter does not only exist at the peer level but also within interactions with campus faculty and staff. Trans* students have documented incidents where they are misgendered by faculty and staff and made to feel that their gender identity is either not understood or intentionally unrecognized (Griner et al., 2017; Nicolazzo, 2017, Pryor, 2015). For example, their gender expression is frequently ignored or disregarded by faculty and staff, including those in counseling and health services (Beemyn et al., 2005; Erbentraut, 2017; McKinney, 2005; Nicolazzo, 2017). Trans* students also encounter open resistance from faculty and staff, specifically in the classroom environment, when it comes to referring to them by their pronoun (Griner et al., 2017; Katz-Wise, Budge, Fugate, Flanagan, Touloumtzis, Perez-Brumer, & Leibowitz, 2017; Nicolazzo, 2017; Pryor, 2015). The negative experiences and interactions trans* students have with faculty and staff are not only psychologically damaging for their identity development, but also reaffirm their reported feelings of isolation and marginalization (Goldberg, 2018; Griner et al., 2017; McKinney, 2005; Nicolazzo, 2017).

At an institutional level, trans* students experience discrimination through campus policies, practices, and cultural norms (Davis & Galupo, 2013; Garvey et al., 2018; McKinney, 2005; Nicolazzo, 2017; Renn, 2017). Often, institutional policies that exist perpetuate and reinforce cisgender privilege. These may include restroom and locker room policies, housing assignment processes, institutional email naming conventions, student health insurance coverage, and classroom attendance and roster practices (Beemyn et al., 2005; Nicolazzo, 2017; Pryor, 2015). For example, trans* students who do not go by their legal name often encounter obstacles changing their name in institutional databases, affecting email, student identification cards, and

classroom rosters. This difficulty comes from campus policies that require a legal name change and institutional leaders who lack an understanding of the difference between a legal name and an affirmed name (Erbentraut, 2017; Pryor, 2015; Nicolazzo, 2017).

Beyond institutional polices, traditional college facilities also create an exclusionary environment as residence halls, restrooms, locker rooms, and recreational buildings are designed to accommodate and affirm the male and female gender binary, failing to meet the needs and safety concerns of trans* individuals (Beemyn et al., 2005; Garvey et al., 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017). The physical structure of campus and the policies that guide them often either fail to recognize the fluidity of gender identity or inadvertently work against creating an environment that is not only inclusionary but affirming of all gender identities and expressions. Many of the policies and practices that exist institutionally, whether intentional or not, are designed based on the male and female gender binary and fail to recognize gender as a spectrum.

In summation, little is known about the experiences of the trans* students as they adjust to the higher education experience (Draughn, Elkins, & Roy, 2002; Nicolazzo, 2017; Parker, 2021;; Renn 2017). Though they are expected to adjust to college like their cisgender peers, we know enough to understand that their adjustment and experiences are significantly different than their peers, often influenced by a myriad of additional issues encountered solely because of their gender identity. The trans* student demographic experiences heightened exposure to a variety of exacerbated risk factors that influence not only their student experience but also their academic learning, ability to persist, and mental health and wellness (Renn, 2017). We also know that higher education institutions are not equipped or actively working to support them. Trans* students are a unique population on the University campus. They face extreme challenges and obstacles that require additional support services, supportive policies, and gender-inclusive facilities.

2.3 Federal, State, and Local Policies

In terms of trans* people's rights, colleges and universities are influenced by local, state, and federal policies. Institutions receive funding and resources through their affiliation with federal, state, and local governance. Based on the nature of this transactional relationship, educational institutions are required to adhere to policy decisions made by these legislative bodies (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). This section of the review will examine the many legal policies that exist on behalf of trans* individuals and the impact they have on university and college policies and practices.

2.3.1 Federal Level

The rights of trans* individuals are a highly contested issue within the U.S. legal and political environment with arguments both for and against gender identity as a protected class. Historically, in the United States, gender identity has not been considered a protected class, and in Fall 2019, the U.S. Supreme Court heard three cases to determine whether employers can discriminate based on gender identity and sexual orientation. While the supreme court handed down a historic decision to maintain and establish workplace protections for LGBTQ individuals, the decision included dissent from two justices and criticism from the Trump administration and religious organizations (Liptak, 2020).

As stated earlier, a 2016 dear colleague letter from the Departments of Education and Justice ultimately resulted in changed federal policy to redefine gender identity as a protected class under Title IX (Lhamon & Gupta, 2016). The change mandated that educational institutions receiving federal assistance were required to allow students to utilize restroom and locker room

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facilities that match their gender identity (Kogan, 2017; Lhamon & Gupta, 2016). Also, during that presidential administration, gender identity discrimination was reclassified as a type of sex discrimination (Jashik, 2018; Kogan, 2017; Vesoulis, 2018; Westrick & Lower, 2016). Though over 1,000 institutions of higher education had already included gender identity as a protected class on their campuses, the change in federal policy forced educational institutions to recognize and understand the difference that exists between gender identity and biological sex (Dirks, 2016; Kogan, 2017). This legislative action ensured protection for trans* students by holding institutions accountable through the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (Dirks, 2016; Gessen, 2018; Klam, 2017; Kogan, 2017; Lhamon & Gupta, 2016).

While the 2016 dear colleague letter brought trans* student rights and protections to the forefront of policy, changes to federal leadership have shifted these policies backward. In 2017, the Departments of Education and Justice released another dear colleague letter that dismissed the 2016 addition of gender identity from Title IX and opened permissions for institutions to determine their own restroom and locker room policies (Battle & Wheeler, 2017). Further, federal legislation had been proposed in the past to redefine gender strictly based on biological sex and to remove trans* as an identity group (Green, Benner, & Pear, 2018; Jaschik, 2018; Vesoulis, 2018). Based on supreme court ruling and changes in presidential administration, the Department of Education issued a notice in 2021 that sexual orientation and gender identity would once again be protected under Title IX (Rogers, 2021).

Furthermore, under President Biden an executive order was issued that protected trans* individuals from discrimination in education, housing, and healthcare (Schmit, Wax-Thiboxeau, & Balingit, 2021). Despite the benefits of the executive order, trans* rights advocates note that policies protecting trans* individuals cannot be subjective to changes in administration and that

legislation is needed to incorporate these protections as federal law, such as the current proposed amendment to the Equality Act (Gravely, 2021). Even with federal protections being restored and expanded on by the Biden administration, higher education institutions are subjected to federal guidance and changes in presidential leadership (Gessen, 2018; Gravely, 2021; Klam, 2017; Kogan, 2017). The result has been detrimental to creating clear supports and consistent policies for trans* student rights.

2.3.2 State Level

The debate over trans* rights was first introduced at the state level, though policies are inconsistent and unclear. In recent years, much contention around gender identity has focused on regulations related to whether individuals should be permitted to use restrooms according to their gender identity or selected solely by their biological sex (Davis, 2019). The debate over restroom usage and trans* rights came to national attention when North Carolina legislators introduced and passed House Bill #2 (HB2), which required individuals to use restrooms, locker rooms, and other public facilities in accordance with their biological sex (Gordon, Price, & Peralata, 2017; Davis, 2019; Kogan, 2017). The legislation in North Carolina received national attention and HB2 was eventually repealed. However, 15 other states had considered instituting similar legislation within that same year (David, 2019; Kralik, 2017; Smith 2017).

Due to a lack of national guidance and leadership on gender identity and trans* rights, statewide legislation, and policies around trans* issues are not uniform. Presently, only 20 states classify gender identity and trans* individuals as a protected class and have anti-discrimination legislation in place (Balingit, 2017). Pennsylvania the state where the University in this study is located does not have any statewide legislation in place that recognize or protects trans* rights.

The increased focus on trans* issues at the state level has been influenced by past federal court rulings that have been found in favor of trans* rights (National Center for Transgender Equality, n.d.; Walsh, 2018). State policies influence colleges and universities as institutions utilize the legislation to guide their policies and practices (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). Due to the absence of trans*-specific policies in many states, institutions do not have guidance or direction they can draw upon.

2.3.3 Local Governance and Municipalities

As a result of a lack of legislative governance and unclear policies at the federal and state levels, trans* rights are also a contested issue at the city and local municipality level. Many states leave it up to local governments to develop their ordinances, with a few states passing legislation that restricts town and city governments from creating gender-inclusive ordinances (Potter, 2016; Smith, 2017). Due to nonexistent or unclear state regulations, gender identity policies vary across different municipalities, with each local town and city government given the purview to create their regulations. For example, the City of Pittsburgh established an ordinance that recognized gender identity and prohibited discrimination, but the Pine-Richland school district, located 30 minutes north of Pittsburgh, made national headlines when it implemented a policy that restricted restroom and locker usage based on biological sex (Behrman, 2017; Potter, 2016). Such variation leaves trans* individuals having to pay close attention to regulations when crossing city lines.

Much like at the state level, restroom and locker room policies are at the center of local government debate around trans* rights. Local governments and school districts are facing increased legal recourse as trans* and cisgender students file lawsuits for and against restroom usage based on gender identity. Recently, a federal judge in Oregon found in favor of a trans*

student claiming they are legally protected from discrimination in school (Green, 2018). On the other side of the debate, a group of students from the Boyertown Area School District in Pennsylvania recently filed an injunction against the district's pro-trans* policy, citing it is a violation of their right to privacy (Walsh, 2018).

Throughout the last four years, legislation around trans* individuals have received increased national attention and been subjected to legal interpretation and policy changes. While trans* issues are subject to federal, state, and local influence, this review demonstrates that limited policies provide colleges and universities with guidance on how or if to establish trans* student rights. This absence of policy has left institutions with the need to develop their own policies and practices to address the needs and challenges of their trans* student population.

2.4 Higher Education Institutional Practices

A challenge facing college administrators is how to best address trans* student needs and provide support for this student population. While it is estimated that the trans* population is increasing nationwide, with the majority of those who identify as trans* falling into the traditional college-age group, this population remains underrepresented and underserved in higher education (Beemyn et al., 2005; Crissman, Berger, Graham, & Dalton, 2017; Goldberg, 2018; Hoffman, 2018; Rankin et al., 2010). As we conceptualize the needs of trans* students, we need to understand better the support mechanism and student services that exist within our colleges and universities. This section of the review will examine trans* students' needs and how institutions of higher education can respond through policies and implementation of best practices.

2.4.1 Trans* Student Needs

Like many college students, the trans* student experience is unique and specific to each individual. However, some common challenges and needs that this student demographic encounters do exist (Nicolazzo, 2017). Like other marginalized groups, trans* students report a need for group-specific policies that include gender identity as a protected class in the institutional non-discrimination policy (Garvey et al., 2018; Goral, 2018; McKinney, 2005; Nicolazzo, 2017, 2018; Rankin et al., 2010; Stolezenberg & Hughes, 2017). The expansion of these gender-inclusive policies needs to include policies related to pronoun usage, name change process, gender-inclusive language in documents and forms, restrooms and locker rooms, and student housing assignments (Beemyn et al., 2015; Garvey et al., 2017).

Trans* students often report a need for on-campus, trans*-friendly facilities (Garvey et al., 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017). Trans* students need gender-inclusive housing options that address their individual needs and provide safe and gender-inclusive restroom options (Davis & Galup, 2013; Garvey et al., 2018). Additionally, trans* students need housing offices to adjust assignment policies so that they reaffirm gender expression over biological sex (Davis & Galup, 2013; Garvey et al., 2018). Beyond student housing, trans* students need gender-inclusive restrooms and locker rooms throughout the campus, and facilities need to be renovated to accommodate their needs (Beemyn et al., 2005; Seelman, 2016).

Trans* students also report needing student support services that address the challenges trans* individuals encounter (Rankin et al., 2011; Nicolazzo, 2017). While trans* students may have similar difficulties in comparison to their LGB peers, they have higher rates of distress and are at an elevated risk for having mental health issues (Dugan, Kusel, & Simounet, 2012; Goldberg, 2018; Grant et al., 2011; Nicolazzo, 2017). This evidence suggests that institutions of higher

education need to focus on training their counseling and health services staff on the issues trans* students face (Goldberg, 2018). Additionally, peer support networks are essential for trans* students adjusting to college, with literature indicating that trans* students often need to develop a network of trans* peers (Beemyn et al., 2005). Literature states that support groups, campus events, and trans* student organizations can often address trans* support needs (Beemyn et al., 2005; Nicolazzo, 2017).

Like many students, financing their education is another area of need for trans* students. However, they are at a greater disadvantage of having the necessary funds. A recent study found that 19% of first-year trans* students report significant concerns related to financing their college education (Golberg, 2018). Trans* students traditionally come from families with lower socioeconomic status and receive financial aid at a higher rate than their cisgender peers (Stolzenberg & Hughes, 2017). Due to these economic challenges, trans* students need institutions to increase financial assistance and provide financial counseling for trans* students because they historically come from lower socio-economic backgrounds and have less family financial support (Goldberg, 2018; Grant et al., 2011; Stolzenberg & Hughes, 2017).

Another major challenge trans* students report is a lack of awareness among peers, faculty, and staff. The deficiency in awareness suggests there is a need for training and education around trans* issues (McKinney, 2005; Nicolazzo, 2017; Pryor, 2015; Renn, 2017). One area that can create a trans*-friendly and inclusive campus is educational programming, such as campus events, speakers, and ally programs. (Beemyn et al., 2005; Garvey et al., 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017).

While campus climates for trans* students appear to be better than it was a decade ago, this is not consistent across all institutions (Renn, 2017). As colleges and universities work to understand the needs of trans* students better, they need to address these needs by creating gender-

inclusive policies and practices. Institutions are forming task forces and workgroups to identify best practices in trans* student services, while also consulting with their professional associations for guidance and direction (Garvey et al., 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017).

2.4.2 Best Practices

The experiences and needs of trans* students are unique and present a multitude of challenges for institutions of higher education. While colleges and universities are responding in different ways, best practices that can decrease the discrimination and harassment trans* students encounter have been identified (Beemyn et al., 2005; Nicolazzo, 2017). For this review, we use the term best practices to identify services and policies that institutions and trans* advocacy organizations have identified as factors that positively influence trans* student experiences and create a gender-inclusive campus culture.

The first identified best practice is the implementation of policies and services that are supportive and gender-inclusive of trans* students (Beemyn, 2003; Beemyn et al., 2005; Goldberg, 2018; Goldberg, Beemyn, & Smith, 2017; Erbentraut, 2017). The first step is for institutions to add gender identity and expression to their non-discrimination policy (Beemyn, 2013; Beemyn et al., 2005; Goldberg, Beemyn, & Smith, 2017). The adoption of gender identity has proven to be successful at multiple institutions as it provides legal recourse for trans* students and establishes that anti-trans* discrimination is not permitted (Beemyn, 2013; Nicolazzo, 2017). Presently, at least 1,937 institutions of higher education across the United States have already included gender identity or expression into their non-discrimination policies (Campus Pride, n.d.-a; Dirks, 2016).

A second-best practice is to recognize that the service needs of trans* students are different than their cisgender and LGB peers; they require a well-funded, dedicated staff and space to

address the needs of trans* students (Beemyn, 2003; Beemyn et al., 2005; Goldberg, 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017). Specific trans* student support services and student groups are useful, as they provide resources and a social support network for the trans* student body (Goldberg, 2018, Nicolazzo, 2017). Examples of where this practice is successful are Indiana University – Bloomington, Ithaca College, the University of California – Los Angeles, University of Massachusetts – Amherst, and the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor. These institutions provide services and staff whose sole purpose is to support trans* students and conduct educational outreach around trans* issues through programming and training (Mase III, n.d.).

The third best practice is the development of policies around housing and recreational facilities, restrooms, and locker rooms that would create gender-inclusive and affirming environments. Gender-inclusive restrooms need to be established with bathroom spaces designated as all-gender (Beemyn et al., 2005; Garvey et al., 2017). Recreational and sports facilities need to designate and clearly label gender-inclusive locker rooms (Goldberg, Beemyn, & Smith, 2017; Goldberg, 2018). Examples of where this practice is successful are Ohio University, George Washington University, and the University of Arizona. These institutions created campus-wide gender-inclusive spaces and policies (Beemyn, 2003; Garvey et al., 2018).

The fourth best practice establishes avenues for institutional documents and forms to incorporate gender identity as a designation and to offer gender-inclusive pronouns (Beemyn et al., 2006; Beemyn, 2013; Nicolazzo, 2017). As part of this best practice, colleges are enabling students to record and register their pronouns, affirmed name, and change their gender designation on campus records and within institutional data management systems (Beemyn et al., 2006; Beemyn, 2013; Goldberg, 2018). Examples of where this practice is successful are the Dartmouth College, University of Iowa, University of Massachusetts – Amherst, and the University of

Vermont. These institutions have policies and practices that allow students to easily change their name, gender designation, and pronouns without legal documentation (Campus Pride, n.d.-b; Johnson, 2019).

A fifth best practice creates student health insurance coverage that finances or subsidizes trans*-related psychotherapy, hormone replacement therapy, and gender confirmation surgeries (Beemyn, 2013; Goldberg, 2018). Trans* students who transition in college often encounter financial obstacles because transition expenses are typically not covered under student health insurance programs (Beemyn, 2013; Goldberg, 2018). Examples of where this practice is successful are Amherst College, Duke University, Yale University, and the University of Oregon. These institutions have incorporated hormone treatment and gender-affirming surgery expenses into their student health insurance programs at minimal or no additional costs to the students and institution (Campus Pride, n.d.-c, Mase III, n.d.).

The sixth and final best practice is the establishment or improvement of education and training around trans* issues and gender inclusion for faculty, staff, and students (Beemyn et al., 2005; Garvey et al., 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017). Trans*-related programming and resources should be provided to the entire campus community to increase awareness and understanding of trans* issues (Beemyn et al., 2005; Garvey et al., 2018; McKinney, 2005). Training for faculty, staff, and student leaders on trans* issues is necessary because most college personnel have not had training or been given knowledge around the needs of trans* students (Goldberg, 2018; Pryor, 2015). Examples of where this practice is successful are Ithaca College, New York University, University of Arizona, and University of Louisville. These institutions provide continuous training and educational programming to increase faculty, staff, and student awareness regarding trans* issues and gender identity (Beemyn & Windmeyer, 2012, Mase III, n.d.).

Colleges and universities are attempting to respond to the needs of trans* students. Progress has been made; however, continuous improvement is necessary to ensure that their trans* student demographic is best served and supported. While best practices exist and have been identified by professional associations such as Campus Pride, there is a need for institutions to continue to develop programs and services that address and anticipate the challenges and obstacles trans* students encounter during their collegiate studies. Below is Table 1, which lists the six identified best practices in trans* inclusive services reviewed in this section and includes a list of institutions that are considered "exemplar" because they are cited in existing research and literature as addressing the specific needs of their trans* students.

Table 1. Best Practices in Trans* Student Inclusive Services and Exemplar Institutions

Best Practice	Identified Need	Exemplar Institutions
Gender inclusive non-discrimination policy	Include gender identity and expression as a protected class in the institutions non-discrimination policy	American University New York University (NYU) Princeton University University of Vermont Vanderbilt University University of Oregon
Trans* student support services and groups	Specific services, staff, and programs designed and designated for supporting trans* students	Indiana University – Bloomington Ithaca College University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) University of Michigan – Ann Arbor
Gender inclusive facilities and usage policies	Construct and renovate facilities to be gender inclusive and adopt inclusive housing, restroom, and locker room policies	George Washington University Ohio University University of Arizona University of Massachusetts – Amherst
Allow students to register their affirmed name, gender identity, and pronouns	Develop systems, forms, and mechanisms that allow students to differentiate between their legal name and biological sex and instead identify by their affirmed name, gender identity, and pronouns	Dartmouth College University of Iowa University of Massachusetts – Amherst University of Vermont
Gender affirming healthcare insurance	Provide access to student health insurance that finances or subsidizes trans* related and affirming medical and psychological healthcare	Amherst College Duke University Yale University University of Oregon
Education and training around trans* issues and gender identity	Establish and improve education and training for faculty, staff, and students around trans* issues, gender identity, and gender inclusive practices	Ithaca College New York University (NYU) University of Arizona University of Louisville

2.5 Conclusion

This review of scholarship and knowledge demonstrates that trans* students encounter complex challenges and obstacles within and outside of the collegiate setting. While limited empirical research exists on trans* student college adjustment and persistence, we know from the literature that their experiences are affected by their higher-than-average exposure to violence, bullying, discrimination, and harassment (Draughn, Elkins & Roy, 2002; Erbentraut, 2017; Meerwiik & Sevelius, 2017). Unlike their cisgender peers, trans* students experience elevated levels of anxiety and distress related to their safety and well-being due to the lack of mandated protection and support from local, state, and federal agencies (Goldberg, 2018). As gender identity and trans* rights continue to be a contested issue with limited federal and state guidance, colleges and universities need to address the challenges and needs of their trans* student demographic. Many institutions have already begun to do so by implementing gender-inclusive policies and practices, and by launching initiatives aimed at recognizing and supporting trans* students.

While the campus climate for trans* students has improved, significant work still needs to be done by colleges and universities to create environments that support and perpetuate trans* student success (Beemyn & Windmeyer, 2013; Nicolazzo, 2017; Renn, 2017). Despite the lack of institutional research, through interactions and conversations with trans* students at the University, I have discerned that our campus climate for trans* students is perceived as hostile to this population. This review has informed my understanding of the types of discrimination and harassment trans* students encounter, how it impacts their student experience and college adjustment, and the needs of trans* students. By increasing my knowledge of the challenges and obstacles trans* students encounter, I will be able to examine the level of support trans* students

receive at the University and determine what types of programs, policies, and best practices need

to be implemented to address our campus climate and the needs of our trans* student population.

3.0 Chapter 3: Methods

3.1 Inquiry Questions

The goal of the inquiry was to understand the trans* student experience at the University and identify their unique challenges, obstacles, and needs as they adjust to college life. A needs assessment was conducted to provide a comprehensive understanding of the problem of practice and its manifestation within the University. The research questions that guided this inquiry included:

1. What is the trans* student perception of campus climate around gender identity?

   - How do university policies and practices influence a trans* student's experience at the University?

   - How do interactions with cisgender faculty, staff, and students impact a trans* student's experience?

2. What are the challenges and obstacles trans* students encounter while they adjust and persist through college?

3. What are the academic, social, and physical needs of trans* students at the University?

   - What types of services or programs do trans* students need to feel included and affirmed?

   - What are the policies and practices trans* students identify as critical to increase their sense of belonging on campus?

3.2 Approach and Methods

3.2.1 Needs Assessment

A needs assessment was conducted using qualitative tools to frame and understand the problem of practice identified for this study and diagnose the institutional systems in which they exist. The needs assessment provided a customizable approach to examine and identify problems and opportunities within a marginalized group, like trans* students who were the focal point of the study (Gupta, 2007; Royse, Badger, Staton-Tindall, & Webster, 2009). The needs assessment was utilized because it embraced the idea that each individual and organization co-exist and that the problems affecting a specific group can be positively rectified through institutional action and prioritization. By design, the needs assessment focused on improvement opportunities through diagnosing the needs of trans* students and providing practical solutions that can be implemented to address the identified needs (Gupta, 2007; Royse et al., 2009). The needs assessment examined and identified two types of needs; expressed and felt. Expressed needs are the services individuals request, and felt needs are those where individuals are asked what they believe or feel they need (Royse et al., 2009).

Needs assessments are practitioner-based tools that have diverse benefits. The primary rationale for using needs assessment in this study was that organizations are nuanced, meaning every organization has a current and desired condition (Gupta, 2007). Needs assessments acknowledge that organizations must improve themselves by identifying the needs of the groups and individuals they serve. The desired condition cannot be realized until the current condition is assessed and "the need" between the two conditions is identified. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between identifying the need and moving from a current condition to a desired one.
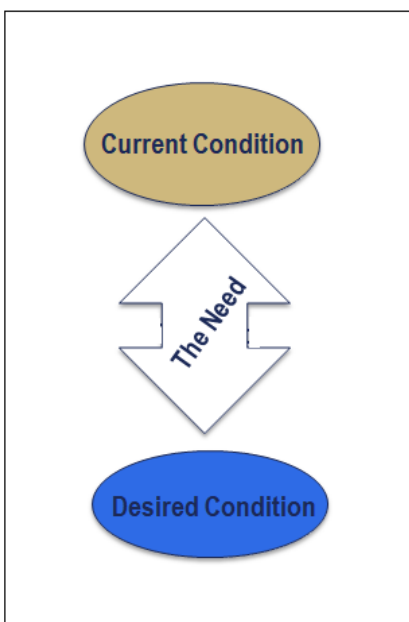
Figure 1. Needs Assessment Model (2007).

Graphic adapted from a figure in Gupta (2007).

The second benefit of using the needs assessments was that it relied on data collected from the trans* student subjects, engaging them in the examination and improvement process as active participants, unlike traditional study subjects (Gupta, 2007; Witkin & Altschuld, 1995). Third, the needs assessment provided an adaptable approach that was relatively easy to manage, facilitating the use of multiple qualitative research tools like in this study and allowing me to focus on the needs of a specific population (Royse et al., 2009). Lastly, needs assessment approaches could address a specific problem of practice and utilize various qualitative tools (Mintrop, 2016).

Like any research methodology, needs assessments have both benefits and limitations. One limitation of needs assessment is that no set formula or template exists since it is customizable. Each practitioner conducts needs assessments differently and utilizes various qualitative and quantitative research tools. Due to the customizable approach, results cannot always be replicated,

and validity must be considered when analyzing data and interpreting findings. Another limitation is that needs assessments can be time-consuming, and the individuals conducting them are typically practitioners like myself, who have responsibilities outside of research. Lastly, needs assessments depend on the participation and active involvement of study participants, which can vary based on the comfortability of participants with the organization and researchers. While considering these limitations, the benefits of conducting a needs assessment far outweighed the limitations, but they were considered and adapted for this study.

3.2.2 Research Methodology

The needs assessment utilized semi-structured interviews, a focus group activity, and document analysis as qualitative tools to collect the data. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on data collection, the focus group component of this study was adapted from a traditional focus group approach to an online interactive focus group activity that participants could complete virtually while still being able to socially distance. These three qualitative research tools were selected for this needs assessment because they allowed me to focus on the how and why of a phenomenon that guided this study (McLeod, 2017). The collected data helped clarify the campus climate and experiences of trans* students, identify the challenges and obstacles trans* students encounter, and devise possible participant-driven strategies that address the voiced, referenced, and inferred concerns. The selected research tools allowed me, the researcher, to connect with study participants to ensure they became invested stakeholders and co-researchers engaged in their liberation as a marginalized group (Freire, 1970). While I led the process, trans* student participants guided the study and influenced the outcomes.

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Qualitative research tools were used to derive a detailed account of participants' feelings, opinions, and experiences while validating their human experience (Atieno, 2009; Rahman, 2017). Because the study focused on trans* students as a historically marginalized and underserved population at the University, I needed to capture and understand the experiences of all participants as individuals and as a collective group. The three qualitative research tools permitted me to examine and analyze the emerging themes and patterns from the data and the participants' unique and shared experiences (Mertens, 2015). Themes from interviews and pre-existing national research were used to frame the focus group activity and were presented to focus group participants. This method aimed to seek to develop solutions to address the challenges and needs of the trans* students at the University as identified by trans* students themselves.

Using these qualitative research tools to collect data proved to be the most effective mechanism to conduct the needs assessment and address the inquiry questions guiding this study. The three tools were utilized to better understand the needs of trans* students and the types of services they believe would best serve them as a student group at the University. The best method to understand the challenges and obstacles that trans* students face was to gather detailed information and narratives from the trans* student participants and institutional documents. From this in-depth analysis, the University has gained a better perspective on trans* students' experiences and factors that affect their retention, academic progress, and sense of belonging.

3.3 Data Sources and Collection

Qualitative data were collected using three methods: (a) document analysis, (b) semi-structured interviews, and (c) a focus group activity. These three combined qualitative data

collection methods were adopted to answer the inquiry questions and address the experiences, challenges, and needs of trans* students at the University. These tools offered a means to provide an in-depth overview and understanding of the issues and participants (Mertens, 2015). Using various types of data sources, such as the ones utilized in this study, allowed me to gain a pluralistic perspective to more thoroughly understand the meaning and implications of the data collected (Frost, 2013). The application of multiple data collection methods increased the study's validity and facilitated data validation through cross-data validity checks and triangulation (Mertens, 2015; Patton, 1999). Document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and the focus group activity are reliable data collection methods for exploring the lived experiences of trans* students as well as the differences and similarities between all participants. Below is an overview of each data collection method used for this applied inquiry.

3.3.1 Document Analysis

Document analysis was used to gain a current and historical perspective on the campus climate for trans* students within the University as a system. Through this methodology, institutional documents, such as forms and informational brochures, handbooks, and policies, were reviewed to better understand the past and present university environment for trans* students. Organizational documents and records allowed me to create meaning and understand the issue under investigation (Bowen, 2009). Mertens (2015) indicated that document analysis is also an effective strategy to examine the background of an issue and provide insight into the functioning of an organization, like a University. Document analysis clarifies the implicit assumptions and biases at the university and their effects on trans* students.

The most significant benefit of document analysis is that it allows the gathering of accessible and readily available data. Documents provided access to information that highlighted policies, practices, and past experiences of individuals and the University. The document analysis also encompassed analyzing documents created through the efforts of the University's Gender Inclusive Task Force and studying the effects of these documents on the institution and trans* student community. Document analysis also led to questions during the interviews, formed a framework for the focus group activity, increased knowledge of issues being investigated, and tracked policy changes (Bowen, 2009).

Documents for this study were collected from the University's online webpages, virtual data storage banks, and University archives. Access to documents was easily available online because it is a common practice. Any documents or publications produced by a department are saved electronically or sent to university archives for record-keeping purposes. Twenty-four documents were reviewed and analyzed for this study, including student handbooks, pre-existing student research, campus newspapers and magazines, reports of bias-related incidents against trans* students, and institutional policies (see Appendix R). Originally, I estimated that 10 to 18 documents would be analyzed, but the analysis was expanded to 24 documents. The documents reviewed were published from between the time the study was conducted and when the institution transitioned to be gender inclusive in the Fall of 2015. A content analysis that I completed as an undergraduate research project in 2016 examined gender-inclusive language and policies in University documents, forms, and a report that highlighted the findings from an institution-wide survey that assessed diversity and equity on-campus. Through this process, I also reviewed and examined policies and documents that I had created and adapted through my professional roles at the University.

3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews revealed individual and group experiences, perceptions, and beliefs (Creswell, 2009; Mertens, 2015). Interviews were conducted with seven participants enrolled as students at the University from 2019 to 2021 and self-identified as trans*. The original goal was to conduct interviews with six to 12 trans* student participants; therefore, the goal was achieved despite limited access to participants due to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions of virtual learning. I established a minimum of six participants because the number represented at least half of the ideal 12-person sample size, which represented the population of the trans* community at the University. Another factor that led to the determination of the study sample size for this study was that the number of trans* students at the University remains unknown, and not all trans* students were able, interested, or willing to participate in the study. Presently, no universal minimum number of participants in research studies exists; however, the larger the sample, the greater the validity. Interviews with seven trans* students yielded a general understanding of the issues and challenges trans* students face. Additionally, participants also discussed and shared the experiences of their trans* peers who were unable to engage in the study as active participants for various reasons.

Two interviews were conducted with trans* alumni. The original goal was to conduct two to four interviews, but the COVID-19 pandemic, lack of access to identity alumni who openly identified as trans*, and institutional limitations on communicating with alumni affected participant involvement. A minimum of two alumni interviews were established with trans* interview participants because two represented half the ideal number of trans* alumni participants. The sample size and participation of trans* alumni were lower because the pool of eligible participants was small. After all, eligible alumni were chosen from those who graduated between

2016 and 2019. Alumni who graduated before 2016 were excluded because they were perceived to be too far removed from their experiences as students. They attended the University when it was a single-gender institution. Therefore, their experiences were bound to be vastly different from our current trans* student population.

The interviews with the nine trans* participants lasted between 28 to 61 minutes, and they were recorded utilizing Zoom with participant consent. Tran* students and alumni were asked the same interview questions; however, trans* alumni were requested to reflect on their experiences as students. Before each interview, participants were sent an electronic interview consent form through Doc-U-Sign (see Appendix Q), and at the start of each interview, participants were asked to read a consent script (see Appendix N) and permitted to ask questions as well as accept or decline participation. Throughout the interviews, participants could refuse to participate and were permitted to remove themselves at any time, which did not occur.

All interviews were conducted utilizing the semi-structured approach to garner uncensored and authentic data from participants. This method addressed the inquiry questions while allowing me to establish a rapport and relationship, thus ensuring and increasing the chances that participant voices are heard (Mertens, 2015). The interview protocol (see Appendix N) included scripted questions to guide the participant to narrate their experiences and identify the challenges and obstacles they had encountered while adjusting to and experiencing university life. All identifiable information, such as names, were removed to ensure participant confidentiality, and participants self-selected a pseudonym for coding and analyzing purposes. Only the researcher and the participant knew pseudonyms selected for self-identification purposes. After collecting the data, I also decided to increase confidentiality, by quoting student participants as just participants, versus including their pseudonym. Demographic information, like race/ethnicity, class standing, and

gender identity, were collected for comparison purposes and were associated with each participant pseudonym. Participants completed an interview consent form before the interview. They were read a consent script to ensure they understood the study and trusted the researcher (see Appendix Q).

After the interviews, audio recordings were sent to a professional online transcription service to generate interview transcripts. Transcripts were reviewed by me and compared with audio recordings to ensure accuracy and decrease the possibility of transcription errors. Subsequently, I used member checking to increase trustworthiness and study reliability (Mertens, 2015). Specifically, participants were asked to review the transcript and respond if they felt it was accurate, not accurate, or missing information. Eight out of nine participants responded that the transcripts were accurate and required no edits. The ninth participant responded that the transcript was accurate but wanted to clarify two of their comments.

In preparation for the interviews, the interview protocol instrument was piloted by conducting a cognitive interview with an individual who identified as trans* from a neighboring institution of higher education. Cognitive interviewing allowed the investigator to examine and alter questions based on participants' perceptions and understanding. Cognitive interviews are help researchers determine the validity of the questions and the participant's initial thought process (Ryan, Gannon-Slater, & Culbertson, 2012). The cognitive interviewing approach was used during the pilot study by asking the volunteer to respond to the questions and verbally explain their thought process. The cognitive interview allowed for alterations based on feedback from the test subject. According to the cognitive participants' feedback, no major alterations were needed, although a suggestion was made to clarify some terms, like persistence and adjustment. The

cognitive interview volunteer was recruited through outreach with colleagues within the greater Pittsburgh region.

3.3.3 Focus Group Activity

The originally proposed focus group design for this study was altered due to decreased access because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus group was adapted to an online virtual activity that engaged participants as individuals and as a group to examine the problem and identify possible solutions (see Appendix O). According to Mertens (2015), effective focus groups are small but manageable in size, allow for interaction between participants, and provide an opportunity to compare their perspectives on a subject matter. Unlike individual interviews, focus groups rely not on the question-and-answer format but rather on the interaction within the group and a thorough understanding of the problem being investigated (Colucci, 2007; Mertens, 2015). Therefore, focus groups rely heavily on participants being comfortable with each other and the facilitator. This also provides opportunities to gain diverse perspectives. The focus group activity was designed to be interactive and engage participants in a virtual setting to share their experiences and perspectives, engage them in problem-solving, and allow for more in-depth analysis through a cause-and-effect approach.

The focus group participants were six trans* students enrolled at the University between 2019-2021. Four out of the six participants also took part in the semi-structured interview component of this research study. Each participant was recruited through email, and detailed instructions were electronically sent in both written and video format (see Appendices O, P, and Q). The trans* student focus group design was altered from an in-person activity to an online interactive exercise to increase participant involvement, interest, and engagement. This change in

approach gave the participants the flexibility to complete the exercise at their own pace, increased confidentiality, and engaged participants at individual and group levels. Participants were led through a fishbone diagram exercise instead of following a traditional question and answer format associated with the focus group. Fishbone diagrams visually depict a cause-and-effect analysis that asks "Why?" questions to address a specific problem. The fishbone diagram was first introduced in the 1960s as a quality improvement tool for product design but is now used in many research sectors as an effective strategy to identify and address problems while engaging participants to devise action-oriented solutions (MindTools, n.d.). Fishbone diagram exercises traditionally consist of a four-stage approach that identifies the problem, examines the major factors involved, identifies possible causes, and analyzes the diagram (MindTools, n.d.).

While some researchers may consider the use of activity-oriented exercises like fishbone diagrams unorthodox, Colucci (2007) stated, they "can make focus groups more enjoyable, successful, and rich in in-depth data" (p. 1431). The fishbone diagrams in the focus group activity are useful because they provide (a) an intentional mechanism that allows multiple participants to examine a problem and (b) varied perspectives that help participants understand the problem at a deeper level. The fishbone diagram was selected because it is also relatively easy to understand, analyze, and implement while allowing participants to identify the problem and ways to make improvements. It provided an opportunity for in-depth analysis and examination of a problem. Additionally, because fishbone diagrams naturally focus on a target topic, it was easy to implement with participants in a virtual format.

Focus group participants were emailed a link to an instructional video where they were read a consent script and provided instructions on how to complete the exercise (see Appendix Q). Participants were initially instructed to email or call the principal investigator if they had any

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clarifying questions or declined to participate. Participants were also informed that they could refuse to participate and stop this exercise at any time. After consenting to participate, focus group participants were instructed to log into an online platform called Mural to complete the fishbone diagram. The use of Mural was selected because of its versatility. It allowed the participants and the principal investigator to complete a focus group activity in a virtual setting and maintained participant confidentiality.

The focus group activity consisted of two phases, asking the participants to address, consider, and analyze the following problem statement: The University is not an affirming space for trans* students. In the first phase, participants identified root causes to the problem that they perceived contributed to the problem and affected productivity and success. To help facilitate the exercise, participants were instructed to structure their responses around eight themes. The principal investigator determined these themes based on national trans* student research trends and common themes from the data collected from interviews and document analysis. After completing phase one, participants logged in to review their responses and complete phase two. Phase two consisted of participants identifying tangible services and resources they felt would make the University more affirming of trans* students. Participants were given a reasonable deadline to complete both phases and were instructed to contact the principal investigator if they needed an extension. Realizing the potential for repeat responses, participants were also instructed to put a + sign next to any response they agreed with or would have posted themselves if it were not already posted.

Focus groups generally present a minimal risk of personal exposure by sharing experiences and thoughts in a group setting. The change in design from an in-person focus group to an online virtual activity mitigated risk even further, as it allowed participants to remain completely

confidential. To ensure anonymity and as a point of reference for data collection, participants were assigned a number and instructed to use it to number their responses. Only the principal investigator and participant knew what number they were assigned. The Mural online platform also mitigated the risk because it allowed participants to engage in the activity without registering to use the platform or entering any identifying information. Mural also allowed me to track how many people accessed the platform, ensuring that participants were not sharing the link with someone who did not consent to participate in the study.

All audio recordings and transcripts from interviews and written notes or visual diagrams from the focus group activity were electronically saved and secured in a password-protected Box folder. Data and notes from the document analysis were be recorded and maintained in the same Box folder. Recordings, notes, transcriptions, visual diagrams, and data would be maintained for five years if data collected needed to be reevaluated for validity or to glean additional findings. To increase trustworthiness and reliability, study participants were provided a copy of the dissertation.

3.4 Participants

In this applied research, the two participant groups were students and alumni who self-identify as trans*. This participant sample was recruited through snowball and convenience sampling (Mertens, 2015). Snowball sampling was utilized by personally inviting trans* students and trans* alumni to participate in the study. Participants and colleagues were also encouraged to invite other trans*-identifying students to participate in the study. The challenge with this sampling method is that it limited the participant pool to students and alumni who were out publicly and actively involved on campus and with the University. It failed to capture those who were not

publicly out as trans*or who were not serving in a student leadership role. Trans* students and alumni who have not been vocal or at the forefront of advocating for trans* rights were likely to be excluded from the study through this sampling method. This method also increased the likelihood of selection bias and recruitment of participants from similar social support groups who may have similar beliefs and experiences (Mertens, 2015).

Alumni participants were restricted to participate only in semi-structured interviews while trans* students enrolled at the University between 2019 and 2021 completed the focus groups. The rationale was that the focus groups concentrated on present conditions at the University, whereas alumni interviews examined past conditions and their effects on their student experience. While alumni are invested in the changes this needs assessment may yield, the outcome of the focus groups will not directly affect them on a student level.

The compounding factors that influenced the study and the implementation of the focus group activity and semi-structured interviews were the COVID-19 pandemic and trans* student availability and interest. Additionally, I had originally intended to send out a mass student email to solicit volunteers but was not permitted based on pre-existing institutional practices restricting this recruitment method for student, faculty, or staff-led research studies. Trans* student participants were invited to participate in the focus group activity and semi-structured interviews but were instructed that participation in either activity is optional and that these activities would have no negative effect on them as individuals and students. Demographic information was collected from participants to determine if any patterns emerged. A demographic comparison that was initially planned was not possible due to the sample size and the participants' lack of racial and ethnic diversity.

3.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis for this study consisted of reviewing and examining the qualitative data gathered and then applying codes. Codes are words or phrases that the researcher generates to symbolize and translate data (Creswell, 2009; Saldaña, 2016). Two cycles of coding were used to ensure the reliability of the findings. The first coding cycle assigned descriptive nouns, and data was codified through multiple iterations. Codifying is a system by which a researcher applies and reapplies codes to consolidate the data (Saldaña, 2016). The second coding cycle converted the codes into condensed categories and analyzed the results to identify the emerging themes and patterns (Creswell, 2009; Saldaña, 2016).

In vivo coding was utilized for data – including transcripts, notes, and visual diagrams – collected from the semi-structured interviews and the focus group activity. According to Saldaña (2016), in vivo coding is frequently used in studies related to marginalized identities and communities because it accurately reflects participant wording. In vivo coding involved assigning a label to a section of collected data that emphasized participants' actual words to develop comparable and contrasting themes (Saldaña, 2016). Therefore, to avoid investigator bias or data misinterpretation and ensure that the collected data accurately represented the voices and lived experiences of trans* students in this study, in vivo coding was used.

Descriptive coding was utilized for the document analysis, allowing researchers to assign a noun or topic to a specific passage or section in a document (Saldaña, 2016). I coded each document through an inductive approach and developed an analytic memo that encompassed my interpretations of those documents and the narrative they provided. While the documents themselves and the coding process are essential to this inquiry, according to Saldaña (2016), "coding is not important, but interpreting and analytic memo writing are critical" (p. 62). Thus,

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according to Saldaña (2016), the analytic memo serves two purposes: to summarize the thematic findings from the coding and provide a consolidated document for further analysis. It also provided a concise and effective tool to triangulate the study by comparing memo findings to interview and focus group activity data. Transcripts, visual diagrams, and memos were the primary documents coded manually. A codebook that included definitions of themes and sub-themes was used as a reference to code narrative text. The use of a codebook increased consistency and accuracy throughout the study. The MAXQDA analytic software platform was used to code, store, and manage data. It provides an electronic system for managing and storing data and acts as a secondary method to analyze the results and draw conclusions that a single researcher may overlook.

After all coding cycles, the Braun and Clarke (2006) approach was utilized to conduct the content and thematic analysis to contextualize the findings and complete the needs assessment. The thematic analysis focused on examining transcripts from interviews, responses from the focus group activity, and student narratives collected and examined as part of the document analysis to determine potential themes and patterns. Document analysis was also utilized to triangulate findings from participants and determine similarities and differences. Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach included in this needs assessment provided "a clear and useable framework for doing a thematic analysis" (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). A visual representation of the steps used in the Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis is displayed in Figure 2.
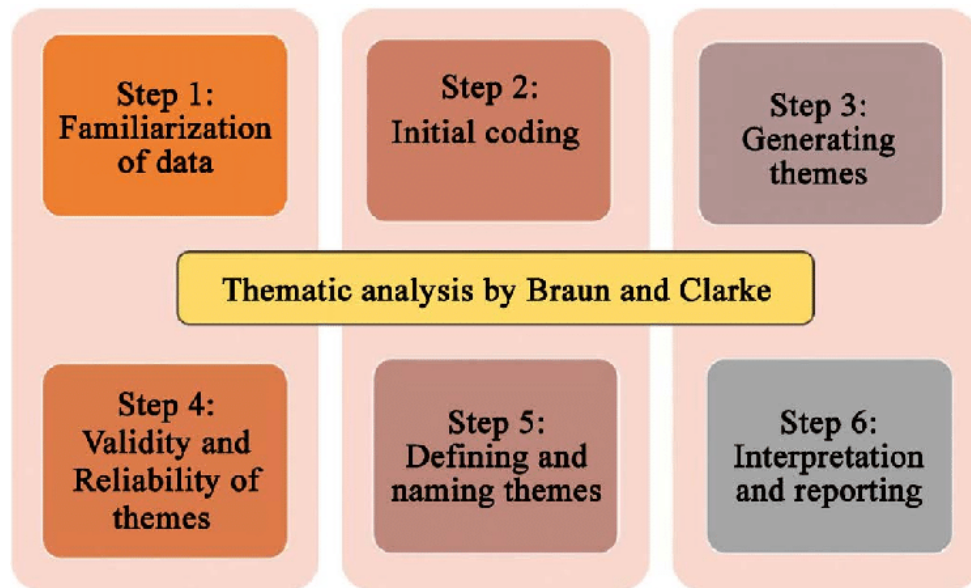
Figure 2. Braun and Clarke Thematic Analysis Illustration (2006)

Graphic adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006)

The thematic analysis results inform the needs assessment's findings, outcomes, and recommendations.

4.0 Chapter 4: Findings

This inquiry assessed the needs of trans* students by investigating the experiences, challenges, and obstacles they face as they adjust to and navigate through the University. The findings presented in this chapter were derived from the data collected from interviews, focus group activities, and institutional documents within the inquiry setting. Interviews yielded over six hours of recorded audio from nine participants (seven trans* students and two alumni), with interviews ranging in length from 28 to 61 minutes. The focus group activity included six trans* student participants. Additionally, 24 institutional documents were analyzed for historical and organizational context (see Appendix R).

The data collected using the three qualitative research tools were coded, analyzed, and triangulated to identify emerging themes and patterns that would clarify the experiences and needs of trans* students within the inquiry setting. As expected, participant interview responses had similarities and differences. Compared to the focus group activity data and document analysis, six prominent themes emerged from this needs assessment. The six themes included:

1. Campus climate is not affirming nor inclusive for trans* students.

2. Trans* students are in need of targeted support services and resources.

3. Trans* students place significant value and importance on social connection.

4. Education and training for cisgender students, faculty, and staff around gender identity and gender-inclusive practices is insufficient.

5. External factors outside the University influence the experience and perceptions of trans* students.

6. Trans* students experience fatigue related to being tokenized and consistent self-advocation.

The sections below present this research study's qualitative findings and expand upon the six themes that emerged from the data.

4.1 Theme 1: Campus climate is not affirming nor inclusive for trans* students

Evidence from this study suggests that the campus climate for trans* students is not affirming or inclusive. This finding supported the experiences and incidents with individual and institutional barriers that trans* students faced. Three distinct barriers were uncovered through this analysis. The barriers included (1) institutional policies and practices, (2) microaggressions and interpersonal interactions, and (3) campus facilities and infrastructure. These barriers provide insight into campus climate and its manifestation within this inquiry setting.

4.1.1 Institutional Policies and Practices

The findings indicate that the University has inadequate gender-inclusive policies that would be considered trans* affirming. The analysis of policies revealed that most fail to name or acknowledge trans* students in scope and language and do not address their needs and challenges. The data showed that outside the University's non-discrimination policy, which mentions gender-identity only as a protected class, the institution presently has two published trans* affirming policies. These two policies are an affirmed name policy and a gender-inclusive housing policy. These policies (which did not exist until the Fall 2019 semester) were the only policies cited by

participants and documented in the student handbook. The affirmed name and gender-inclusive

housing policies received positive feedback from multiple participants and were generally viewed

as a step towards improving campus climate. However, data indicated that they were also criticized

for their overall intent and effectiveness, specifically regarding policy awareness, inconsistency of

application, and structural and system limitations.

Despite the positive response to the affirmed name policy, evidence suggests frustrations

with systems and processes that favor a legal name over an affirmed name. Examples provided by

participants included the display of legal names on classroom rosters, diplomas, graduation

booklets, and in non-federally regulated information systems. The use and access to legal names

in institutional information systems were further cited as a significant limitation. Faculty and staff

had access to participants' legal names that participants felt did not need it, which resulted in

increased cases of "deadnaming." A participant spoke of this experience when they shared that

they were regularly "deadnamed" in the counseling center when they checked in for their

counseling appointments. As the participant shared, the rationale was that the center's appointment

scheduling system only listed their legal name, with no clarification as to why that is the case.

Other participants shared similar experiences when interacting with other offices at the University.

Another limitation cited by participants was that not all students could utilize the affirmed name

process because some may not have fully disclosed their gender identity and expression to their

families. While perceived as well intended, the policy may increase their risk of being outed to

their family.

Like the affirmed name policy, the gender-inclusive housing policy was perceived as

flawed in availability and application. Evidence indicated that some participants and their trans*

peers had been assigned a room on a single-gender floor, despite their request to be placed in

gender-inclusive housing, or at the very least on a floor that aligned with their gender identity. When the study was conducted, the data revealed that the housing application process was limited by not allowing students to self-select or list their gender identity within their application and online housing profile. Participants also cited challenges with the roommate search and matching process, specifically when finding a roommate and housing assignment that is trans* affirming. The present housing application system allows students to search for roommates. Still, participants indicated that not all trans* students might feel comfortable outing themselves in a public system where other students can search to find them. No current technical or staff assistance is provided on finding a roommate who is trans* affirming.

The study's findings also suggest that gender-inclusive restrooms on-campus had a positive effect on participants' perceptions of gender inclusivity. Participants shared that the availability and transparency of gender-inclusive restrooms were affirming. However, evidence indicates both design and access of restrooms are still an area of growth for the University. Based on a review of institutional policies, the University presently does not have a formal restroom policy. Therefore, gender-inclusive restrooms are an institutional practice without a formal policy. Participant responses and data also suggest that the University lacks trans* affirming policies related to student conduct and employee discipline processes, trans* faculty and staff recruitment, email and username naming conventions, classroom attendance taking, and training curriculums. All participants were able to cite negative and non-affirming interactions with cisgender faculty, staff, and students. Therefore, the data indicated trans* students would benefit from developing and implementing additional trans* affirming policies and practices.

The limited number of trans* affirming policies and practices at the University and the confines of those present in a place influenced trans* students' perceptions and experiences in this

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study. Based on participant responses and the analysis of the existing policies, it appears that gender-inclusive policies and practices considered trans* affirming are presently restricted and do not support the needs and challenges of trans* students.

4.1.2 Microaggressions and Interpersonal Interactions

Participants' responses and student narratives (i.e., newspaper articles and letters) indicated that trans* students at the University are exposed to microaggressions related to their gender identity and expression when interacting with cisgender students, faculty, and staff. Commonly cited microaggressions included being deadnamed, misgendered, tokenized, excluded, and exposed to adverse and transphobic interactions with cisgender individuals. These microaggressions appeared within and outside the classroom environment at both the undergraduate and graduate student levels. While findings suggest that trans* students face various microaggressions, the most prominent microaggressions were being deadnamed and misgendered.

Every study participant recalled instances where they and their trans* peers were deadnamed or misgendered verbally, on paper, or in a virtual setting. One participant recalled a professor who consistently passed around an attendance sheet with their deadname, although the participant constantly corrected the professor and completed the affirmed name process. Another participant shared similar frustrations and recalled being continuously deadnamed and misgendered by an instructor, even after they and cisgender peers corrected this professor multiple times. The data further indicated that trans* students were deadnamed by individuals and within the University's online learning platform and at University events, such as graduation. These findings suggest that deadnaming and misgendering occur with employees and classmates and happen on campus in residence halls. For example, both interview and focus group participants

shared that residence life staff deadname and misgender students because of deadnames on residence hall door tags and decorations.

Other microaggressions participants cited included cisgender-based language by faculty and classmates. The evidence revealed that the use of cisgender language made trans* students feel increasingly alienated and excluded while it failed to recognize and affirm students who do not identify on the cisgender binary. Participants stated examples that included dividing a class based on cisgender identity or referring to a group of individuals utilizing gender-based languages, such as ladies or gentlemen. Additionally, the findings suggested that cisgender faculty, staff, and peers tokenized trans* students. Participants shared experiences where they were asked to speak on behalf of the trans* community. They also shared incidents where they were invited to participate in University events and activities only because of their trans* student identity.

The data evidenced a prevalence of microaggressions within the University setting and their adverse effects on trans* students' experiences and perceptions. The consistency of these microaggressions is an additional significant challenge and obstacle for trans* students and a discriminatory practice they adjust to and navigate while enrolled at the University.

4.1.3 Campus Facilities and Infrastructure

The data analysis revealed inadequate campus facilities and infrastructure. Participants noted that progress had been made to develop gender-inclusive restrooms and housing. However, participant responses and student narratives indicated that the current physical layout, options, and availability of gender-inclusive restrooms and trans* affirming student housing fail to address the varying needs of all-trans* students. Furthermore, the findings suggest that the current physical

structure of most campus buildings has not been redesigned or renovated to promote gender inclusion or affirm people outside the cisgender binary.

Participant responses and historical documents indicated that while the University first launched gender-inclusive restrooms in 2014 and increased the number on campus in 2019, many buildings still lack an adequate number of gender-inclusive restrooms. For example, multiple participants cited the lack of gender-inclusive restrooms in the theatre, library, and science center. The findings also suggest that inequities exist in the number of gender-inclusive restrooms available in buildings. Access issues were highlighted because participants identified that most gender-inclusive restrooms in academic and administrative buildings are single-person use facilities only, providing limited access, whereas multi-stall restrooms can be used by several individuals simultaneously.

While gender-inclusive housing received positive feedback from participants, structural limitations exist related to housing options available for trans* students. Participants cited the lack of housing with private bathrooms in residence halls and apartments. Based on the current housing's structural setup, students have access to either single-use or multi-use community restrooms on a floor or a semi-private restroom shared with multiple individuals. Findings also suggest that while trans* students in a residence hall can request a single room, students looking to live in the apartment-style living only have the option to share an apartment with one or two other people. The review of institutional data suggests that no single apartment-style housing option is presently available to undergraduates at the University.

The physical structure and setup of campus facilities do not promote a trans* affirming environment. This study suggests that the current structural limitations of campus challenge trans* students based on equity, access, and wellbeing and fail to address the needs of all-trans* students.

While the findings indicated that progress had been made over the last few years to address the needs of trans* students, the overall campus climate around gender identity and being trans* remains neither inclusive nor affirming. Trans* students face various barriers that negatively influence their student experience on campus and exacerbate the challenges they face as college students and members of a marginalized identity.

4.2 Theme 2: Trans* students are in need of targeted support services and resources

Based on participants' responses and an analysis of institutional documents, the findings of this study revealed that the University lacks and trans* students need targeted support services and resources. Data indicated that the expressed and felt needs of trans* students are not being completely met at an institutional level. While participants cited that progress has been made over the last three years, citing examples like the affirmed name policy and Lavender graduation ceremony, insufficiencies still exist within two areas, the lack of trans* specific services and resources available to trans* students and the limited amount of trans* affirming care embedded within existing institutional support structures and systems. This section expands upon these two insufficiencies.

Unlike other marginalized identity groups at the University, the data revealed no existing standalone or targeted resources and support services for trans* students. Interview participants could name and identify various campus services and resources they utilized. Still, students failed to mention trans* specific resources and services. None of the interview participants named a department, program, or resource that explicitly focused on providing support services and resources solely to and for the benefit of trans* students. Interview and focus group participants

did not mention any targeted trans* student services. For example, one interview participant expressed concerns about the lack of a queer student resource center/space like you would find at other institutions. Focus group responses identified the need to create a position to deal with trans* issues and be a point person for trans* students. Additionally, study findings suggested that compared to other existing targeted student support services, such as those made available to students with disabilities, international students, BIPOC students, and women, trans* students do not have a dedicated advocacy center, staff, or support programs.

Beyond the lack of targeted standalone services, data indicated that existing support services and resources at the University provide inadequate trans* affirming care and support. Participants cited interactions with departments and offices where they were deadnamed, misgendered, and made to feel that staff working within these units were insensitive or unaware of how to best address the issues and needs of trans* individuals. Document analysis further supported these findings. While participants described various one-off adverse interactions with different offices, the findings suggest insufficient trans* affirming mental healthcare at the University. For example, focus group participants shared that the University has "poor mental health resources." They also suggested a discernable need to "increase trans* specific mental healthcare." Furthermore, the prevailing perception in the trans* community was that the counseling center, one of the most prominent support services provided, is not adequately prepared to address the needs of trans* students. A student participant expanded on that idea:

> I don't have a fond opinion of counseling services at the University. I think for people that just need someone to talk to for a little bit, they're a great resource. Whether it be the stress of class or the death of a family member, I think they're a great place to go, to just kind of talk and work through things like that. But I think for more heavier, long-term things, such

as maybe having a chronic mental illness or needing counseling on coming out and embracing your gender identity and navigating through those circles, I haven't seen that at counseling services.

Other participants shared similar responses. Participants could recall instances where they or peers had experienced a lack of care and support from similar offices at the University, such as residence life, student conduct, career services, and the women's center.

Like other higher education institutions, the University provides various support services and resources to support and promote student success. Despite the vast array of services that presently exist, it appears that the lack of targeted trans* affirming support services and resources was a prominent theme that emerged from study data. This study's findings suggest that the level of support and resources available to trans* students, both standalone and embedded, are limited and insufficient.

4.3 Theme 3: Trans* students place significant value and importance on social connections

Evidence from this study suggests that trans* students place significant value and importance on developing and maintaining social connections with students, faculty, and staff. The data revealed that trans* students have an interest and need in developing and maintaining relationships within three types of social support groups. First is the connection and relationships with their cisgender peers, faculty, and staff. The second focuses on finding support and camaraderie with trans* peers, and the third revolves around identifying trans* affirming mentors and role models. This section expands upon the significance study participants placed on these social support networks and the consistent theme of the need for meaningful and positive social

connections and interactions with peers, faculty, and staff that emerged from the data collected and analyzed.

Study findings indicated that all interview participants mentioned and consistently identified affirming interactions as valuable and necessary from a social support perspective. Interview findings further confirmed that trans* students are yearning and actively seeking to establish and maintain positive and affirming relationships with cisgender peers, faculty, and staff. Data further revealed that participants either attributed their adjustment and collegiate success to establishing affirming relationships with cisgender individuals or, on the opposite end, believed that the lack of these relationships complicated their adjustment. For example, multiple participants shared that when they experienced microaggressions, they coped by receiving support and assistance from trans* affirming peers, faculty, and staff. One participant even attributed their accomplishments to a select group of cisgender trans* affirming faculty and staff, sharing, "I wouldn't be where I'm at right now if it wasn't for them."

Additionally, the findings also revealed that while participants are yearning for social connection, they do not want the focal point of their relationships to be solely about their trans* identity. Several participants shared frustrations about discussing and educating cisgender individuals who are part of their social support networks about their gender identity. A participant expanded upon this idea by sharing:

> I think with other trans students, it's easier because you're all coming from a relatively similar place where you understand what it means to be outside of the norm. So you don't have to discuss that at all. Whereas other cis students are like, What does it mean to be queer? And you have to talk through very personal identities and some traumas, and your like, I just wanted to talk to you about what you got at the on-campus coffee shop.

Similar ideas emerged from the focus group. Participants shared a lack of trans* etiquette among their cisgender peers and felt forced to speak on behalf of their entire identity group.

Beyond the need for relationships with cisgender individuals, this study's findings suggest that trans* students are interested in establishing social relationships and connections with their trans* peers. Interview participants who were able to develop friendships with other trans* peers indicated that these interactions benefited their collegiate adjustment and persistence. For example, one participant expanded upon this idea by stating:

> I ended up starting to become friends with more of the trans students on campus because it was like - Hey, we have common ground, we can understand each other. You understand, you get me. It helped a lot and being able to actually communicate with each other and understand our different experiences.

Considering their common and shared experiences, trans* students have a need and interest in finding a peer group and identifying their community within the institution. A participant expanded upon this notion by stating, "the friends that I have made here and especially the people that do also identify as trans ... there's a sense of community." Findings also suggest that the individuals they interacted with the most and regarded as close friends were fellow trans* students among study participants. The participants' responses also suggested that trans* students want more opportunities to interact socially at the university. The data indicated that social engagement opportunities for trans* students were predominately non-existent. Several participants indicated that they valued the Queer Straight Alliance as a student group that could provide these opportunities. Still, evidence suggests that these social interactions are further limited because this group is presently no longer active at the University or, for some participants, was unresponsive when contacted.

According to the data, trans* students need and are interested in identifying trans* and trans* affirming mentors and role models. The evidence indicated that trans* students lack mentors and role models with similar gender identities. Presently, institutional data containing the number of faculty and staff who identify as trans" are not available. However, the findings suggest that trans* students perceive a significant lack of trans* representation among University employees. Participant responses and documents analyzed in this study confirmed this perception. One study participant expanded upon this idea:

> I think it would be interesting to have more representations of trans people in a professional setting. If there were, more trans lecturers or your trans professors or things like that, because right now, a lot of trans and non-binary identities feel very young, and they almost feel juvenile, unfortunately. And I don't like that, but it's hard when you don't see yourself represented in the professionals around you.

Focus group data and published student narratives also confirmed this finding. The data also revealed trans* students expressed a need and interest in mentorship opportunities with faculty and staff that are either trans* or self-identify as part of the LGBTQ identity group. As shared previously, unlike other marginalized identity groups, support services and programs for trans* and LGBTQ students are primarily non-existent at the University. Data revealed that the only exception was the University's implementation of a lavender graduation celebration for LGBTQ graduates, which multiple participants mentioned as an affirming measure.

Trans* students value and yearn for planned and unplanned opportunities to socially interact and build affirming relationships with cisgender individuals, trans* peers, and University employees. Their interactions also extend to a need to see and interact with trans visibly* affirming mentors and role models who identify as trans* or members of the LGBTQ community. While

multiple participants were able to create social support networks and find their community within the institution, the findings suggest that this is an area where institutional support and assistance would be beneficial.

4.4 Theme 4: Education and training for cisgender students, faculty, and staff around gender identity and gender-inclusive practices is insufficient

Another theme to emerge from the study suggests that the current level of education and training on gender-inclusive practices and gender identity at the University is insufficient. Participant responses and data collected from the document analysis indicated a correlation between the microaggressions trans* students encounter and the limited awareness of gender identity and trans* issues that exist among cisgender students, faculty, and staff. The findings suggested a gap in providing and supporting campus-wide gender identity-based education. The following section describes the insufficiencies in gender-identity-based education.

According to the findings, education on gender identity exists, but has historically focused on the cisgender binary. Data collected and analyzed revealed that the University, as a former women's college, has allocated resources and developed support structures to ensure that students, faculty, and staff have education and training on gender equity and women's rights. Examples supporting these findings include a women's center, women and gender studies, and a leadership living-learning community for women. Participant responses suggested that the education and training on gender equity have failed to address and acknowledge the needs, rights, and experiences of trans* individuals. One participant expanded upon this idea and shared:

It feels like they're (the University) so focused on women specifically and women's empowerment that sometimes, trans people are an afterthought. And again, I think that's a general symptom of society. But sometimes, it is hard when you have a whole course that's centered around, this is how we are empowering women. And yes, that lens can be applied to non-binary and trans people. But the name of the course, it's still Women in Policy or Feminist Studies. These are useful things; these are important things. But the language around them is still binary. Even if the teachers are trying to make it more inclusive, it's still a Women's and Gender Studies Program.

Focus group data revealed similar findings, with participants stating, "peers are not properly educated on trans issues or trans etiquette." Findings also indicated that faculty and peers reinforce the cisgender binary by using gendered language and failing to acknowledge the lack of trans* representation in existing research. One focus group participant identified that "yearly training" should be conducted to educate faculty on creating an inclusive environment in their classroom. Additionally, institutional documents that were part of the document analysis supported a gap in training and education on gender identity and inclusive practices. The analyzed documents consistently noted and recommended that the University increase its efforts to educate and train all faculty, staff, and students on this subject matter.

Data analysis revealed that training and education focusing on trans* identity and gender-inclusive practices have been limited and inconsistent. The only documented training discovered through this analysis was conducted as a component of an existing training program, such as faculty meetings and new faculty orientation, and select student leader training programs. The data further revealed that these training sessions were usually conducted once a year and were restricted to a 30-to-60-minute period. Study findings indicated that the University incorporated educational

materials on gender identity and inclusive practices in official publications, such as student and employee handbooks and teaching pamphlets. Despite the recommendations received from students and the gender inclusive taskforce, when this study was conducted, no data suggest that active and consistent gender-identity education and training is provided to staff, adjunct faculty, contracted employees, or the general student population.

Additionally, evidence suggests that gender-identity and gender-inclusive training is not an institutional requirement or mandate for any group, and individual department heads and program leads determine the participation. Furthermore, the findings revealed limited education on gender identity within the existing academic coursework. Interview participants shared that trans* identity was incorporated only as part of the women and gender studies or intergroup dialogue program curricula. Otherwise, participants shared discussions on trans* identity, and gender inclusion in other classes was primarily non-existent and cisgender focused, except for when they shared their perspective and incorporated it themselves as a trans* individual.

Focus group participants similarly elaborated on this finding, indicating that trans* students are often expected to speak on behalf of their identity group. Each participant recalled an experience where they had to educate and engage with a cisgender peer or employee on gender-inclusive practices or trans* issues. Most interview participants shared experiences where they were consistently asked questions about "coming out" as trans* to different faculty and classmates each semester. For example, one participant elaborated on the lack of education and awareness among faculty, sharing that "A lot of faculty could be educated more on pronouns, especially non-binary ones because I still know a lot of people who are basically forced to choose a binary gender in order to not be ostracized or just feel ashamed of themselves." Another participant indicated that in their interactions with cisgender peers, when they adopted their affirmed name, they

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encountered well-meaning but insensitive questions and inquiries like, "Why do you use this name? Are you a boy? What's wrong?" The data suggest that the lack of education and awareness of cisgender students, faculty, and staff may be correlated with the microaggressions within the inquiry setting. Most participants shared that in their interactions with cisgender peers, faculty, and staff, they were well-intentioned but lacked awareness of trans* issues and trans* etiquette.

As previously discussed in this chapter, this study's findings highlighted that trans* students consistently experience microaggressions within the inquiry setting. The data analyzed for this study and expanded upon in this theme suggest a gap in education and training on gender identity and inclusive practices. The current gender-identity-based education insufficiently addresses the needs and issues trans* students face. Evidence also suggests that the lack of awareness and sensitivity around trans* issues may contribute to the microaggressions many participants experience.

4.5 Theme 5: External factors outside the University influence the experiences and perceptions of trans* students

The findings further revealed that trans* students encounter a variety of various external factors outside the inquiry setting that influence their college adjustment and persistence. External factors outside the university affected participants' experiences positively and negatively. This same data also suggests a correlation between trans* students' perceptions and their evaluations of their experiences based on individual interactions involving their trans* gender identity before enrollment. Accordingly, external factors, like finances, healthcare, social support networks, and pre-existing exposure to transphobia and discrimination have the potential to exacerbate their

student experience. This section expands upon the external factors identified within this study and the common barriers that participants experience outside the University.

The first common barrier most student participants consistently reported revolved around anxiety related to finances - both related and unrelated to their gender identity. Examples of participant financial concerns included costs associated with attending colleges, such as tuition, housing, and food. Several participants shared that they were responsible for covering the costs associated with college themselves and lacking financial support from family. While most participants shared this common concern, the data could not determine whether the lack of familial financial assistance was related to their gender identity. Still, data suggest a possible correlation, as four out of nine interview participants lived financially independently. Focus group data also showed that trans* students need access to the emergency fund because of the lack of family support and financial hardships. The results showed that trans* students consistently cited costs related to trans* affirming healthcare and the purchase of gender-affirming clothing as sources of gender identity-related financial problems.

Beyond financial concerns related to trans* affirming healthcare, the findings revealed the lack of access to trans limits trans* students* affirming healthcare both in and outside the inquiry setting. The lack of on-campus trans* affirming healthcare was discussed in Theme 2, but participants cited that access to off-campus trans* affirming healthcare, both physical health and mental care, is challenging. Participants indicated that access to healthcare is inadequate, and the current student health plan provides limited trans* affirming care. Interview participants and written student narratives cited the limitations surrounding the current University-sponsored health care plan. While most participants reported they choose not to enroll in the health plan, one participant provided further insight into the lack of trans* affirming care by stating:

There was no gender-affirming care, and it was hard to get surgery covered, like GRS or a gender reassignment surgery; it was hard to get that covered and done. Yeah, there's no gender care. The only care, I believe, was to see your PCP. And a lot of the times, getting on hormone replacement therapy isn't just your PCP, and that is a big expense.

The data collected from document analysis confirmed that the student health insurance plans provided limited to no coverage related to trans* affirming care.

Evidence revealed that social support networks also affected trans* students' ability to adjust to and persist at college. Among student participants, the level of off-campus social support networks varied. Participants who had them shared that they relied on these networks, which consisted of family and friends, to help them cope and navigate challenges related and unrelated to their gender identity. One participant indicated that in the absence and loss of their social support network, they found themselves employing unhealthy coping mechanisms to manage the anxieties they were facing, such as using alcohol and drugs. Another participant shared their "strength and resiliency" to manage the day-to-day challenges they encountered as a trans* individual in their pre-existing support network. Therefore, the data suggest that trans* students benefit from pre-established off-campus support networks at college.

The last factor that emerged from data is that trans* students' pre-collegiate exposure to microaggressions influenced their perceptions of campus climate and evaluations of their experiences at the University. The data revealed that most interview participants had previously experienced microaggressions and other forms of discrimination related to their gender identity and expression even before coming to college. Multiple participants shared that compared to the microaggressions they encountered on-campus, they felt safe to be themselves compared to when they were in their hometown or secondary school settings. The data also suggests that most

participants could either openly explore or express their gender identity for the first time in college. Several study participants also cited that while they were openly trans*, they knew classmates who could not be "out" and go by their affirmed name because their parents were not aware or did not accept them. One participant recalled a friend who had their RA create two name tags for their door, one listed their deadname and the other affirmed name. They shared that this friend would switch the tags on the door when their parents visited them due to fear of being disowned and losing familial support. Therefore, perceptions related to campus climate were strongly influenced by the type of discrimination they had encountered before college. When asked to evaluate campus climate, all participants were able to identify areas of improvement. Still, data indicated that their overall perception was influenced by what they had encountered before coming to the University.

While each participant could recount ways in which the University could improve and disclose microaggressions they faced, the research showed that generally, seven out of the nine interview participants had a favorable outlook on the inclusive efforts of the University. However, the findings indicated that their exposure to discrimination and harassment outside the collegiate environment might influence this perception. Trans* participants with positive, mixed, and negative perceptions of campus culture all spoke about normalizing the microaggressions they encountered and the coping mechanisms they employed to overcome these triggering experiences. Alex 2 indicated that compared to his experiences outside the University, he felt the University was affirming his gender identity. He shared that he gets upset when he is deadnamed or misgendered but has learned to just get over things and employ coping mechanisms to deal with microaggressions. Other participants shared similar sentiments, and from the data collected in this study, it appears that trans* participants have learned to live with the marginalization they encounter. Their on-campus experiences are often minimized because compared to outside the

collegiate environment, they are either worse or perceived as common challenges trans*

individuals learn to face.

These external factors identified in this section are barriers that trans* students encounter

that provide additional challenges and obstacles while enrolled in college. Trans* students'

exposure to microaggressions and discriminatory practices may be pervasive and affects them in

multiple settings. This study's data revealed that external factors are a compounding issue that can

potentially exacerbate the student experience and academic success of trans* students.

4.6 Theme 6: Trans* students experience fatigue related to being tokenized and consistent self-advocation

The final theme that emerged from the data analysis indicated that trans* students

experience fatigue from being tokenized and consistently self-advocating for themselves and their

needs. The data indicated that this fatigue was a persistent finding among all participants. This

section expands upon these findings, showing that trans* students experience consistent and

pervasive fatigue like other marginalized populations.

Participants cited feeling tokenized at an individual and University level. The data

indicated that tokenization occurs within the classroom environment, especially when asked to

speak to or share their viewpoint based on their trans* identity. Data also suggested that while the

participants cited using pronouns as an affirming practice, the required use of self-disclosure in

some classroom settings exposes trans* students to further tokenization and anxiety related to

whether they "come out." The findings also suggested that the tokenization is perceived to occur

at a University level, with data suggesting that the institution utilizes images of trans* students to

market the institution as LGBTQ-friendly. One participant cited an example of an incident where the University called upon trans* students and allies to take a "unity picture." This participant shared that trans* students felt targeted because they were emailed to participate in the picture individually and did not feel the administration acknowledged or addressed their needs as trans* students. Evidence suggests that many trans* students are often invited to speak or participate in events based on their singular identity as a trans* student, which they indicated was problematic because it further tokenized them and ignored their intersecting identities and diversity interests.

Trans* students also reported experiencing fatigue due to advocating for their needs and self-interests. Participants cited that the fatigue they experienced was related to various identity-related factors. One of the most common exhaustion points was the continuous nature of the "coming out" process for trans* students. As one participant elaborated:

I wanted that fix-all, where I could just come out once, so I don't have to do it anymore, everybody knows, and it's fine now. I don't have to keep coming out. In reality, just like it is with sexuality, it's the same with gender identity. You have to keep coming out, and you have to keep addressing the issue. It can just be exhausting.

Another point of exhaustion, as trans* students stated, was continuously discussing, and explaining their gender identity. One participant highlighted this example by sharing that they are frustrated with continuously educating cisgender faculty and peers about pronoun usage and trans* etiquette. Additionally, the findings revealed that trans* students face fatigue from pointing out and addressing microaggressions and system inequities at the University. Several participants expressed frustrations about perceived institutional commitment to address the needs and issues of trans* students. One participant shared that they believe trans* students are not a "priority,"

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whereas another indicated that they tend to be an "afterthought." Another participant elaborated on this perception:

> I feel like oftentimes, the university will create a gender inclusion council or a diversity council, and the people on the council will give University administration their recommendations on how to fix it. Then it might be years before you see actual change or an actual beginning to implement those kinds of good changes for the institution. I think a lot of that is slowed down just through an administration not being very transparent. Then also viewing their own institution as, "We do so great. We do so many things." Which is true, but it slows down further progress, once they reach a certain point.

Study findings suggested that the fatigue trans* students experience may also be accentuated because the feedback they are providing is not being considered. Participants indicated that not only does the institution seem slow to act, but it also does not involve trans* students in the change process. Focus group data confirmed this finding, with one participant identifying the following solution, "Allow currently enrolled trans students to have an active voice and opinion on on-going policies and procedural changes at the university such as a committee or direct line of communication with staff."

Based on the data collected and analyzed in the study, trans* students appeared to be subject to increased fatigue and anxiety. The data suggest that in the absence of trans* student support services and resources, trans* students must consistently advocate for themselves and navigate a campus climate that does not affirm or support their needs. The trans* student experience is further complicated by how trans* students are tokenized and self-advocate for their needs and interests.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter presented the patterns and themes that emerged from the needs assessment. The research data was collected, coded, re-coded, codified, and categorized based on the study parameters outlined in Chapter 3. The emerging themes clarified the experiences, challenges, and needs of trans* students within the inquiry setting. Additionally, as part of the study design, the perception of campus climate on gender identity and expression for trans* students at the University was also explored. Through the in-depth analysis, the results of this inquiry provide empirical evidence of the challenge and obstacles trans* students face. The findings also highlight that while there is much works that needs to be done to improve the experiences and perceptions of trans* students, optimistically progress has been made in the last three years with the development of tran* inclusive policies, practices, and programs. Chapter 5 discusses how these findings can be utilized to address the needs and interests of trans* students within the inquiry setting and affirm the extant literature and research.

5.0 Chapter 5: Discussions and Implications

The purpose of this inquiry was twofold. First, it aimed to understand the campus climate and its effects on trans* students at the University. Second, it aimed to identify common needs, perceived challenges, and the unique obstacles trans* students encounter in the inquiry setting as they adjust to and navigate college. The needs assessment approach was adopted to achieve these goals. The study's findings identified improvement opportunities and tangible solutions to challenges and needs expressed and felt by the trans* student participants. This chapter reviews the inquiry questions that guided this study based on assertions from the themes and the literature. The chapter begins with an in-depth discussion of each inquiry question, summarizing the identified themes, the study's findings, and their contribution to the existing literature. The chapter then discusses implications for practice, including solutions identified by participants, study limitations, and possible directions for future research on this topic.

5.1 Conclusions Related to Inquiry Questions

This section discusses each inquiry question and assertions made to address each question. Assertions are findings in qualitative research studies and embrace the study's situational, temporal, and contextual nature (Saldaña, 2016). Each assertion aims to answer the inquiry questions based on the themes that emerged from the data collected and analyzed in Chapter 4 and the research and literature discussed in Chapter 3.

5.1.1 Inquiry Question #1: What is the trans* student perception of campus climate around gender identity? (How do university policies and practices influence a trans* students experience at the University? How do interactions with cisgender faculty, staff, and students impact a trans* student's experience?)

Based on data, the campus climate and culture at the university lack the necessary services, resources, and policies to support and affirm trans* students adequately. This assertion was supported by Theme 1, which revealed that campus culture is not affirming nor inclusive of trans* students, and Theme 6, which highlighted that trans* students encounter increased tokenism and experience fatigue related to consistent self-advocation. The literature reviewed in this study also supported this assertion by demonstrating that trans* students at institutions of higher education are an underserved population that face challenges surrounding campus policies, facilities, support services, and general awareness (Beemyn et al., 2015; Davis & Galup, 2013; Garvey et al., 2018; Goldberg, 2018; McKinney, 2005; Nicolazzo, 2017; Pryor, 2015; Rankin et al., 2010; Renn, 2017). Existing research shows that the campus climate at secondary and post-secondary institutions is perceived as unwelcoming, non-affirming, and hostile towards trans* students (Beemyn, 2003; Goldberg, 2018; Grant et al., 2011; Nicolazzo, 2017; Rankin et al., 2010). Evidence from this study supports and contributes to the existing research, as the study demonstrated that the University, at the time the study was conducted, was not perceived or universally considered to be an inclusive or affirming of trans*students. I utilized the term universally in this study because evidence suggests trans* students could find and interact with offices and employees they perceived as affirming and supportive of their gender identity and expression, although they were not implemented or available institution wide. This nuance is important to share because it provides context and because it is supported by existing scholarly findings, which indicates that despite

negative perceptions of campus climates, trans* students do manage to find faculty and staff who affirm and support them (Beemyn, 2003; Grant et al., 2011; Nicolazzo, 2017).

This study identified two primary institutional factors supporting the assertion that the campus climate is non-affirming for trans* students. The first is that trans* students commonly have marginalizing and exclusionary experiences and interactions. These common shared experiences are consistent with research findings that indicate trans* students are increasingly exposed to discriminatory and oppressive environments (Nicolazzo, 2017; Rankin et al., 2010). According to the results, a trans* student collegiate experience involves adapting to traditional challenges of college and coping with increased anxiety and discrimination from being exposed to gender-identity-based microaggressions (Beemyn 2003; Garvey et al., 2017; Griner et al., 2017; Nicolazzo, 2017). Data indicated that the microaggressions manifested themselves at all levels within the University, ranging from interactions with peers, faculty, and staff to University policies, practices, and systems. As illustrated in Chapter 2, microaggressions affect trans* students' social and academic success and general wellbeing (Beemyn, 2003; Goldberg, 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017).

The second institutional factor contributing to the assertion that the University is non-affirming is that trans* students are expected to advocate for themselves on their own time at the expense of their personal development. Trans* students in this study felt like they were expected to educate their cisgender peers, faculty, and staff about gender identity and the meaning of trans*. Trans* students are expected to answer questions and are called upon to share their perspectives as a member of the trans* community in and outside the classroom environment. This expectation contributed to fatigue and feelings of consistently advocating and fighting for their needs. The existing research also confirmed that providing identity-based education is an exhausting

occurrence that is common for trans* students and takes its toll on them (Beemyn, 2003; Nicolazzo, 2017; Rankin & Beemyn, 2011). Evidence from the study suggests that as part of this self-advocation, trans* students feel tokenized and felt used to market the University as a diverse environment that is LGBTQ-friendly. As the study findings and the literature illustrate, trans* students, like other marginalized identity populations, face increased tokenization and victimization because of their gender identity and expression (Goldberg, 2018; Griner et al., 2017; Nicolazzo, 2017; Pryor, 2015; Rankin et al., 2010).

5.1.2 Inquiry Question #2: What are the challenges and obstacles trans* students encounter while they adjust and persist through college?

From the data collected and analyzed in this study, I assert that trans* students encounter distinct challenges and obstacles that affect their ability to adjust to and navigate college because of their gender identity. This assertion was supported by Theme 1; highlighting that campus culture is neither affirming nor inclusive of trans* students; Theme 3, revealing that trans* students place significant value and importance on social connection; Theme 4, indicating that education and training for cisgender students, faculty, and staff around gender-inclusive practices is insufficient; and Theme 5, suggesting that external factors outside the University influence the experiences and perception of trans* students. Existing literature demonstrates that in comparison to cisgender peers, trans* students find themselves in oppressive environments that present unique challenges and obstacles because of their gender identity and expression (Beemyn 2003; Goldberg, 2018; Grant et al., 2011; Nicolazzo, 2017; Rankin et al., 2010). Evidence collected in this study contributes to literature around this topic and supports the assertion that trans* students face distinct obstacles and challenges as they adjust and persist through college. While the experiences

of trans* students cannot be generalized, they appear to be shared by most study participants. Shared experiences mentioned by multiple participants included exposure to discrimination through microaggressions, inadequate education and training on gender-identity, lack of trans* related resources and services, inadequate trans* affirming policies and accountability measures, increased anxiety and psychological trauma, and lack of trans* affirming social support networks. These shared experiences not only emerged from the study but support similar findings from existing research that while the experiences of trans* students vary, most trans* student experience similar negative and discriminatory experiences (Beemyn, 2003; Garvey et al., 2017; Grant et al., 2011; Nicolazzo, 2017).

Evidence suggests that trans* students are subjected to challenges and obstacles that negatively affect their personal, social, psychological, and academic success and wellbeing. As illustrated in Chapter 2, these obstacles can potentially affect trans* student adjustment, retention, and persistence even among students with effective coping strategies (Beemyn 2003; Goldberg, 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017; Rankin et al., 2010). These challenges and obstacles manifest themselves at both individual and institutional levels. Individually, participants consistently endured microaggressions, with all participants mentioned exampleslike being deadnamed or misgendered. Existing research indicates that such triggering experiences contribute to trans* students' anxiety surrounding social acceptance, which is affected by pre-collegiate experiences and further exacerbated by navigating the coming out process and its repetitive nature for trans* individuals (Dugan, Kusel, & Simounet, 2012; Goldberg, Beemyn, & Smith; 2018; Grant et al., 2011; Nicolazzo, 2017)Participants stated other individual factors, including concerns around finances and cost of college, access to trans* affirming amenities and services, like housing and healthcare, and availability of a trans* affirming social support network consisting of friends, family members,

and mentors. The existing literature supports and confirms these findings, indicating that these individual factors identified in this study are a common concern among many trans* students at colleges and universities nationwide (Garvey et al., 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017).

Institutionally, trans* students face obstacles due to deficiencies in current University policies, practices, and resources. The current University policies are not affirming or inclusive for the most part and fail to acknowledge or account for the needs and interests of trans* students. Evidence suggests that because of the lack of trans* affirming policies, departments provide inconsistent trans* affirming care and support. Research confirms this finding and supports that organizational practices are inconsistent and subject to individual interpretation in the absence of policies (Beemyn et al., 2005; Dirks, 2012; Garvey et al., 2018; James et al., 2016; McKinney, 2005; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). The data also indicated the lack of training and education on gender identity and trans* issues for employees and students. As illustrated in Chapter 2, the lack of awareness and education around trans* issues is a prominent challenge trans* students encountered at college and universities nationwide (Beemyn et al., 2005; Dugan, Kusel, & Simounet, 2012; Nicolazzo, 2017). Lastly, the study's findings confirmed that the lack of designated trans* affirming resources, such as an LGBTQ Center or staff position, negatively affects and decreases awareness and access to services, trans* student advocacy, and institutional accountability, which is also support by research highlighting the importance of LGBTQ spaces and staff on college campuses as a best practice and trans* student need (Beemyn, et al., 2005; Goldberg, Beemyn, & Smith, 2018; Mase III, n.d.; Nicolazzo, 2017).

According to the study results, the obstacles trans* students encounter are not restricted to their interactions within the inquiry setting. Trans* students come to and navigate through the University already having been exposed to microaggressions and institutional equities in their day-

to-day interactions with the world around them and secondary educational environments. This exposure appears to have affected participants' perceptions of their on-campus experiences. The findings suggest that participants have already been exposed to instances and situations where they were discriminated against and marginalized because of their gender identity and expression. Therefore, experiences before and outside the collegiate environment might have influenced participants' responses and perceptions of and abilities to navigate obstacles they encountered at the University, a finding supported by literature demonstrating that trans* students encounter discrimination and harassment before college and within and outside the educational sector (Grant et al., 2011; James et al., 2016; Kosciw et al., 2016).

5.1.3 Inquiry Question #3: What are the academic, social, and physical needs of trans* students at the University? (What types of services or programs do trans* students need to feel included and affirmed? What are the policies and practices trans* students identify as critical to increase their sense of belonging on campus?)

Based on the study data, trans* students have unique needs as a student population that the University must examine and address to increase their sense of belonging and social integration. This assertion was supported by Theme 2, indicating that trans* students lack targeted support services and resources, and Theme 3, highlighting that trans* students place significant value and importance on social connection. The literature review supported and confirmed this assertion by highlighting the importance of belonging for all college students, but especially trans* students as an already marginalized identity group facing significant challenges and obstacles (Goldberg, Beemyn, & Smith, 2017; Nicolazzo, 2017; Parker, 2021; Renn, 2017). Therefore, evidence from

this study and existing research suggests that trans* students have various needs at individual and group levels. According to the data collected, most of these needs are perceived as not being met by the University. Study participants and documents revealed that within this inquiry setting, trans* students need the following:

- affirming policies, practices, and facilities

- dedicated trans* student support services and resources,

- institution-wide gender-identity based education and training,

- opportunities for meaningful social interaction and relationship building, and

- increased institutional commitment and accountability.

The existing literature confirms and supports the validity of these concerns through identifying that a gap exists in the services and experiences of trans* students in comparison to their cisgender peers and through the identification of existing best practices in trans* student support, advocacy, and affirmation (Beemyn et al., 2005; Dugan, Kusel, & Simounet, 2012; Goldberg, Beemyn, & Smith, 2018; McKinney, 2005; Nicolazzo, 2017; Rankin et al., 2010; Renn, 2017).

Study findings indicated that the University needs to extensively review and revise its existing policies and practices to be trans* affirming and inclusive of all gender identities. In this regard, new policies should be developed to ensure equitable practices for all gender identities and address trans* student issues and interests. The existing literature and study findings confirm this need and suggest that the lack of trans* affirming policies and practices are a contributing factor to the lack of dedicated services and programs that address the needs of trans* students (Beemyn et al., 2005; Garvey et al., 2018; Goldberg, Beemyn, & Smith, 2018; McKinney, 2005; Nicolazzo, 2017). The data indicated that the absence of not having a staff member or office solely responsible for advocacy, support, and policy development hampered and affected access to and availability

of institutional resources. According to participants' responses and literature, trans* students need to have a place or person at the University focused on their needs and interests (Beemyn et al., 2005; Golberg, Beemyn, & Smith, 2018; Nicolazzo, 2017). The evidence also indicated that trans* affirming care and support need to be universally applied in all sectors within the University. Trans* students do not operate singularly; therefore, it is in the best interest of students and each department to examine the level of trans* affirming care they provide and address any deficiencies within each unit.

Data also revealed that gender-identity education and training at the university are inadequate and insufficient. Research has already shown that the lack of knowledge and awareness of gender identity and trans* issues among cisgender individuals is a significant mitigating factor that contributes to an un-affirming campus climate and student experience (Beemyn et al., 2005;; Dugan, Kusel, & Simounet, 2012; McKinney, 2005). Evidence from this study suggests that cisgender peers, faculty, and staff at the University lack awareness and understanding of trans* issues. The absence of required education and training on gender identity for all students and employees appears to have intensified this deficiency. Furthermore, trans* students perceived that the University is not committed to affirming and supporting trans* students. Resoundingly, based on past experiences and slow institutional response and reaction, participants felt that the University does not care about their needs and interests, a common finding found in the existing literature. Micro-aggressive incidents, which were perceived to be either not addressed or inadequately resolved by the University, often reinforced these feelings despite being reported to appropriate authorities. The lack of accountability leaves trans* students feeling unheard and further victimized, which leads to decreased reporting, as research shows (Beemyn et al., 2005; Goldberg, 2018; McKinney, 2005).

This study also confirmed that trans* students have a significant need for social interaction with trans* and queer peers, faculty, and staff. Nicolazzo (2017) found that trans* students benefited from expanding their social network by creating kinship and affinity with trans* and queer individuals based on commonalities. Similarly, this study found similar findings and suggests that trans* students benefit from opportunities to form meaningful relationships with individuals who have similar sexual and gender identities and interact with other LGBTQ individuals. These opportunities increase the chance that trans* students will find friends and mentors they could trust and build an affirming and supportive relationships with (Beemyn et al., 2005; Dugan, Kusel, & Simounet, 2012; Nicolazzo, 2017). Data further suggested that trans* students would benefit from developing an LGBTQ mentorship program and increasing trans* visibility amongst faculty and staff. The existing research supported these findings and suggested that trans* students need mentorship and role models who are visible and supportive (Beemyn et al., 2005; Parker, 2021; Nicolazzo, 2017).

5.2 Implications for Practice

The needs assessment approach was adopted to identify specific tangible, solution-oriented, and practitioner-based areas for improvement at the University (Gupta, 2007; Royse et al., 2009). More specifically, the findings provide implications for how the University and its leadership can improve and enhance the trans* student experience by addressing the issues and needs outlined in this study. As illustrated in Figure 1 in Chapter 2, needs assessments are grounded in a framework that allows for an in-depth comparison between the current condition and desired condition to identify and examine the needs of the target population (Gupta, 2007). Therefore, the

identified needs highlight action-oriented solutions and areas of growth for the University. Implementing these solutions will allow the University to shift to campus culture and institutional approach that affirms, embraces, and supports trans* students.

Changing campus culture will require an institutional commitment to review, examine, and develop new and existing policies, programs, and services to ensure that they are gender-inclusive and do not implicitly reinforce the traditional gender binary. The efforts to promote gender inclusion must be spearheaded by university leaders and stakeholders responsible for the curricular and co-curricular services provided to students. Each department and academic program must commit to this by actively reviewing department-specific policies, procedures, and services to ensure gender identity affirmation is at the forefront. Additionally, while all faculty and staff practice gender inclusion, the University needs to create a designated staff position responsible for trans* and queer student support and services. An individual in this role could address and advocate for trans* students' needs and allocate some time to assist departments in being inclusive and overseeing institutional accountability measures.

Beyond departmental accountability, the study illustrated that to address trans* students' needs, the University would benefit from increasing accountability efforts within institutional policies, procedures, and processes. Several participants in the study perceived the institution to be resistant to change and slow to act at reactive and proactive levels, citing examples of microaggressions that occurred and structural inequity that has been shared but either not addressed or inadequately handled. The study revealed that trans* students need the institution to address transphobic behavior and attitudes promptly with an educational and punitive approach, like other student conduct and employee disciplinary process. Furthermore, the institution should be transparent in handling disciplinary matters and spelling out the process clearly and consistently

in student and employee handbooks. Overall, the University would be well served to spell out a zero-tolerance policy for transphobia and create an outline for how trans* students can report the various types of microaggressions they encounter and increase transparency around how it is addressed and resolved. These efforts should be incorporated into the existing student conduct and employee disciplinary processes.

The study also confirmed the need for universal and increased training and education on gender identity and trans* issues. Students, faculty, and staff generally lack the knowledge and understanding in this area and general inclusive etiquette (Beemyn, et al., 2005; McKinney, 2005; Nicolazzo, 2017; Renn, 2017). This study's findings illustrated that trans* students are often asked questions related to gender identity from cisgender peers, faculty, and staff and are frequently asked to speak on behalf of the trans* population both in and outside the classroom environment. The development and transition to continuous training and education for cisgender students, faculty, and staff on gender inclusion, implicit bias, and gender identity would address this deficiency among the University's cisgender population and further enhance an inclusive and trans* affirming campus culture. Additionally, the education and training on gender identity should also be comprehensive and applied within curricular and co-curricular environments, in specific academic courses, educational campaigns, campus events and activities, and student, faculty, and staff training (Beemyn, et al., 2005;; Nicolazzo, 2017).

Aside from increasing training and education, an opportunity exists to involve and engage trans* students in the institution's inclusion efforts. Trans* students, like other marginalized student groups, want to ensure their voice is being heard and experiences related to institutional equity are considered. According to previous research, trans* students have historically faced environments where policies and services are developed for them as users but not as active

participants and stakeholders (Freire, 1970; Niicolazzo, 2017). This study highlighted that trans*

students felt further marginalized by changes in institutional policies and practices because they

were not included in the process from the beginning. Instead, they have been brought in at the end

for feedback. Still, study participants had an intense desire to be consulted and involved in change

efforts around gender inclusion throughout the process and not at the end. The study also confirmed

that trans* students perceive a lack of trans* visibility among faculty and staff who could serve as

role models and mentors. The lack of representation highlights an institutional need to focus

recruitment and hiring efforts to intentionally increase trans* visibility among faculty and staff at

the University.

Regardless of current and past practices, this study identified a critical need to develop an

institutional strategy that addresses the needs and interests of trans* students at the University. The

implications outlined in this section demonstrated that the needs of trans* students could be

addressed and resolved by adopting gender-inclusive policies and practices university-wide and

creating and developing tailored support services for trans* students. Furthermore, the study also

identified opportunities for gender-inclusive practices and tangible solutions that could be

implemented with institutional support. A list of solutions is included in Appendix T. This list

emerged from participant recommendations, data collected and analyzed for this inquiry, and best

practices identified in existing literature and research.

5.3 Institutional Specific Recommended Actions

As the findings indicated, the experience of trans* students has improved at the University

within the last three to four years. However, as cited by study participants and existing literature

reviewed in this document, further progress is needed at the institutional level. The data and themes that emerged from the needs assessment and the solutions identified in Appendix T provide a foundational framework and starting point for the University to develop an action plan that will address the needs and challenges of trans* students. Therefore, I recommend that the University create an administrative position responsible for providing dedicated support and services to trans* and queer students. The individual hired into this role should fall under the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and be given the agency to lead and implement change while also being charged with being able to hold others accountable for the development and implementation of an improvement plan.

Secondly, I recommend that the university convene seven workgroups consisting of students, faculty, staff, and administrators for the areas identified in Appendix T: research and assessment; institutional policies; online systems; education and training; inclusive practices; campus facilities; and support services and resources. Participants indicated a perception that the University is resistant to change; therefore, to combat this, each workgroup should be small and manageable and be comprised of no more than seven members (two students, two faculty, two staff, and one administrator). These workgroups should be given a specific charge to examine and address the solutions identified within their respective areas. Each group should be assigned a three-to-six-month timeline to develop a plan and strategy to either implement the solutions identified in Appendix T or explain why it is not feasible, which includes providing an alternate solution. Workgroups should be required to provide bi-weekly or monthly progress reports and a finalized implementation plan to the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

The implementation plan developed by each workgroup should include a timeline for implementation and projected needs, such as costs, labor, and additional support. The workgroup

reports will then be incorporated into one document that should be shared with the University community to ensure transparency and to solicit further feedback. Additionally, the progress of the improvement action plan would be monitored by the staff member hired to lead trans* and queer student services with support and accountability from University leadership, such as the President and the Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The efforts of a dedicated staff member and the seven workgroups create a culture of change discussed in the section above and employ a model of shared responsibility and governance.

5.4   Limitations and Future Research

Like all studies, while the findings provided significant insight into the experiences and needs of trans* students, the study had some limitations. The first limitation of this study is that the needs assessment approach is designed to provide a methodology to examine the problem of practice within a specific inquiry setting, versus a multi-institutional study. While the study contributed to scholarly knowledge and supported the findings of pre-existing research, the findings and results are localized to a single institution. However, this limitation also provides a significant opportunity for future research. The needs assessment approach and research tools utilized for this study can easily be conducted in multitude of educational settings. The benefits of a needs assessment approach is it is customizable and adaptable, allowing for easy replication, design flexibility, and data comparison across multiple institutions.

This study was also limited by the size and diversity of the participant sample. Participation was voluntary and relied on participants being invited either by the principal investigator or through word of mouth from peers, faculty, and staff, some of whom are members of similar social

networks. An institutional-wide recruitment email to students could not be distributed due to existing policies restricting the mass recruitment of study participants at the University. Therefore, because recruitment of participants was restricted to snowball and convenience sampling, it may not represent the collective experience of trans* students within the inquiry setting. Additionally, recruitment of participants occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have influenced the availability and willingness of students to participate in the study.

The participant pool was also racially and ethnically homogenous and only had one participant who self-identified as BIPOC. While the University is a predominately white institution, the lack of racial and ethnic diversity is a limitation because the existing literature illustrates that BIPOC trans* students have historically experienced increased harassment and discrimination due to their intersecting marginalized social identities (Grant et al., 2011; James et al., 2016; Nicolazzo, 2017; Parker, 2021). The limited sample size and lack of racial and ethnic diversity allow for opportunities for future research to be conducted where a larger and more diverse sample size are recruited and obtained, and findings compared with the original study. Future research could also expand the study participation by adding a campus climate survey to the data collection method that could assess the perceptions and experiences around gender identity for all students and employees, both trans* and cisgender. Increasing the diversity of the sample size would also allow for a comparison of similarities and differences of trans* student needs based on race and ethnicity, contributing to existing research on the experiences of trans* students with multiple marginalized social identities.

Another limitation was that given my dual role as the principal investigator and a practitioner within the inquiry setting, a power dynamic may have existed between myself and study participants. My role as both an administrator and researcher could have influenced

participants' responses and recruitment due to various factors, both positively and negatively. Participants were aware that I was actively involved in the development of gender-inclusive policies and practices before this study, therefore this may have impacted the candidness of participant responses. Study participants may have felt more comfortable speaking with me based on my pre-existing relationship with them, but it could have also been a limitation because they may have not wanted to offend me by providing negative feedback. Future research could address this limitation by conducting this study utilizing both researchers known and unknown to the participant sample. Additional research could also include a follow-up assessment with trans* students who initially enrolled at the University after developing the affirmed name policy versus those who enrolled before the affirmed name policy was implemented. The findings from this study revealed that first-year and second-year participants had a more positive outlook and frequently cited the affirmed name policy, which adopted into institutional culture before their arrival at the University.

5.5   Conclusion

The primary goal of this inquiry was to address the problem of practice by conducting empirical research to gain a deeper understanding of the trans* student experience and the type of services and resources needed to affirm and support this student population within the inquiry setting. The study focused on achieving this aim by identifying the unique needs of trans* students through in-depth examination and analysis of the challenges and obstacles they encounter as they adjust to and navigate through the University. Overall, the results revealed that while progress has been made to address some of the trans* students' needs, the University still lacks the resources

and services this student demographic needs to feel affirmed and supported. Additionally, the findings revealed that campus culture needs to be changed by increasing education, training, and awareness of trans* issues and gender identity.

The needs assessment supported the existing research and literature by demonstrating that trans* students, as a marginalized student demographic, have limited resources, support, and institutional prioritization compared to their cisgender peers. As previously noted, the inquiry findings cannot necessarily be applied or generalized across higher education. However, the results of this study provide a glimpse into the problems and challenges trans* students face at the University while also identifying the practical solution and opportunities that exist to improve trans* students' experiences and create an affirming and gender-inclusive campus culture. The study achieved its goal of providing an in-depth understanding of the experiences, needs, and challenges trans* students face within the inquiry setting and the types of services they need to overcome.

To conclude this dissertation, this study demonstrated that trans* students lack institutional resources and support services at the University due to the lack of knowledge, understanding, and awareness of trans* issues at institutional and individual levels. Despite this deficit, the study provides a comprehensive outline of trans* students' needs while highlighting specific examples of how the institution can address these challenges through development and improvement efforts. This study's end goal is to provide university leadership opportunities to build a collaborative strategy on gender inclusion that would address the needs of all gender identities and acknowledge that trans* students have unique needs and challenges.

Common Data Set 2014-2015

B. ENROLLMENT AND PERSISTENCE

B1 Institutional Enrollment - Men and Women Provide numbers of students for each of the following categories as of the institution's official fall reporting date or as of October 15, 2014. Note: Report students formerly designated as "first professional" in the graduate cells.

	FULL-TIME		PART-TIME	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Undergraduates				
Degree-seeking, first-time freshmen	1	101	0	2
Other first-year, degree-seeking	0	3	0	1
All other degree-seeking	2	393	14	82
Total degree-seeking	3	497	14	85
All other undergraduates enrolled in credit courses	24	38	57	214
Total undergraduates	27	535	71	299
Graduate				
Degree-seeking, first-time	94	315	8	100
All other degree-seeking	89	345	43	194
All other graduates enrolled in credit courses	1	0	1	12
Total graduate	184	660	52	306
Total all undergraduates				932
Total all graduate				1,202
GRAND TOTAL ALL STUDENTS				2,134

B2 Enrollment by Racial/Ethnic Category. Provide numbers of undergraduate students for each of the following categories as of the institution's official fall reporting date or as of October 15, 2014. Include international students only in the category "Nonresident aliens." Complete the "Total Undergraduates" column only if you cannot provide data for the first two columns. Report as your institution reports to IPEDS: persons who are Hispanic should be reported only on the Hispanic line, not under any race, and persons who are non-Hispanic multi-racial should be reported only under "Two or more races."

	Degree-Seeking First-Time First Year	Degree-Seeking Undergraduates (include first-time first-year)	Total Undergraduates (both degree- and non-degree-seeking)
Nonresident aliens	4	31	109
Hispanic/Latino	4	21	22
Black or African American, non-Hispanic	20	70	71
White, non-Hispanic	70	413	432
American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic	1	2	2
Asian, non-Hispanic	3	16	16
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic			
Two or more races, non-Hispanic	0	15	15
Race and/or ethnicity unknown	2	31	265
TOTAL	104	599	932

Common Data Set 2015-2016

B. ENROLLMENT AND PERSISTENCE

B1 Institutional Enrollment - Men and Women Provide numbers of students for each of the following categories as of the institution's official fall reporting date or as of October 15, 2015. Note: Report students formerly designated as "first professional" in the graduate cells.

	FULL-TIME		PART-TIME	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Undergraduates				
Degree-seeking, first-time freshmen	58	152	1	0
Other first-year, degree-seeking	1	18	0	0
All other degree-seeking	21	361	7	76
Total degree-seeking	80	531	8	76
All other undergraduates enrolled in credit courses	18	38	71	212
Total undergraduates	98	569	79	288
Graduate				
Degree-seeking, first-time	74	325	5	79
All other degree-seeking	96	353	39	205
All other graduates enrolled in credit courses	1	0	2	11
Total graduate	171	678	46	295
Total all undergraduates				1,034
Total all graduate				1,190
GRAND TOTAL ALL STUDENTS				2,224

B2 Enrollment by Racial/Ethnic Category. Provide numbers of undergraduate students for each of the following categories as of the institution's official fall reporting date or as of October 15, 2015. Include international students only in the category "Nonresident aliens." Complete the "Total Undergraduates" column only if you cannot provide data for the first two columns. Report as your institution reports to IPEDS: persons who are Hispanic should be reported only on the Hispanic line, not under any race, and persons who are non-Hispanic multi-racial should be reported only under "Two or more races."

	Degree-Seeking First-Time First Year	Degree-Seeking Undergraduates (include first-time first-year)	Total Undergraduates (both degree- and non-degree-seeking)
Nonresident aliens	6	22	107
Hispanic/Latino	12	32	32
Black or African American, non-Hispanic	18	71	72
White, non-Hispanic	150	498	525
American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic	4	5	5
Asian, non-Hispanic	6	17	19
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic			
Two or more races, non-Hispanic	9	17	17
Race and/or ethnicity unknown	6	33	257
TOTAL	211	695	1,034

Common Data Set 2018-2019

B. ENROLLMENT AND PERSISTENCE

B1

B1 Institutional Enrollment - Men and Women Provide numbers of students for each of the following categories as of the institution's official fall reporting date or as of October 15, 2018. Note: Report students formerly designated as "first professional" in the graduate cells.

	FULL-TIME		PART-TIME	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
B1 **Undergraduates**				
B1 Degree-seeking, first-time freshmen	90	188	.	.
B1 Other first-year, degree-seeking	18	19	.	.
B1 All other degree-seeking	179	500	12	
B1 *Total degree-seeking*	287	707	12	0
B1 All other undergraduates enrolled in credit courses	8	18	5	17
B1 *Total undergraduates*	295	725	17	17
B1 **Graduate**				
B1 Degree-seeking, first-time	77	294	9	
B1 All other degree-seeking	98	294	44	175
B1 All other graduates enrolled in credit courses	.	3	10	40
B1 *Total graduate*	175	591	63	215
B1 Total all undergraduates				1,054
B1 Total all graduate				1,044
B1 **GRAND TOTAL ALL STUDENTS**				2,098

B2 Enrollment by Racial/Ethnic Category. Provide numbers of undergraduate students for each of the following categories as of the institution's official fall reporting date or as of October 15, 2018. Include international students only in the category "Nonresident aliens." Complete the "Total Undergraduates" column only if you cannot provide data for the first two columns. Report as your institution reports to IPEDS: persons who are Hispanic should be reported only on the Hispanic line, not under any race, and persons who are non-Hispanic multi-racial should be reported only under "Two or more races."

	Degree-Seeking First-Time First Year	Degree-Seeking Undergraduates (include first-time first-year)	Total Undergraduates (both degree- and non-degree-seeking)
B2 Nonresident aliens	7	28	61
B2 Hispanic/Latino	6	30	30
B2 Black or African American, non-Hispanic	18	67	67
B2 White, non-Hispanic	226	837	843
B2 American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic	.	3	3
B2 Asian, non-Hispanic	9	36	39
B2 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic			
B2 Two or more races, non-Hispanic	3	19	19
B2 Race and/or ethnicity unknown	9	37	43
B2 **TOTAL**	278	1,057	1,105

2016 Dear Colleague Letter on Transgender Students

U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division

U.S. Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights

Dear Colleague Letter on Transgender Students
Notice of Language Assistance

If you have difficulty understanding English, you may, free of charge, request language assistance services for this Department information by calling 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) (TTY: 1-800-877-8339), or email us at: Ed.Language.Assistance@ed.gov.

Aviso a personas con dominio limitado del idioma inglés: Si usted tiene alguna dificultad en entender el idioma inglés, puede, sin costo alguno, solicitar asistencia lingüística con respecto a esta información llamando al 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) (TTY: 1-800-877-8339), o envíe un mensaje de correo electrónico a: Ed.Language.Assistance@ed.gov.

給英語能力有限人士的通知：如果您不懂英語， 或者使用英语有困难，您可以要求獲得向大眾提供的語言協助服務，幫助您理解教育部資訊。這些語言協助服務均可免費提供。如果您需要有關口譯或筆譯服務的詳細資訊，請致電 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) (聽語障人士專線：1-800-877-8339),或電郵: Ed.Language.Assistance@ed.gov。

Thông báo dành cho những người có khả năng Anh ngữ hạn chế: Nếu quý vị gặp khó khăn trong việc hiểu Anh ngữ thì quý vị có thể yêu cầu các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ cho các tin tức của Bộ dành cho công chúng. Các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ này đều miễn phí. Nếu quý vị muốn biết thêm chi tiết về các dịch vụ phiên dịch hay thông dịch, xin vui lòng gọi số 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) (TTY: 1-800-877-8339), hoặc email: Ed.Language.Assistance@ed.gov.

영어 미숙자를 위한 공고: 영어를 이해하는 데 어려움이 있으신 경우, 교육부 정보 센터에 일반인 대상 언어 지원 서비스를 요청하실 수 있습니다. 이러한 언어 지원 서비스는 무료로 제공됩니다. 통역이나 번역 서비스에 대해 자세한 정보가 필요하신 경우, 전화번호 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) 또는 청각 장애인용 전화번호 1-800-877-8339 또는 이메일주소 Ed.Language.Assistance@ed.gov 으로 연락하시기 바랍니다.

Paunawa sa mga Taong Limitado ang Kaalaman sa English: Kung nahihirapan kayong makaintindi ng English, maaari kayong humingi ng tulong ukol dito sa inpormasyon ng Kagawaran mula sa nagbibigay ng serbisyo na pagtulong kaugnay ng wika. Ang serbisyo na pagtulong kaugnay ng wika ay libre. Kung kailangan ninyo ng dagdag na impormasyon tungkol sa mga serbisyo kaugnay ng pagpapaliwanag o pagsasalin, mangyari lamang tumawag sa 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) (TTY: 1-800-877-8339), o mag-email sa: Ed.Language.Assistance@ed.gov.

Уведомление для лиц с ограниченным знанием английского языка: Если вы испытываете трудности в понимании английского языка, вы можете попросить, чтобы вам предоставили перевод информации, которую Министерство Образования доводит до всеобщего сведения. Этот перевод предоставляется бесплатно. Если вы хотите получить более подробную информацию об услугах устного и письменного перевода, звоните по телефону 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) (служба для слабослышащих: 1-800-877-8339), или отправьте сообщение по адресу: Ed.Language.Assistance@ed.gov.

U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division

U.S. Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights

May 13, 2016

Dear Colleague:

Schools across the country strive to create and sustain inclusive, supportive, safe, and nondiscriminatory communities for all students. In recent years, we have received an increasing number of questions from parents, teachers, principals, and school superintendents about civil rights protections for transgender students. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) and its implementing regulations prohibit sex discrimination in educational programs and activities operated by recipients of Federal financial assistance.[1] This prohibition encompasses discrimination based on a student's gender identity, including discrimination based on a student's transgender status. This letter summarizes a school's Title IX obligations regarding transgender students and explains how the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) evaluate a school's compliance with these obligations.

ED and DOJ (the Departments) have determined that this letter is *significant guidance*.[2] This guidance does not add requirements to applicable law, but provides information and examples to inform recipients about how the Departments evaluate whether covered entities are complying with their legal obligations. If you have questions or are interested in commenting on this guidance, please contact ED at ocr@ed.gov or 800-421-3481 (TDD 800-877-8339); or DOJ at education@usdoj.gov or 877-292-3804 (TTY: 800-514-0383).

Accompanying this letter is a separate document from ED's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, *Examples of Policies and Emerging Practices for Supporting Transgender Students*. The examples in that document are taken from policies that school districts, state education agencies, and high school athletics associations around the country have adopted to help ensure that transgender students enjoy a supportive and nondiscriminatory school environment. Schools are encouraged to consult that document for practical ways to meet Title IX's requirements.[3]

Terminology

- *Gender identity* refers to an individual's internal sense of gender. A person's gender identity may be different from or the same as the person's sex assigned at birth.

- *Sex assigned at birth* refers to the sex designation recorded on an infant's birth certificate should such a record be provided at birth.

- *Transgender* describes those individuals whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. A *transgender male* is someone who identifies as male but was assigned the sex of female at birth; a *transgender female* is someone who identifies as female but was assigned the sex of male at birth.

☐   *Gender transition* refers to the process in which transgender individuals begin asserting the sex that corresponds to their gender identity instead of the sex they were assigned at birth. During gender transition, individuals begin to live and identify as the sex consistent with their gender identity and may dress differently, adopt a new name, and use pronouns consistent with their gender identity. Transgender individuals may undergo gender transition at any stage of their lives, and gender transition can happen swiftly or over a long duration of time.

Compliance with Title IX

As a condition of receiving Federal funds, a school agrees that it will not exclude, separate, deny benefits to, or otherwise treat differently on the basis of sex any person in its educational programs or activities unless expressly authorized to do so under Title IX or its implementing regulations.[4] The Departments treat a student's gender identity as the student's sex for purposes of Title IX and its implementing regulations. This means that a school must not treat a transgender student differently from the way it treats other students of the same gender identity. The Departments' interpretation is consistent with courts' and other agencies' interpretations of Federal laws prohibiting sex discrimination.[5]

The Departments interpret Title IX to require that when a student or the student's parent or guardian, as appropriate, notifies the school administration that the student will assert a gender identity that differs from previous representations or records, the school will begin treating the student consistent with the student's gender identity. Under Title IX, there is no medical diagnosis or treatment requirement that students must meet as a prerequisite to being treated consistent with their gender identity.[6] Because transgender students often are unable to obtain identification documents that reflect their gender identity (*e.g.*, due to restrictions imposed by state or local law in their place of birth or residence),[7] requiring students to produce such identification documents in order to treat them consistent with their gender identity may violate Title IX when doing so has the practical effect of limiting or denying students equal access to an educational program or activity.

A school's Title IX obligation to ensure nondiscrimination on the basis of sex requires schools to provide transgender students equal access to educational programs and activities even in circumstances in which other students, parents, or community members raise objections or concerns. As is consistently recognized in civil rights cases, the desire to accommodate others' discomfort cannot justify a policy that singles out and disadvantages a particular class of students.[8]

1.   *Safe and Nondiscriminatory Environment*

Schools have a responsibility to provide a safe and nondiscriminatory environment for all students, including transgender students. Harassment that targets a student based on gender identity, transgender status, or gender transition is harassment based on sex, and the Departments enforce Title IX accordingly.[9] If sex-based harassment creates a hostile environment, the school must take prompt and effective steps to end the harassment, prevent its recurrence, and, as appropriate, remedy its effects. A school's failure to treat students consistent with their gender identity may create or contribute to a hostile environment in violation of Title IX. For a more detailed discussion of Title IX

requirements related to sex-based harassment, see guidance documents from ED's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) that are specific to this topic.[10]

2. Identification Documents, Names, and Pronouns

Under Title IX, a school must treat students consistent with their gender identity even if their education records or identification documents indicate a different sex. The Departments have resolved Title IX investigations with agreements committing that school staff and contractors will use pronouns and names consistent with a transgender student's gender identity.[11]

3. Sex-Segregated Activities and Facilities

Title IX's implementing regulations permit a school to provide sex-segregated restrooms, locker rooms, shower facilities, housing, and athletic teams, as well as single-sex classes under certain circumstances.[12] When a school provides sex-segregated activities and facilities, transgender students must be allowed to participate in such activities and access such facilities consistent with their gender identity.[13]

☐ **Restrooms and Locker Rooms.** A school may provide separate facilities on the basis of sex, but must allow transgender students access to such facilities consistent with their gender identity.[14] A school may not require transgender students to use facilities inconsistent with their gender identity or to use individual-user facilities when other students are not required to do so. A school may, however, make individual-user options available to all students who voluntarily seek additional privacy.[15]

☐ **Athletics.** Title IX regulations permit a school to operate or sponsor sex-segregated athletics teams when selection for such teams is based upon competitive skill or when the activity involved is a contact sport.[16] A school may not, however, adopt or adhere to requirements that rely on overly broad generalizations or stereotypes about the differences between transgender students and other students of the same sex (*i.e.*, the same gender identity) or others' discomfort with transgender students.[17] Title IX does not prohibit age-appropriate, tailored requirements based on sound, current, and research-based medical knowledge about the impact of the students' participation on the competitive fairness or physical safety of the sport.[18]

☐ **Single-Sex Classes.** Although separating students by sex in classes and activities is generally prohibited, nonvocational elementary and secondary schools may offer nonvocational single-sex classes and extracurricular activities under certain circumstances.[19] When offering such classes and activities, a school must allow transgender students to participate consistent with their gender identity.

☐ **Single-Sex Schools.** Title IX does not apply to the admissions policies of certain educational institutions, including nonvocational elementary and secondary schools, and private undergraduate colleges.[20] Those schools are therefore permitted under Title IX to set their own

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sex-based admissions policies. Nothing in Title IX prohibits a private undergraduate women's college from admitting transgender women if it so chooses.

☐ **Social Fraternities and Sororities**. Title IX does not apply to the membership practices of social fraternities and sororities.[21] Those organizations are therefore permitted under Title IX to set their own policies regarding the sex, including gender identity, of their members. Nothing in Title IX prohibits a fraternity from admitting transgender men or a sorority from admitting transgender women if it so chooses.

☐ **Housing and Overnight Accommodations**. Title IX allows a school to provide separate housing on the basis of sex.[22] But a school must allow transgender students to access housing consistent with their gender identity and may not require transgender students to stay in single-occupancy accommodations or to disclose personal information when not required of other students. Nothing in Title IX prohibits a school from honoring a student's voluntary request for single-occupancy accommodations if it so chooses.[23]

☐ **Other Sex-Specific Activities and Rules**. Unless expressly authorized by Title IX or its implementing regulations, a school may not segregate or otherwise distinguish students on the basis of their sex, including gender identity, in any school activities or the application of any school rule. Likewise, a school may not discipline students or exclude them from participating in activities for appearing or behaving in a manner that is consistent with their gender identity or that does not conform to stereotypical notions of masculinity or femininity (*e.g.*, in yearbook photographs, at school dances, or at graduation ceremonies).[24]

4. *Privacy and Education Records*

Protecting transgender students' privacy is critical to ensuring they are treated consistent with their gender identity. The Departments may find a Title IX violation when a school limits students' educational rights or opportunities by failing to take reasonable steps to protect students' privacy related to their transgender status, including their birth name or sex assigned at birth.[25] Nonconsensual disclosure of personally identifiable information (PII), such as a student's birth name or sex assigned at birth, could be harmful to or invade the privacy of transgender students and may also violate the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).[26] A school may maintain records with this information, but such records should be kept confidential.

☐ **Disclosure of Personally Identifiable Information from Education Records**. FERPA generally prevents the nonconsensual disclosure of PII from a student's education records; one exception is that records may be disclosed to individual school personnel who have been determined to have a legitimate educational interest in the information.[27] Even when a student has disclosed the student's transgender status to some members of the school community, schools may not rely on this FERPA exception to disclose PII from education records to other school personnel who do not have a legitimate educational interest in the information. Inappropriately disclosing (or requiring students or their parents to disclose) PII from education records to the school community may

violate FERPA and interfere with transgender students' right under Title IX to be treated consistent with their gender identity.

☐ **Disclosure of Directory Information**. Under FERPA's implementing regulations, a school may disclose appropriately designated directory information from a student's education record if disclosure would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy.[28] Directory information may include a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance.[29] School officials may not designate students' sex, including transgender status, as directory information because doing so could be harmful or an invasion of privacy.[30] A school also must allow eligible students (*i.e.*, students who have reached 18 years of age or are attending a postsecondary institution) or parents, as appropriate, a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose a student's directory information.[31]

☐ **Amendment or Correction of Education Records**. A school may receive requests to correct a student's education records to make them consistent with the student's gender identity. Updating a transgender student's education records to reflect the student's gender identity and new name will help protect privacy and ensure personnel consistently use appropriate names and pronouns.

   o Under FERPA, a school must consider the request of an eligible student or parent to amend information in the student's education records that is inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of the student's privacy rights.[32] If the school does not amend the record, it must inform the requestor of its decision and of the right to a hearing. If, after the hearing, the school does not amend the record, it must inform the requestor of the right to insert a statement in the record with the requestor's comments on the contested information, a statement that the requestor disagrees with the hearing decision, or both. That statement must be disclosed whenever the record to which the statement relates is disclosed.[33]

   o Under Title IX, a school must respond to a request to amend information related to a student's transgender status consistent with its general practices for amending other students' records.[34] If a student or parent complains about the school's handling of such a request, the school must promptly and equitably resolve the complaint under the school's Title IX grievance procedures.[35]

* * *

We appreciate the work that many schools, state agencies, and other organizations have undertaken to make educational programs and activities welcoming, safe, and inclusive for all students.

Sincerely,

/s/   /s/

Catherine E. Lhamon   Vanita Gupta
Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights   Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education   U.S. Department of Justice

[1] 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681–1688; 34 C.F.R. Pt. 106; 28 C.F.R. Pt. 54. In this letter, the term *schools* refers to recipients of Federal financial assistance at all educational levels, including school districts, colleges, and universities. An educational institution that is controlled by a religious organization is exempt from Title IX to the extent that compliance would not be consistent with the religious tenets of such organization. 20 U.S.C. § 1681(a)(3); 34 C.F.R. § 106.12(a).

[2] Office of Management and Budget, Final Bulletin for Agency Good Guidance Practices, 72 Fed. Reg. 3432 (Jan. 25, 2007), www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/fedreg/2007/012507_good_guidance.pdf.

[3] ED, *Examples of Policies and Emerging Practices for Supporting Transgender Students* (May 13, 2016), www.ed.gov/oese/oshs/emergingpractices.pdf. OCR also posts many of its resolution agreements in cases involving transgender students online at www.ed.gov/ocr/lgbt.html. While these agreements address fact-specific cases, and therefore do not state general policy, they identify examples of ways OCR and recipients have resolved some issues addressed in this guidance.

[4] 34 C.F.R. §§ 106.4, 106.31(a). For simplicity, this letter cites only to ED's Title IX regulations. DOJ has also promulgated Title IX regulations. *See* 28 C.F.R. Pt. 54. For purposes of how the Title IX regulations at issue in this guidance apply to transgender individuals, DOJ interprets its regulations similarly to ED. State and local rules cannot limit or override the requirements of Federal laws. *See* 34 C.F.R. § 106.6(b).

[5] *See, e.g., Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins*, 490 U.S. 228 (1989); *Oncale v. Sundowner Offshore Servs. Inc.*, 523 U.S. 75, 79 (1998); *G.G. v. Gloucester Cnty. Sch. Bd.*, No. 15-2056, 2016 WL 1567467, at *8 (4th Cir. Apr. 19, 2016); *Glenn v. Brumby*, 663 F.3d 1312, 1317 (11th Cir. 2011); *Smith v. City of Salem*, 378 F.3d 566, 572-75 (6th Cir. 2004); *Rosa v. Park W. Bank & Trust Co.*, 214 F.3d 213, 215–16 (1st Cir. 2000); *Schwenk v. Hartford*, 204 F.3d 1187, 1201–02 (9th Cir. 2000); *Schroer v. Billington*, 577 F. Supp. 2d 293, 306-08 (D.D.C. 2008); *Macy v. Dep't of Justice*, Appeal No. 012012082 (U.S. Equal Emp't Opportunity Comm'n Apr. 20, 2012). *See also* U.S. Dep't of Labor (USDOL), Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 37-14, *Update on Complying with Nondiscrimination Requirements: Discrimination Based on Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Stereotyping are Prohibited Forms of Sex Discrimination in the Workforce Development System* (2015), wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL_37-14.pdf; USDOL, Job Corps, Directive: Job Corps Program Instruction Notice No. 14-31, *Ensuring Equal Access for Transgender Applicants and Students to the Job Corps Program* (May 1, 2015), https://supportservices.jobcorps.gov/Program%20Instruction%20Notices/pi_14_31.pdf; DOJ, Memorandum from the Attorney General, *Treatment of Transgender Employment Discrimination Claims Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964* (2014), www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2014/12/18/title_vii_memo.pdf; USDOL, Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, Directive 2014-02, *Gender Identity and Sex Discrimination* (2014), www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/directives/dir2014_02.html.

[6] *See Lusardi v. Dep't of the Army*, Appeal No. 0120133395 at 9 (U.S. Equal Emp't Opportunity Comm'n Apr. 1, 2015) ("An agency may not condition access to facilities—or to other terms, conditions, or privileges of employment—on the completion of certain medical steps that the agency itself has unilaterally determined will somehow prove the bona fides of the individual's gender identity.").

[7] *See G.G.*, 2016 WL 1567467, at *1 n.1 (noting that medical authorities "do not permit sex reassignment surgery for persons who are under the legal age of majority").

[8] 34 C.F.R. § 106.31(b)(4); *see G.G.*, 2016 WL 1567467, at *8 & n.10 (affirming that individuals have legitimate and important privacy interests and noting that these interests do not inherently conflict with nondiscrimination principles); *Cruzan v. Special Sch. Dist. No. 1*, 294 F.3d 981, 984 (8th Cir. 2002) (rejecting claim that allowing a transgender woman "merely [to be] present in the women's faculty restroom" created a hostile environment); *Glenn*, 663 F.3d at 1321 (defendant's proffered justification that "other women might object to [the plaintiff]'s restroom use" was "wholly irrelevant"). *See also Palmore v. Sidoti*, 466 U.S. 429, 433 (1984) ("Private biases may be outside the reach of the law, but the law cannot, directly or indirectly, give them effect."); *City of Cleburne v. Cleburne Living Ctr.*, 473 U.S. 432, 448 (1985) (recognizing that "mere negative attitudes, or fear . . . are not permissible bases for" government action).

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[9] *See, e.g.*, Resolution Agreement, *In re Downey Unified Sch. Dist., CA*, OCR Case No. 09-12-1095, (Oct. 8, 2014), www.ed.gov/documents/press-releases/downey-school-district-agreement.pdf (agreement to address harassment of transgender student, including allegations that peers continued to call her by her former name, shared pictures of her prior to her transition, and frequently asked questions about her anatomy and sexuality); Consent Decree, *Doe v. Anoka-Hennepin Sch. Dist. No. 11, MN* (D. Minn. Mar. 1, 2012), www.ed.gov/ocr/docs/investigations/05115901-d.pdf (consent decree to address sex-based harassment, including based on nonconformity with gender stereotypes); Resolution Agreement, *In re Tehachapi Unified Sch. Dist., CA*, OCR Case No. 09-11-1031 (June 30, 2011), www.ed.gov/ocr/docs/investigations/09111031-b.pdf (agreement to address sexual and gender-based harassment, including harassment based on nonconformity with gender stereotypes). *See also Lusardi*, Appeal No. 0120133395, at *15 ("Persistent failure to use the employee's correct name and pronoun may constitute unlawful, sex-based harassment if such conduct is either severe or pervasive enough to create a hostile work environment").

[10] *See, e.g.*, OCR, *Revised Sexual Harassment Guidance: Harassment of Students by School Employees, Other Students, or Third Parties* (2001), www.ed.gov/ocr/docs/shguide.pdf; OCR, *Dear Colleague Letter: Harassment and Bullying* (Oct. 26, 2010), www.ed.gov/ocr/letters/colleague-201010.pdf; OCR, *Dear Colleague Letter: Sexual Violence* (Apr. 4, 2011), www.ed.gov/ocr/letters/colleague-201104.pdf; OCR, *Questions and Answers on Title IX and Sexual Violence* (Apr. 29, 2014), www.ed.gov/ocr/docs/qa-201404-title-ix.pdf.

[11] *See, e.g.*, Resolution Agreement, *In re Cent. Piedmont Cmty. Coll., NC*, OCR Case No. 11-14-2265 (Aug. 13, 2015), www.ed.gov/ocr/docs/investigations/more/11142265-b.pdf (agreement to use a transgender student's preferred name and gender and change the student's official record to reflect a name change).

[12] 34 C.F.R. §§ 106.32, 106.33, 106.34, 106.41(b).

[13] *See* 34 C.F.R. § 106.31.

[14] 34 C.F.R. § 106.33.

[15] *See, e.g.*, Resolution Agreement, *In re Township High Sch. Dist. 211, IL*, OCR Case No. 05-14-1055 (Dec. 2, 2015), www.ed.gov/ocr/docs/investigations/more/05141055-b.pdf (agreement to provide any student who requests additional privacy "access to a reasonable alternative, such as assignment of a student locker in near proximity to the office of a teacher or coach; use of another private area (such as a restroom stall) within the public area; use of a nearby private area (such as a single-use facility); or a separate schedule of use.").

[16] 34 C.F.R. § 106.41(b). Nothing in Title IX prohibits schools from offering coeducational athletic opportunities.

[17] 34 C.F.R. § 106.6(b), (c). An interscholastic athletic association is subject to Title IX if (1) the association receives Federal financial assistance or (2) its members are recipients of Federal financial assistance and have ceded controlling authority over portions of their athletic program to the association. Where an athletic association is covered by Title IX, a school's obligations regarding transgender athletes apply with equal force to the association.

[18] The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), for example, reported that in developing its policy for participation by transgender students in college athletics, it consulted with medical experts, athletics officials, affected students, and a consensus report entitled *On the Team: Equal Opportunity for Transgender Student Athletes* (2010) by Dr. Pat Griffin & Helen J. Carroll (*On the Team*), https://www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/NCLR_TransStudentAthlete%2B(2).pdf. *See* NCAA Office of Inclusion, *NCAA Inclusion of Transgender Student-Athletes* 2, 30-31 (2011), https://www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/Transgender_Handbook_2011_Final.pdf (citing *On the Team*). The *On the Team* report noted that policies that may be appropriate at the college level may "be unfair and too complicated for [the high school] level of competition." *On the Team* at 26. After engaging in similar processes, some state interscholastic athletics associations have adopted policies for participation by transgender students in high school athletics that they determined were age-appropriate.

[19] 34 C.F.R. § 106.34(a), (b). Schools may also separate students by sex in physical education classes during participation in contact sports. *Id.* § 106.34(a)(1).

[20] 20 U.S.C. § 1681(a)(1); 34 C.F.R. § 106.15(d); 34 C.F.R. § 106.34(c) (a recipient may offer a single-sex public nonvocational elementary and secondary school so long as it provides students of the excluded sex a "substantially

equal single-sex school or coeducational school").

[21] 20 U.S.C. § 1681(a)(6)(A); 34 C.F.R. § 106.14(a).

[22] 20 U.S.C. § 1686; 34 C.F.R. § 106.32.

[23] *See, e.g.*, Resolution Agreement, *In re Arcadia Unified. Sch. Dist., CA*, OCR Case No. 09-12-1020, DOJ Case No. 169-12C-70, (July 24, 2013), www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/crt/legacy/2013/07/26/arcadiaagree.pdf (agreement to provide access to single-sex overnight events consistent with students' gender identity, but allowing students to request access to private facilities).

[24] *See* 34 C.F.R. §§ 106.31(a), 106.31(b)(4). *See also, In re Downey Unified Sch. Dist., CA, supra* n. 9; *In re Cent. Piedmont Cmty. Coll., NC, supra* n. 11.

[25] 34 C.F.R. § 106.31(b)(7).

[26] 20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 C.F.R. Part 99. FERPA is administered by ED's Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO). Additional information about FERPA and FPCO is available at www.ed.gov/fpco.

[27] 20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)(A); 34 C.F.R. § 99.31(a)(1).

[28] 34 C.F.R. §§ 99.3, 99.31(a)(11), 99.37.

[29] 20 U.S.C. § 1232g(a)(5)(A); 34 C.F.R. § 99.3.

[30] Letter from FPCO to Institutions of Postsecondary Education 3 (Sept. 2009), www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/doc/censuslettertohighered091609.pdf.

[31] 20 U.S.C. § 1232g(a)(5)(B); 34 C.F.R. §§ 99.3. 99.37(a)(3).

[32] 34 C.F.R. § 99.20.

[33] 34 C.F.R. §§ 99.20-99.22.

[34] *See* 34 C.F.R. § 106.31(b)(4).

[35] 34 C.F.R. § 106.8(b).

Appendix E

A Content Analysis of Gender Inclusive Language in Forms/Policies

A Content Analysis of Gender Inclusive Language in Forms/Policies

CRM / PSY / SSA 490: Integrative Capstone
Fall 2016

STUDENT
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STUDENT

Faculty Supervisor: FACULTY

University
Western, PA

INTEGRATIVE CAPSTONE STRUCTURE

The Integrative Capstone is a course designed to prepare students for transition from the undergraduate student role into the professional world. The course is designed to have students deeply engage with their major content and research skills while also engaging in professional development.

The Psychology, Criminology, and Social Services Administration programs developed and offered the Capstone course for the first time this semester (Fall 2016). This specific Capstone course was developed to allow for flexibility from year to year in terms of the focus of the course as well as the professional development needs of the students. A broad description was submitted to the Undergraduate Programs Committee (UPC) for review and approval:

> **Course Description (PSY 490 / CRM 490 / SSA 490):**
> Students in the Integrative Capstone will provide assistance to different divisions/offices/departments/outside institutions [entities] with survey/interview script development, pilot testing of surveys/scripts, survey data collection, qualitative interviewing/focus groups, data management, and data analysis. Students will work collaboratively with interested entities to understand the overall goals of the data collection process, develop data collection tools, pilot test these tools, and potentially collect and analyze data based on these tools. Through this process, students will not only develop concrete research skills, but will develop soft skills (professional communication, ethics, confidentiality, etc.) that will improve their marketability upon graduation. Students may have the option of continuing with the project in their second semester through the Independent Research offering.

Once the course was reviewed and approved by UPC, the primary focus was on identifying an "entity" to work with. The Women's Institute indicated an interest in working with the Capstone students on performing a "gender scan" of the University policies, procedures, and programming. Student Affairs and Admissions were approached and agreed to also participate. As a result of these partnerships, the following course description was developed for Fall 2016:

Students enrolled in the Fall 2016 Integrative Capstone will be working in collaboration with the Women's Institute to complete an "identity scan" of forms/surveys and policies that undergraduate students will come in contact with both prior to and after their enrollment at the institution. Forms/surveys and policies will be requested from Enrollment, Student Affairs, and the Registrar. Students will utilize best practices to review the documents to determine both how students are being asked to disclose aspects of their identity (e.g., sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, etc.) and to evaluate the inclusiveness of the language and images used. Students will develop a report and presentation that will outline their findings and recommendations for areas of improvement.

Team Structure

Through a collaborative process, the instructor (Dr. FACULTY) and the ten students enrolled in the CRM / PSY / SSA Integrative Capstone identified ten key project areas. Each student then self-selected a "team" they wished to lead based not only on their personal strengths, but also based on skills they wished to develop over the course the semester. The students and the team(s) they led were:

Team	Leader / Point Person
Weekly Updates / Meeting Minutes	Student
Data Manager / Moodle Moderator	Student
Literature Review	Student
CRM subgroup	Student
PSY subgroup	Student
SSA subgroup	Student
Methods	Student
Data Analysis / Results	Student
Best Practices	Student
Recommendations	Student
Future Directions	Student
Discussion	Student
Report	Student
Presentation	Student

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LITERATURE REVIEW

In 1869, University resisted the stigma of educating women and offered opportunities that were not commonplace at the time. As University continues its mission, the legacy of progressive education can be best served in an environment where opportunity is presented without exclusion based on gender.

This Capstone project approaches the importance of gender inclusivity from three disciplines: psychology, criminology, and social services administration. This multifaceted approach addresses language and policy on both an individual and systemic level. The psychological perspective evaluates how certain language impacts an individual's self-esteem, self-concept, and academic performance. The criminological perspective provides insight into the risks of exclusive language and unintended consequences, such as dehumanization, social outcasting, and harassment/assault, on prospective and current students. The social services administration perspective offers insight into policies that impact the student experience and cultural environment, acknowledging how the language used can have a positive impact on future policy making.

Definitions

According to the World Health Organization (2016), "Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men" (WHO, 2016, para. 1). Although contemporary Western culture tends to have a reductionist view of biological sex and gender as a singularity, there are differences between biological sex and gender (Burke, 1996). While sex refers to biological characteristics, gender refers to the social, psychological, cultural, and historical meanings and expectations aligning (or not aligning) with a particular sex (Newman, 2012). People who have

a gender identity that matches their biological sex are known as cisgender. Transgender people are individuals who identify as a gender that is different from their biological sex (World Health Organization, 2016). According to the Williams Institute, about 0.3 percent of the United States population openly identifies as transgender (Gates, 2011). This percentage may be less representative in research due to evaluation apprehension between transgender individuals and researchers. The statistics as they stand reveal that people who identify as transgender are a small group. Small minority groups are often underrepresented or misunderstood by a massive majority group, which suggests the need for education and advocacy (Marshall, 2014).

The cultural norm in American life tends to view gender as a categorical binary between the sexes with little understanding of the complexity of gender (Burke, 1996). Many people are unrepresented in the binary system, which has prompted gender to be studied as a continuous characteristic with many variations, including deviation between gender and biological sex (Hines, 2010). The conceptual understanding of "gender" should be expanded to include both gender identity and gender expression. Gender identity is the label a person selects that represents their "internal sense" of their gender orientation—their sense of being a "particular gender" (University Women's Institute, 2016). In contrast to gender identity being an "internal sense" of one's gender, gender expression is how individuals present or perform their gender. Gender expression can involve both physical (clothing, hair style, makeup, etc.) and social (language, body language, behavior, etc.) methods (University Women's Institute, 2016). Deeper understanding of gender expression calls on colleges and universities to build a more inclusive space where all students will have an equal voice in the community.

Psychology Literature: Identity Validation and Academic Performance

Identity validation has important consequences on individual self-concept, self-esteem, and academic performance. Identity can be validated through both the use of inclusive language and the creation of a social environment which supports inclusivity. Language shapes the way we think about and interact with others, and can even impact how we think about ourselves. Gendered language, such as the utilization of "feminine" and "masculine" pronouns, can have a negative impact on individuals not fitting into the traditional gender binary. Additionally, the degree to which groups of people and institutions accept an individual's identity can have direct benefits (such as self-esteem and improved academic performance) but also negative consequences (social outcasting, withdrawal, and alienation) (Stets & Burke, 2014; Hine, 2010).

Sczesny, Moser, and Wood (2015) examined the effect of sexist and gender-biased language. This study measured the reinforcement of gender roles as well as attitudes about opportunity and social empowerment. The study was conducted in two parts with online participants. The first part examined the use of gender-biased terminology in spontaneous conversation and found that people used gendered language habitually from previously reinforced behaviors and also deliberately through a cognitive reasoning process. The study suggested that the use of language can be a deliberate vehicle for harassment and discrimination, but can also carry a bias of which the speaker may not be aware (Sczesny, Moser, & Wood, 2015).

According to Bigler and Leaper (2015), the use of pronouns and gender-specific language has a more significant impact on transgender individuals than their cisgender peers. This study observed the impact of gender-specific labels compared to gender neutral labels, concluding that language could be simplified and made more inclusive by utilizing gender-neutral pronouns and

titles. Researchers observed the manner in which language marks individuals' gender. The study examined contemporary efforts of changing gendered language, including calls for the use of gender-neutral nouns and pronouns such as ze instead of he or she. The study highlighted the role of values in shaping views of language policies that may mitigate the pervasiveness and consequences of gendered language (Bigler & Leaper, 2015).

Language regarding gender has a relationship with social inequality and cultural norms. Hansen, Littwitz, and Sczesny (2016) examined the use of gender-inclusive language in news reports and representation of women and men in the respective gender roles. The results indicated that women are less visible in the media with only 13% of all news stories relating to women. Additionally, the media often depict women and men in a stereotypical manner, with 46% of news stories reinforcing gender stereotypes, and only 6% challenging such stereotypes. The role of language was significant in this study. The results suggested that language that was fair and avoided stereotypes encouraged more dynamic social roles in the community (Hansen, Littwitz, & Sczesny, 2016).

Mindfulness of gender and language can facilitate a more meaningful experience in the classroom and improve the sense of safety for individuals with variant gender representations (Dylan, 2012). Transgender students often have to spend a great deal of energy advocating for themselves and coping with stress. High amounts of stress can interfere with academic performance and classroom learning (Rands, 2009). Students perform better in a classroom that is inclusive and free from hostility or harassment (California School Board Association, 2014). It is imperative for academic institutions to be aware of the way gendered language influences the classroom (Ball, 2013).

Criminology Literature: Safety

In the United States, transgender individuals are likely to be victims of violent crime including homicide, rape and assault (Duncan, 2014). The risk of victimization increases when an individual is both transgender and a member of an ethnic minority (Meyer, 2003). Research evaluated in this section builds a foundation for understanding the need for a safe community on campus, as well as the threats to physical, mental, and emotional safety that gender nonconforming students experience.

According to a 2016 study, (Haas, 2014) there are health consequences associated with social exclusion of transgender people. A 2011 National Transgender Discrimination Survey found 41% of transgender people had attempted suicide, which is disproportionately higher than the national average of 4.6% (Haas, 2014) Suicidal behavior in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) adolescents increased when the rate of hate crimes increased (Duncan & Hatzenbuehler, 2014). When suicidality data was compared with hate crime data from the Boston Police Department and cross-analyzed within each region, researchers found that students in communities with the highest rate of hate crimes were more likely to experience thoughts of suicide and have a history of attempted suicide (Duncan & Hatzenbuehler, 2014). This study suggests that a community that is perceived as unsafe can have negative mental health outcomes for LGBT youth (Duncan & Hatzenbuehler, 2014).

Models for reducing the likelihood of hate crimes can be observed in other intersections of diversity as well. Stotzer and Hossellman (2012) studied universities with large populations of minority students, particularly African-American and Latino, and analyzed hate crime data on campus. The study found a relationship between increased diversity of the student body and a reduced number of hate crimes on campus. When the number of black and Latino students

increased, the overall reported ethnic-based hate crimes decreased. This model is an example of how increased diversity benefitted the campus by reducing hate crimes. Although diversity and inclusion of gender identity is unique, the principle of increasing diversity and reducing alienation is the same (Myer, 2003).

Other studies have set out to understand why hate crimes occur in some institutions but not others. Van Dyke and Tester (2014) identified a relationship between the existence of a Greek fraternity system and the prevalence of hate crimes, especially on campuses with smaller minority populations. The study used FBI data and statistics of 349 colleges, analyzing variables such as socioeconomic stratification, racial demographics, the presence of sororities or fraternities and the prevalence of hate crimes. The findings of the study present a correlation between the representation of a marginalized group, the existence of exclusive clubs and the prevalence of hate crimes (Van Dyke & Tester, 2014). Although University does not have a Greek fraternity system, some of the components of the Greek system, such as hazing and exclusive membership, could occur in other student settings (Stotzer, 2012).

Social Services Administration Literature: Importance of Policy

Title IX is a component of the Education Amendment of 1972. It is a policy enforced by the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. Title IX ensures equal access to education and activities funded by the Department of Education with regards to gender (U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Implementation of Title IX policy prevents gender-based hazing, bullying, social exclusion, and academic exclusion. Institutions should advance these directives by offering other resources to faculty, staff, and students regarding diversity and inclusion, as well as awareness of social issues such as bullying and hazing. (Kimmel, 2016). In addition, Title IX has been interpreted to extend protections to transgender

and gender non-conforming students (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016). Interpreting Title IX with a broad definition of gender bears a new understanding of the way transgender students are to be included and regarded within an academic institution (California School Board Association, 2014).

People who are transgender or gender-nonconforming often struggle with inconsistent personal documentation with regards to name and gender. If one document bears gender identity while the other bears biological sex without a distinction, the individual may have difficulty verifying their identity. Poor identity verification can cause problems with the expediency of bureaucratic processes, unfair exclusion and personal vulnerability. People may be forced to reveal their biological sex, medical information pertaining to sex reassignment or previous names. Disorganized documentation can also foster personal problems such as feelings of exclusion and alienation (Regaza, 2016; Callahan, 2015).

The University of California, David, Health System (UCDHS) was the first health center at an academic institution in the United States to begin collecting electronic record of sexual orientation and gender identity. They strived to be more inclusive on the premise that education regarding sexual orientation and gender identity would decrease the occurrence of health issues in LGBT students. Instead of collecting binary data, such as "male" and "female, UCDHS included a questionnaire regarding patients' gender identity, gender assigned at birth, and sexual orientation. UCDHS recognized that LGBT health disparities were similar to those of racial and ethnic minority groups, perhaps due to the stigma associated with minorities. Many LGBT individuals experience anxiety and depression as a result of exclusion and mistreatment. If they do not feel comfortable or included in receiving appropriate health care, their coping behaviors may put them at risk for diminished physical and mental well-being. Although efficient data

collection was the main goal, they found that their efforts to include LGBT students had inspired

other changes at the institution that made the hospital campus a better place for LGBT

individuals. (Callahan, et al. 2015).

Gender inclusivity can also be considered a form of multiculturalism (Adler, 2002).

Multiculturalism is the idea that people can live pluralistically in a larger global community, and

transcend the boundaries of nationalism and homogeneity. Growth of linguistic and cultural

communication has resulted in the erosion of barriers that have historically separated people

even if they share the same physical space. Multiculturalism can be defined as one whose

horizons extend significantly beyond their own culture. The recent social climate regarding

political, economic, and demographic development has increased pressure on the nonprofit

sector to meet the needs of vulnerable and disenfranchised groups. Multiculturalism does not aim

to celebrate differences, but aims for a reduction in the patterns of racism and sexism along with

other systemic oppressions through a fundamental transformation of an organization's culture

(Adler, 2002).

Support for the LGBT community is growing on a national scale, and concordantly

growing on college campuses. Institutional policies should be aligned with the growth and

inclusion of those of underrepresented gender and sexual minorities. Parents, families, friends,

and the individual students of the LGBT community anticipate and depend on their institution of

higher education to not only be welcoming and inclusive, but to uphold "policies that will ensure

their overall well-being," just as the rest of the population expects to experience (Ball, 2013, p.

23). Ball (2013) provides thoughtful insight on higher education:

> "As leaders in higher education who make goals like raising retention and graduation
> rates, improving access for every group, increasing degree attainment and growing
> enrollment priorities, we should be able to see the importance of creating a campus
> culture that welcomes and promotes excellence in teaching and learning for all.

Fundamental to this creation is anticipating the world around us and engaging every learner to effectively impact that world" (p. 23).

PURPOSE OF STUDY

At University, we believe that world readiness means being an informed and engaged citizen in one's communities and recognizing and respecting diversity of culture, identity and opinion. Creating and promoting a diverse campus community requires embracing the differences in our population and ensuring a supportive and safe environment for everyone, regardless of gender, race, or sexuality. In order to create a more inclusive community, we partnered with the Women's Institute to ensure that the language of documents representing key departments of our University, including Enrollment and Student Affairs, are representative of University's mission and campus culture. Using qualitative content analysis, students with expertise in Psychology, Criminology, and Social Services Administration assessed gendered language in existing forms and documents. Students used literature and best practices to recommend the most effective language for future actions that University should take to become more inclusive.

METHODS

Data Sources

Forms and policies were provided by Admissions and Student Affairs for analysis. Student Affairs contributed forms and policies from Career Development, Counseling Services, and Residence Life, along with the full Student Handbook and several "miscellaneous" forms. All documents, except for the Student Handbook, were provided as electronic copies. Overall we received 36 different forms that totaled 365 pages (see Table 1).

Table 1: List of Forms

Department	Pages
Admissions	
Admissions General Info Card	1
Admissions Visit Forms	2
Common Application Screen Shots	2
Career Development	
Student Information Sheet	1
Student Employee Information Sheet	1
Student Employment New Hire Paperwork Instructions Sheet	1
Student Employment - New Hire Paperwork Packet	10
Student Employment - Competency Goal Setting Worksheet	2
Student Employment Self-Evaluation Skills Assessment Worksheet	1
Student Employee Supervisor Evaluation July 2016	2
Supervisor Evaluation of Intern WEEK 3 August 2015	2
Supervisor Evaluation of Intern MIDTERM August 2015	2
Supervisor Evaluation of Intern FINAL August 2015	2
Post-Internship Student Evaluation Fall 2015	3
Desk Attendant Manual 2015-2016	12
Office of Student Affairs Training Manual	28
Counseling and Health Services	
Confidential Registration - Revised 2016	2
Triage Self-Report 2016-2017	2
Informed Consent 2016-2017	2

Residence Life and Student Affairs	
Student Organization Policies and Procedures 2015-2016	72
Residence Life Policies	22
Campus Security and Title IX-0716	28
Medical Accommodation Request Process	2
Medical Accommodations Handout	2
Living-Learning Communities 2016-2017	2
Roommate Discussion and Mediation Guide	5
Alternative Spring Break Application Packet 2016	2
2016 RA OL Application	10
CAB Application	3
Miscellaneous Forms	
New Student Packet- Fall 2016	18
Constitution of University Student Government (2/4/2010)	8
2015-2016 CSG Candidate Filing Form	3
WOW Application 2016	2
WOW 2016 Evaluation	2
Student Planner	
Student Handbook (From Student Planner)	109

Data Analysis

Content analysis was used to evaluate the forms and policies. Content analysis "the study of recorded human communications" (Babbie, 2004, p. 314). This unobtrusive method allows for the collection and analysis of already existing documents to identify key themes related to the research question.

The research team collectively developed a "codebook" of key language and themes to identify when analyzing the forms/policies. The key language and themes to identify included:

- Gendered pronouns (she/he; hers/his; herself/himself; her/him)
- University College for Women
- Women/men
- Ladies
- Sisters
- Alumnae / alumna
- "Gender" (but not gender identity / gender expression)
- Biological sex but no mention of gender
- Name (legal v. preferred)

The research team was separated into 4 smaller teams to focus on specific areas of forms/policies. These teams included:

- Career Development: STUDENT
- Admissions, Counseling, and "Other": STUDENT and STUDENT
- Residence Life and Student Affairs: STUDENT and STUDENT
- Student Handbook: STUDENT and STUDENT

The groups used a process of consensus coding to analyze the data. Each individual researcher reviewed each page and coded it based on the codebook. The groups then had meetings to identify common themes and develop one collective report that was submitted to the Data Analysis team leader (Marina) for review. The faculty supervisor (Dr. FACULTY) completed a full review of all coding.

The goal of the Capstone project is to identify exclusive language pertaining to gender or gender identity. Exclusivity has been shown to be damaging to the individual and their experience at an institution. The researchers performed this unobtrusive research using content analysis to make recommendations for improving inclusivity on University's campus.

<div align="center">RESULTS</div>

Admissions

Table 2. Content Analysis Results of Admissions Forms/Policies

Form	Page Numbers *	Suggestions for Improvement
Admissions General Info Card	1	Yes
Admissions Visit Forms	3-4	Yes
Common Application Screen Shots	5-6	No

*Corresponds to page numbers in PURPLE manual

Admissions General Info Card (page 1): This form requested visitors to specify their "NAME"
but did not clarify whether it was requesting legal or preferred name.

> Recommendations: If Admissions is attempting to collect legal name, please specify. In
> addition, if interested in collecting legal name, a space should be provided for visitors to
> indicate preferred name.

Admissions Visit Forms (pages 3-4): This form requested visitors to specify their "NAME" but
did not clarify whether it was requesting legal or preferred name. The use of "gender" can be
problematic. Is Admissions attempting to collect sex/gender assigned at birth or the individual's
current gender identity? In addition, athletics are separated into two categories on the form—
women and men. Although University is limited by NCAA policy on transgender student
participation in sports, can visitors indicate teams that match their gender identity or only teams
that match their biological sex?

> Recommendations: If Admissions is attempting to collect legal name, please specify. In
> addition, if interested in collecting legal name, a space should be provided for visitors to

indicate preferred name. In addition, if Admissions is attempting to collect sex assigned at birth (to fulfill legal data collection obligations), please specify and also provide an opportunity for students to indicate their gender identity. Amending this form to align with the Common Application format would be very useful (pages 5-6).

Common Application (pages 5-6): Collecting biological sex is federally mandated, but Common Application providing students the possibility of indicating (in their own words) their "identity" is very beneficial.

Recommendations: We believe this method supports inclusivity by both fulfilling federal/institutional mandates and identity validation. We suggest that similar methods are utilized on other Admissions forms to provide parallels between the Common Application format.

Career Development

Table 3. Content Analysis Results of Career Development Forms/Policies

Form	Page Numbers*	Suggestions for Improvement
Student Information Sheet	7-8	Yes
Student Employee Information Sheet	9	Yes
Student Employment New Hire Paperwork Instructions Sheet	11	No
Student Employment New Hire Paperwork Packet	13-22	Yes
Student Employment - Competency Goal Setting Worksheet	23-24	Yes
Student Employment Self-Evaluation Skills Assessment Worksheet	25	Yes
Student Employee Supervisor Evaluation Form	27-28	No
Pre-Internship Self-Evaluation Skills Assessment	29-30	Yes
Supervisor Evaluation of Intern--Week 3	31-32	No
Supervisor Evaluation of Intern--MIDTERM	33-34	No
Supervisor Evaluation of Intern--FINAL	35-36	No
Post- Internship Self-Evaluation Skills Assessment	37-39	Yes
Desk Attendant Manual 2015-2016	41-52	Yes
Office Of Student Affairs Training Manual 2015-2016	53-80	No

*Corresponds to page numbers in PURPLE manual

Student Information Sheet (pages 7-8): This form requested students to specify their "NAME" but did not clarify whether it was requesting legal or preferred name.

> Recommendations: If Career Development is attempting to collect legal name, please specify. In addition, if interested in collecting legal name, a space should be provided for students to indicate preferred name.

Student Employee Information Sheet (page 9): This form requested students to specify their "NAME" but did not clarify whether it was requesting legal or preferred name.

> Recommendations: If Career Development is attempting to collect legal name, please specify. In addition, if interested in collecting legal name, a space should be provided for students to indicate preferred name.

Student Employment New Hire Paperwork Instructions Sheet (page 11): No concerns were identified with this document.

Student Employment- New Hire Paperwork Packet (pages 13-22): This form requested students to specify their "NAME" (page 14) but did not clarify whether it was requesting legal or preferred name. Forms on pages 15-22 are created by various government agencies (City of Western PA, Federal IRS, US Department of Homeland Security) and cannot be modified by University for use.

> Recommendations: If Career Development is attempting to collect legal name, please specify. In addition, if interested in collecting legal name, a space should be provided for students to indicate preferred name.

Student Employment- Competency Goal (pages 23-24): This form requested students to specify their "NAME" but did not clarify whether it was requesting legal or preferred name.

>Recommendations: If Career Development is attempting to collect legal name, please specify. In addition, if interested in collecting legal name, a space should be provided for students to indicate preferred name.

Student Employment Self-Evaluation Skills Assessment Worksheet (page 25): This form requested students to specify their "NAME" but did not clarify whether it was requesting legal or preferred name.

>Recommendations: If Career Development is attempting to collect legal name, please specify. In addition, if interested in collecting legal name, a space should be provided for students to indicate preferred name.

Student Employee Evaluation Form (pages 27-28): No concerns were identified with this document.

Pre-Internship Self-Evaluation Skills Assessment (pages 29-30): This form requested students to specify their "NAME" but did not clarify whether it was requesting legal or preferred name.

>Recommendations: If Career Development is attempting to collect legal name, please specify. In addition, if interested in collecting legal name, a space should be provided for students to indicate preferred name.

Supervisor Evaluation of Intern—Week 3 (pages 31-32): No concerns were identified with this document.

Supervisor Evaluation of Intern—MIDTERM (pages 33-34): No concerns were identified with this document.

Supervisor Evaluation of Intern--Final (pages 35-36): No concerns were identified with this document.

Post-Internship Self-Evaluation Skills Assessment (pages 37-39): This form requested students to specify their "NAME" but did not clarify whether it was requesting legal or preferred name.

    Recommendations: If Career Development is attempting to collect legal name, please specify. In addition, if interested in collecting legal name, a space should be provided for students to indicate preferred name.

Desk Attendant Manual 2015-2016 (pages 41-52):

    Desk Attendant Position Description (pages 42-43): In the second paragraph, it specifically says "her" position.

        Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "their").

    Expectations of the desk attendant (pages 44-45): Him/her" is used (3rd bullet point under "Availability").

        Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "them")

    Resignation Procedures & Termination Procedure (page 46): "His/her" is used in multiple places.

        Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "their").

Written warning with Probation (page 47): "His/her" is used.

> Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "their").

Visitation/Guest Policy (page 48): "Himself/herself" and "he/sheare used.

> Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "themselves" and "they").

Quiet Hours (page 49): No concerns were identified with this section of the manual.

Lockout Policy & Procedure (page 50): "His/her" and "he/she" are used.

> Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "their" and "they").

Confidentiality and Alcohol Policy (pages 51-52): No concerns were identified with this section of the manual.

Office of Student Affairs Training Manual 2015-2016 (pages 53-80): No concerns were identified with this document.

Counseling Services

Table 4. Content Analysis Results of Counseling Services Forms/Policies

Form	Page Numbers*	Suggestions for Improvement
Confidential Registration - Revised 2016	81-82	Yes
Triage Self-Report 2016-2017	83-84	Yes
Informed Consent 2016-2017	85-86	Yes

*Corresponds to page numbers in PURPLE manual

Confidential Registration (pages 81-82): Three concerns were identified with this form: (1) the form requests visitors to specify their "NAME" but does not clarify whether it was requesting legal or preferred name; (2) a question to disclose gender only provides two options (male/female); and (3) the form states "University College for Women" at the top.

Recommendations: (1) If counseling is attempting to collect legal name, please specify. In addition, if interested in collecting legal name, a space should be provided for the student to indicate preferred name. (2) The gender question should be made more inclusive and an option to report "preferred gender pronouns" (examples: she, he, ze, e, they) should be provided. (3) Finally, "University College for Women" needs to be removed.

Triage Self-Report (pages 83-84): This form requests visitors to specify their "NAME" but does not clarify whether it is requesting legal or preferred name.

Recommendations: If Counseling Services is attempting to collect legal name, please specify. In addition, if interested in collecting legal name, a space should be provided for students to indicate preferred name.

Informed Consent (pages 85-86): This form uses "his/her" to refer to the counselors (bottom of page 85).

Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "their").

Residence Life and Student Affairs

Table 5. Content Analysis Results of Residence Life and Student Affairs Forms/Policies

Form	Pages Numbers*	Suggestions for Improvement
Student Organization Policies and Procedures 2015-2016	87-158	Yes
Residence Life Policies	159-180	Yes
Campus Security and Title IX Policies and Procedures	181-208	Yes
Housing Medical Accommodation Request Process	209-210	No
Medical Accommodations Handout	211-212	No
Living-Learning Communities 2016-2017	213-214	No
Roommate Discussion and Mediation Guide	215-220	No
Alternative Spring Break Application Packet 2016	221-222	No
2016 RA OL Application	223-232	Yes
2016-2017 University Activities Board Application	233-235	Yes

*Corresponds to page numbers in PURPLE manual

Student Organization Policies and Procedures 2015-2016 (pages 87-158):

Table of Contents (page 88-89): Table of Contents lists "University College for Women

Student Government Officers."

Recommendations: Replace with neutral language—"Student Government

Officers.

University's Mission Statement (page 92): This statement uses "men and women" and mentions "University College for Women."

Recommendations: The mention of "University College for Women" should be removed and "men and women" should be changed to "students" to be more inclusive

Student Organizations (page 95): Criteria #3 (Criteria for Recognizing Student Organizations) references University's non-discrimination policy. This policy mentions "gender" but does not specify both "gender identity" and "gender expression."

Recommendations: The non-discrimination policy should be amended to specify protections based on both gender identity and gender expression.

Student Organization Policies (page 99): Policy states the granting of a degree to "women" and also references University's non-discrimination policy. This policy mentions "gender" but does not specify both "gender identity" and "gender expression."

Recommendations: This policy needs to be modified to remove the mention of granting degrees only to women. In addition, the non-discrimination policy should be amended to specify protections based on both gender identity and gender expression.

Article 3 of the Sample Constitution (page101): Gender is mentioned but does not specify both "gender identity" and "gender expression."

Recommendations: This policy should be amended to specify protections based on both gender identity and gender expression.

Policy regarding use of Eden Hall Campus (pages 114-115): Bullets 2, 5, and 6 use the pronouns "her/his" and "he/she".

> Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "their" and "they").

University Vehicle Policy (page 116): Section 6 uses the pronouns "her/his".

> Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "their").

Student Organizations (page 120): This form uses the pronouns "her/himself

> Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "themselves").

Statement of Non-Discrimination (page 120): University's statement of non-discrimination

mentions "gender" but does not specify both "gender identity" and "gender expression."

> Recommendations: The non-discrimination policy should be amended to specify protections based on both gender identity and gender expression.

Alcohol and Drug Policy (pages 121-122): The alcohol policy uses the pronoun "her."

> Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "their" and "them").

Specific Standards of Conduct Regarding Illegal Drugs and Alcohol (pages 122-126):
Sections 6308(a), 6039(a), and 6310(a) all use pronouns "she/he." In addition, Section
6310(a) also uses pronouns "her/him"

> Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We
> recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "they" and
> "them").

Pennsylvania Penalties and Sanctions (page 124): This uses the pronouns "she/he".

> Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We
> recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "they").

Graduate Student Assembly- Section II (page 126): Eligibility (b.iv) states "University
College for Women" and also references University's non-discrimination policy which
mentions "gender" but does not specify both "gender identity" and "gender expression."

> Recommendations: Mention of "University College for Women" should be
> removed and non-discrimination policy should be amended to specify protections
> based on both gender identity and gender expression.

Graduate Student Assembly- Section III- E (page 127): This uses the pronouns "his/her".

> Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We
> recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "their").

University College Student Government (page 130): This section states "University
College

for Women."

> Recommendations: "University College for Women" should be removed.

CSG Senate Meetings (page 131): Top of page states "University College for Women".

> Recommendations: "University College for Women" should be removed

Methods of order of the student organization forum (page 132): States "University College for Women" in two places

Recommendations: "University College for Women" should be removed.

Article III: Membership & Eligibility (page 133): "University College for Women" is used.

Recommendations: "University College for Women" should be removed.

Methods of order of Undergraduate Budget Committee (page 134): States "University College for Women" in two places

Recommendations: "University College for Women" should be removed.

Article III: Membership and Eligibility (page 135): Uses pronoun "her" and mentions non-discrimination based on "gender" but not "gender identity" and "gender expression" specifically.

Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "their"). In addition, non-discrimination should be expanded beyond "gender" to include "gender identity" and "gender expression."

Section 7: Duties of the Vice Chair (page 136): This section uses pronoun "her."

Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "their").

Section 8: Spending Allocated Funds (page 138): This section uses pronouns "his/her."

Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "their").

Travel (page 143): This section uses pronouns "he or she."

Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "they").

Student Leadership & Student Organization Recognition Program (page 149): This section mentions "University College for Women"

Recommendations: "University College for Women" should be removed.

Individual Awards (page 150- 151): This section uses the pronouns "his/her".

Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "their").

140 Things to Do At University (pages 151-155): The Traditions section states "Mix with alumnae…" (#32). The Get Involved @ University section states "Take the first steps in becoming a true World Ready Woman…" (#92) and "Do you care about your campus and your school in general? Attend a University College for Women Student Government…" (#96). The University Spirit section states "Say thank you to as many University ladies as possible…" (#123).

Recommendations: (1) Alumnae indicates female graduates so replace with gender-neutral "alums"; (2) "World Ready Woman" should be changed to "Take the first steps in becoming World Ready…"; (3) Remove "University College for Women" and state "Attend a Student Government…"; and (4) modify #123 to state "Say thank you to as many University athletes as possible for representing the University."

Traditions (pages 155-156): This section uses "Alumnae" and "Alumna." In addition, the last bullet on page 156 states "Senior Dinner (May) is a night for the graduating seniors to reminisce with their family, University sisters…"

> Recommendations: "Alumnae and "Alumna" should be replaced with gender-neutral "alum" and "alums." In addition, "University sisters" should be replaced with "University family" or "University peers."

Residence Life Policies (pages 159-180):

Condition of Premises/Damage (pages 161-162): Item C uses pronoun "she."

> Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "they").

Right to Entry (page 163): Pronouns "her/his" used.

> Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "their").

Alcohol Policy (page 164): This section uses the pronouns "her/him."

> Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "them").

Articles and Activities Prohibited in the Residence Halls (pages 166-167): Last bullet on page 167 uses pronouns "her/his."

> Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "their").

Room Charges and Refunds (page 175): The pronoun "she" is used.

Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "they").

Solicitation and Advertising (page 176): This section uses the pronouns "her/his".

Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "their").

Visitation/Guest Policy (pages 178-179): Fourth bullet uses the pronouns "she" and "her."

Recommendations: This needs to be corrected to be more gender inclusive. We recommend using neutral language to be more inclusive (example: "they" and "their").

Campus Security and Title IX Policies and Procedures (pages 181-208):

WHAT IS TITLE IX? (pages 184-185): This section mentions: (1) "sex discrimination" but the University also incorporates protections of transgender individuals; (2) data from the National Institute of Justice on victims of sexual assault while in college that only reports "women" and "men"; (3) "There can be no one priority issue for either sex"; and (4) "male and female students."

Recommendations: (1) If the University is interpreting Title IX to protect students based on gender identity, then both "sex and gender discrimination" should be used; (2) data should be presented that reports victimization of non-binary and/or transgender students; (3) remove mention of "either sex" which reinforces a sex-

binary and is non-inclusive for intersex students; and (4) utilize neutral terminology for students (example: "students").

Notice of Non-Discrimination (pages 185-186): References University's non-discrimination policy. This policy mentions "gender" but does not specify both "gender identity" and "gender expression." In addition, the summary of protections provided under Title IX by the University states "We do not discriminate based on the basis of sex..."

> Recommendations: The non-discrimination policy should be amended to specify protections based on both gender identity and gender expression. In addition, if University is interpreting Title IX to protect students based on gender identity (and maybe gender expression), then this statement should be changed to "We do not discriminate based on the basis of sex and gender (identity and expression)."

WHAT DOES TITLE IX COVER? (page 186): This section mentions "sex discrimination."

> Recommendations: If the University is interpreting Title IX to protect students based on gender identity, then both "sex and gender discrimination" should be used.

Transgender Students and Gender Identity (pages 186-187): This section mentions "sex discrimination."

> Recommendations: If the University is interpreting Title IX to protect students based on gender identity, then both "sex and gender discrimination" should be used.

Violence Against Women Act (pages 188-189): In this section, it states "LGBT".

Recommendation: We recommend changing "LGBT" to "LGBTQIA+" in order to be more inclusive.

LGBTQ Resources (page 190): The heading of this section is titled "LGBTQ Resources."

Recommendation: We recommend changing "LGBTQ" to "LGBTQIA+" in order to be more inclusive.

Sexual Harassment (pages 194-195): This section mentions "sex" and "same sex" and uses pronouns "s/he" (under quid pro quo harassment).

Recommendations: Since harassment occurs not only based on biological sex, but by gender (identity/expression), we would recommend using "sexual and gender harassment," and "same sex / same gender." In addition, gendered pronouns should be replaced with neutral language (example: "they").

Sexual Violence (pages 195-196): This section uses pronouns "his or her" and only reports victimization data for male and female students.

Recommendations: The pronouns "his or her" should be replaced with gender-neutral language (example: "their" and data should be presented that reports victimization of non-binary and/or transgender students.

University's Policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence (pages 197-207):

Introduction (page 197): Policy mentions "sex discrimination."

Recommendations: Since harassment and assault occur not only based on biological sex, but by gender (identity/expression), we would recommend using "sexual and gender harassment and violence."

Title IX Complaint/Grievance Policy and Procedure (pages 203-206): This section mentions "sex discrimination" and "sex."

Recommendations: Since harassment and assault occur not only based on biological sex, but by gender (identity/expression), we would recommend using "sex and gender discrimination" and "sex and gender."

University Notice of Non-Discrimination (pages 206-207): This policy mentions "gender" but does not specify both "gender identity" and "gender expression." In addition, the pronouns "her or his" and "she or he" are used under the General Procedure for Discrimination Grievances.

Recommendations: The non-discrimination policy should be amended to specify protections based on both gender identity and gender expression. In addition, the pronouns "her or his" and "she or he" should be replaced with gender-neutral language (example: "their" and "they").

Housing Medical Accommodation Request Process (pages 209-210): No concerns were identified with this form.

Medical Accommodations Handout (pages 211-212): No concerns were identified with this form.

Living-Learning Communities 2016-2017 (pages 213-214): No concerns were identified with this form.

Roommate Discussion and Mediation Guide (pages 215-219): No concerns were identified with this form.

Alternative Spring Break Application Packet 2016 (pages 221-222): No concerns were identified with this form.

2016 RA & OL Application (pages. 223-232): This application includes the University Mission Statement which mentions "women and men." In addition, the Personal Information form (page 230) requests applicants to specify whether they want a "Women's Polo" or "Men's Polo" and Unisex T-Shirt size.

    Recommendations: The mention of "men and women" should be changed to "students" to be more inclusive. In addition, shirts should be uni-gender/uni-sex.

2016-2017 University Activities Board Application (pages 233-235): This form requests applicants to specify their "NAME" but did not clarify whether it was requesting legal or preferred name.

    Recommendations: If Student Affairs is attempting to collect legal name, please specify. In addition, if interested in collecting legal name, a space should be provided for applicants to indicate preferred name.

Miscellaneous Forms

Table 6. Content Analysis Results of Miscellaneous Forms/Policies

Form	Page Numbers *	Suggestions for Improvement
New Student Packet—Fall 2016	237-254	Yes
Constitution of University Student Government (2/4/2010)	255-262	Yes
2015-2016 CSG Candidate Filing Form	263-266	Yes
WOW 2016 Application	267-268	Yes
WOW 2016 Evaluation	269-270	No

*Corresponds to page numbers in PURPLE manual

New Student Packet—Fall 2016 (pages 237-254):

Residence Life (page 247): When separating the floors, the document lists "women" and "men."

Recommendations: The language should be modified to be more inclusive "male-identified" and "female-identified."

AlcoholEdu & Haven (page 251): This information box provides sexual assault victimization rates for women and men.

Recommendations: Data should also be presented that reports victimization of non-binary and/or transgender students.

Constitution of University Student Government (CSG) (pages 255-262): Article III, Section 1 mentions not denying membership and activities to an individual based on their gender, but does not specify both gender identity and gender expression.

> Recommendations: The Constitution should be amended to specify protections based on both gender identity and gender expression.

2015-2016 CSG Candidate Filing Form (pages 263-266): This form uses the pronouns "she or he" and "his or her". In addition, this form requests applicants to specify their "NAME" but did not clarify whether it was requesting legal or preferred name.

> Recommendations: The pronouns "she or he" and "his or her" need to be replaced with more neutral language (example: "they" and "their"). In addition, if Student Affairs is attempting to collect legal name, please specify. If interested in collecting legal name, a space should be provided for applicants to indicate preferred name.

WOW 2016 Application (pages 267-268): Several concerns were identified: (1) this form mentions "women-specific program," "world ready women," "sisterhood," and "women"; (2) the form requests applicants to specify their "NAME" but did not clarify whether it was requesting legal or preferred name; and (3) the form includes questions referencing Dr. Barazzone.

> Recommendations: (1) University will need to determine how they are defining "women" for this program—is it only biological females or individuals who self-identify as female?; (2) if Student Affairs is attempting to collect legal name, please specify. If interested in collecting legal name, a space should be provided for applicants to indicate preferred name; (3) replace all mentions of "Dr. Barazzone" with "Dr. Finegold" (if he is going to be attending the next WOW retreat).

Student Handbook

Table 7. Content Analysis Results of Student Handbook

Student Planner	Pages	Suggestions for Improvement
Handbook	81 (pages 109-218)	Yes

Motto (page 110):

The motto states "Filiae Nostrae Sicut Antari Lapides (Our daughters are as cornerstones).

    Recommendations: Historical context should be added to explain the origin of the motto

    and its continued use after becoming a co-education institution.

History of University (pages 111-112): This section states that "On May 1, 2014 University

University's Board of Trustees voted in approval of a resolution that expanded access to a high-

quality University undergraduate education to men..."

    Recommendations: We recommend that the phrase "undergraduate education to men" be

    changed to "undergraduate education to all gender identities."

Mission Statement (page 112): The University Mission Statement states "University

prepares women and men to be world ready..."

    Recommendations: We recommend that "women and men" be changed to "students" or

    "individuals" to be more inclusive.

<u>140 Things to Do at University Before You Graduate (pages 115-120):</u> Item #47 states "Go to a LGBTQ History Month event."

    <u>Recommendations:</u> We recommend that "LGBTQ" be replaced with "LGBTQIA+" to be more inclusive.

<u>Student Leadership Programs (page 156):</u> The WOW Leadership Retreat is available for "all undergraduate and graduate women" but does not clearly indicate how the University is defining "women"—is it based on biological sex or gender identity?

    <u>Recommendations:</u> We recommend clarifying that you are either seeking applicants with a female biological sex identity or are female-identified (gender identity).

<u>Presidential Interim Suspension (page 158):</u> This section uses the pronouns "her/himself."

    <u>Recommendations:</u> The language should be modified to be more gender-neutral (example: "themselves")

<u>Conduct Standing (pages 158-160):</u> Item 5 indicates "Violation of University Policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence." In addition, Item 7 (Discrimination/Harassment) mentions "gender" but does not indicate inclusion of both gender identity and gender expression.

    <u>Recommendations</u> Since harassment and assault occur not only based on biological sex, but also on gender (identity/expression), we would recommend using "Sexual and Gender Violence and Harassment" In addition, Item 7 should be modified to include both gender identity and gender expression.

Athletics—NCAA Division III (pages 164-165): This section only mentions men's and women's sports and does not include NCAA and University policy on participation of transgender students in sanctioned athletic programs.

    Recommendations: We suggest reviewing and incorporating information about participation policies for transgender students to be more inclusive (https://www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/Transgender_Handbook_2011_Final.pdf).

Counseling Services (page 167): This section mentions workshops on "women's issues."

    Recommendations: Modify language to state "sex and gender issues" to be more inclusive.

Campus Security and Title IX Policies & Procedures (pages 173-192): Please see analysis and recommendations under RESIDENCE LIFE AND STUDENT AFFAIRS.

Room Charges and Refunds (page 204): This section uses the pronoun "she."

    Recommendations: The language should be replaced with a gender-neutral pronoun (example: "they").

Women's Leadership LLC (page 212): This section mentions "women" several times but does not indicate a clear definition of "woman"—is it based on biological sex or gender identity?

    Recommendations: We recommend clarifying that you are either seeking applicants with a female biological sex identity or are female-identified (gender identity).

Appealing a Sanction (page 214): This section uses the pronouns "he or she."

Recommendations: The language should be replaced with a gender-neutral pronoun (example: "they").

Condition of Premises/Damage (pages 216-217): This section uses the pronoun "she" (Item C).

Recommendations: The language should be replaced with a gender-neutral pronoun (example: "they").

Right to Entry (page 218): This section uses the pronouns "her/his."

Recommendations: The language should be replaced with a gender-neutral pronoun (example: "their").

BEST PRACTICES

Students often begin the process of finding the most suitable college by browsing the college's website, and sometimes submitting their information in order to receive additional information about the college. Then, they may apply using the Common Application, and if accepted, will receive countless forms and documents that they must fill out. Encompassing the values of the college, the discrimination policy should be in line with the type of languages used in the forms and documents. The best practices for inclusive language are organized below into important areas where students often have to answer questions about their sex or gender, as well as models of best practices, including the request information section, the Common Application as a best practice, collecting and representing demographic information, non-discrimination policies, and Harvard University as a best practice model.

Requesting Information and First Impressions

The first forms that students encounter provide the first impression of the institution and its overall values. The below table is a display of colleges, both local and national, and where potential students can request more information on their websites. Western PA schools, such as University, University of Pittsburgh, Carlow, Carnegie Mellon, and Duquesne, have male and female as the only options for gender, and list it as a required field to even process the form. A student that does not identify as either male or female may not feel that they have a place at the college, since this is the first form they may look to or encounter. Two notably progressive colleges, the University of Southern California and Stanford University, also do not have options for non-binary genders. On the other hand, Sarah Lawrence College does inquire about gender, but does list a preferred name, which addresses and solves a different issue of those who do not

wish to be known by their birth name. The University of Massachusetts has a slightly more inclusive option of "no response," along with the binary male and female options in their request information section. While this allows a prospective student to proceed without having to choose between two genders, it does not recognize the wider spectrum. Four prominent colleges, Dartmouth, Princeton, Macalester, and Harvard, have more inclusive ways of requesting information about gender. Dartmouth, Princeton, and Macalester ask for sex assigned at birth and provide an option of writing in a gender identity. Harvard only has a write-in space for gender identity.

Table 8. Examples of Requesting Information

Inclusivity	University	Link
Non-Inclusive	University	http://www.University.edu/inquire/inquire_ug.cfm
Non-Inclusive	Pitt	https://upoak.askadmissions.net/emtinterestpage.aspx?ip=freshman
Non-Inclusive	Carlow	http://www.carlow.edu/Request_Information.aspx
Non-Inclusive	Carnegie Mellon	https://admission.enrollment.cmu.edu/pages/request-information
Non-Inclusive	Duquesne	https://myapplication.duq.edu/Apply/Pages/createaccount.aspx?f=c3f6b3b6-f215-46f8-8ef0-136f0e2b5ee3
Non-Inclusive	Point Park	https://www.pointpark.edu/info_request.aspx
Non-Inclusive	University of Southern California	http://admission.usc.edu/requestforinformation.html
Non-Inclusive	Stanford	https://apply.stanford.edu/register/requestinfo
Preferred Name	Sarah Lawrence	https://www.sarahlawrence.edu/admission/inquire/
No requirement	University of Massachusetts	https://webapp.spire.umass.edu/admissions/cgi-bin/inquiry/uginq_display.pl

Inclusive	Dartmouth	https://apply.dartmouth.edu/register/signmeup
Inclusive	Princeton	https://apply.princeton.edu/register/inquire
Inclusive	Macalester	https://admissions.macalester.edu/register/connect
Inclusive	Harvard	https://apply.college.harvard.edu/register/?id=1b4499e4-8fd0-47f0-bb86-f17cd0fc8b32

Common Application as a Best Practice

The Common Application, used by University, is growing in popularity as more colleges are adopting it as their main application for admission. The Common Application exemplifies a best practice because of its inclusiveness and recognition of the gender spectrum and supports those who have a different identity than was assigned at birth. Another advantage to the Common Application is that it offers information on how to answer specific questions, making the process much friendlier and accessible to all users. Along with the request information section, the application to college serves as a first impression. The Common Application is successful in using appropriate language and including a variety of options that support and suggest an inclusive institution.

Table 9. Information About the Common Application

Summary	Link
Common Application Expands Gender Identity Options	http://www.commonapp.org/whats-appening/news/common-application-expands-gender-identity-options
Gender Identity Options	http://www.commonapp.org/whats-appening/college-counseling/gender-identity-options
Dilemma From Day 1-Making trans students feel welcome	http://www.chronicle.com/article/Dilemmas-From-Day-1/233760

Demographic Information

After searching hundreds of colleges, no colleges were found to present data on demographic information that includes gender identity/expression other than male or female. Even Harvard University, which used the very best practices, did not include any other demographic data on gender besides male and female. Including more comprehensive data would better represent the student population. Best practices for asking demographic information can be found at the links below, as well as terms that may be offensive and definitions for inclusive terminology.

Terminology and Definitions. When collecting any information, using the most suitable language is very important. Inclusive gender language conveys the message that the community is inclusive, and sees each individual as a person. The links below are common terms and their definitions regarding all aspects of gender. The Williams Institute provides several abbreviations and definitions throughout their report. A few other sources include lists of definitions to further solidify the common understanding of various terms.

Table 10. Resources on Terminology and Definitions

Summary	Link
GLAAD: Tips on avoiding offensive language	http://www.glaad.org/reference/offensive
The Williams Institute	http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/geniuss-report-sep-2014.pdf
Unitarian Universalists Association: Inclusive language and definitions	http://www.uua.org/lgbtq/identity/transgender

Collecting Information. The Williams Institute was one of the best sources for examples of how to develop demographic questions. Asking demographic information can be very complex, but with the recommended two-step approach, the questions are simplified, yet appropriate. The questions begin with asking sex assigned at birth, and the second question is about current gender identity.

The proposed example is as follows:

1.) What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?

  □ Male   □ Female

2.) How do you describe yourself? (check one)

  □ Male   □ Female   □ Transgender

  □ Do not identify as female, male, or transgender

Although the questions and answers are more general and simplified, more specific questions may be asked based on the complexity of the desired answers and information to collect. For example, the second question could potentially generate more data:

2.) What is your current gender identity? (Check all that apply)

  □ Male   □ Female   □ Trans male/Trans man

  □ Trans female/Trans woman □ Genderqueer/Gender non-conforming

  □ Different identity (please state): _____

The Williams Institute also includes example questions about sexual orientation, gender expression, transgender identity, and a wide range of gender based questions. Along with the Williams Institute, various links are provided that are best practices for collecting demographic information, as well as survey information and the most inclusive language for forms.

Table 11. Resources on Collecting Demographic Data

Summary	Link
Campus Pride: Colleges asking Inclusive Identity questions	https://www.campuspride.org/tpc/identity-questions-as-an-option/
Demographic data *Note: is not inclusive	http://oir.harvard.edu/fact-book/degrees-awarded-demographics
The Williams' Institute: Asking Information	http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/geniuss-report-sep-2014.pdf
Human Rights Campaign: Collecting Transgender Inclusive Data	http://www.hrc.org/resources/collecting-transgender-inclusive-gender-data-in-workplace-and-other-surveys
Survey Gende	how-to-write-survey-gender-

http://www.hrc.org/resources/collecting-transgender-inclusive-gender-data-in-workplace-and-other-surveys

Non-Discrimination Policies

When students transition from high school to college, they do not expect to lose rights or experience more discrimination. The Western PA Public Schools outline the types of procedures that are enforced and practiced in the school systems throughout Western PA, as written in their Title IX policy. Students are welcome to choose preferred pronouns, and their legal name and legal gender is not required on any forms, other than a mandatory permanent record. If students rightly experience inclusion and validation, those basic justices should not be taken away in college. Going from an environment that recognizes a preferred pronoun, preferred name, and

one's gender identity to an environment that adheres to binary gender categories would only make the transition to college more stressful. Furthermore, outlined below are other college's discrimination policies as best practices.

Table 12. Examples of Non-Discrimination Policies

Summary	Link
Western PA Public School's Title IX Policy	http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/cms/lib07/PA01000449/Centricity/Domain/4/Transgender%20Gender%20Expansive%20Students%20policy.pdf
Point Park University: diversity statement	http://www.pointpark.edu/About/Welcome/DiversityStatement
Carlow University: diversity statement	http://www.carlow.edu/Center_for_Mercy_Heritage_and_Service.aspx
Agnes Scott College: diversity statement	https://www.agnesscott.edu/president/presidential-committee-diversity/statement-on-gender-expression-and-gender-identity.html

Harvard University as a Best Practice Model

Harvard University proved to be an excellent best practice model by their choice of language, resources, and overall inclusion. Starting with the "information request" form, Harvard utilizes a non-binary approach to gender. Under the "Optional Demographic Information" there is a space for students to write in their "Gender Identity." The student is not limited to either identifying as male or female. Furthermore, CBS covered a fairly recent change in Harvard's registration process: the ability to choose a preferred pronoun such as he, she, ze, e, or they. This allows students to feel included and validated as humans, as being identified by an unsuitable pronoun can be hurtful and offensive. However, it is of note that even a very inclusive model still

does not include demographic data of non-binary genders. A college with inclusive demographic

data is yet to be found.

Table 13. Best Practices from Harvard University

Summary	Link
Office of BGLTQ Student Life Terminology under "Resources" tab	http://bgltq.fas.harvard.edu/
Information Request Form *Note: Gender Identity fill-in space	https://apply.college.harvard.edu/register/?id=1b4499e4-8fd0-47f0-bb86-f17cd0fc8b32
CBS coverage of Harvard's gender inclusive pronouns	http://www.cbsnews.com/news/harvard-university-colleges-gender-free-pronouns-transgender-genderqueer-students/

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Recommendations

In addition to the form-specific recommendations (see Data Analysis section), our team has identified several key general recommendations:

- The term "First-Year" should be continued to be used in all forms/policies and all communications between staff, faulty, students, and potential students. This term is more inclusive than using "freshman/freshmen."
- Please avoid using gendered language such as "women and men", "he and she," and "her and his." Instead, use more gender-neutral terms such as they, them, and theirs, or "students."
- Please utilize more inclusive methods of collecting data about gender (identity / expression). The two-step process created by the Williams Institute provides a good example. In addition, wherever possible, forms should allow students to designate their "preferred gender pronouns" (examples: she, he, they, ze, e).
- Our team noticed that demographic and crime statistics are reported only for "males" and "females." This trend is seen at many institutions (see Best Practices). Although not required by law, it is recommended that the institution include statistics on gender non-conforming individuals as well as men and women. In addition, please specify if the statistics on men/women are based on biological sex or gender identity.

Specific Recommendations: Motto, Mission Statement, and Non-Discrimination Policy

Our team has also developed recommendations specific to three key statements/policies which we feel could be made more inclusive- the University Motto, Mission Statement, and non-discrimination policy.

Motto. The motto is translated to "Our daughters are as cornerstones". This motto represents the beliefs and ideals used to guide the students at University. The school was founded to provide women with an education comparable to the education men could receive in 1869. Cornerstone means essential, an anchor, or foundation. In the historical context,

cornerstone means our daughters of University are the foundation and pillars of the school and society. We recognize the importance of retaining this motto, but would suggest providing historical context to provide understanding as to why this motto was retained after becoming a co-educational institution.

Mission Statement. University's mission statement states "…University prepares women and men to be world ready." The phrase "men and women" is gender- specific and could be considered exclusive to individuals who do not identify as male or female. We recommend changing "men and women" to "students" to be more inclusive.

Non-Discrimination Policy – Title IX (Campus Security and Title IX Policies and Procedures). Title IX is a federal civil right that prohibits sex discrimination at universities. It is not just about sports; it also relates to sex-based discrimination in education. It prohibits sexual harassment, gender-based discrimination, and sexual violence. Our first recommendation would be for University to continue to support the interpretation that Title IX protects any person from sex-based discrimination, regardless of their real or perceived sex, gender identity, and/or gender expression. The student handbook specifically states "all university students – male and female, straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender…." will be protected from sex discrimination. Our second recommendation is to amend the University non-discrimination policy. The policy currently states, "It is the policy of University to not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, marital status…" (University Student Handbook, p. 176). We recommend that the policy should be amended to specify protections based on both gender identity and gender expression.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Although we completed a large amount of work this semester on the Capstone project, there are several directions the research could be expanded in the future. Specifically, we could complete additional research on gender inclusivity, or expand the research to additional identity categories including disability status, international students, etc.

If the research were to continue focusing on gender inclusivity, we would suggest:

- Collaborating with Centers to identify additional research projects (Center for Women's Entrepreneurship, Women's Business Center, Center for Women and Politics, Women's Institute)
- Utilizing our research model to analyze forms/policies from additional departments (Athletics, PACE)
- Review of syllabi to address gender inclusivity
- Review of upcoming website content for inclusive language
- Review of visual images on website and print media for gender inclusivity
- Review of programs provided by Student Affairs for gender inclusivity
- Expansion of research method to include individual interviews, focus groups, and surveys of students, faculty, and staff about gender inclusivity on campus.

It would also be important to examine other aspects of identity. Below are future directions to conduct research on other aspects of identity to improve inclusivity:

- Increase outreach to identity populations to gather data
- Research inclusivity related to political / social ideology
- Research inclusivity based on race/ethnicity/nationality
- Research inclusivity based on disability status
- Research inclusivity based on sexual/romantic orientation
- Research inclusivity based on system of belief (religion)

- Research inclusivity based on socioeconomic status

Finally, there are several overarching suggestions for improving the research conducted on inclusivity:

- Emphasize importance of recognizing intersectionality of identity; (research should be developed based on understanding of intersectionality)
- Emphasize collaboration between departments/centers and across "levels" of University community (students, staff, faculty)
- Involvement of Diversity & Inclusion Council in reviewing and implementing recommendations

All of these suggestions could help improve the quality of research conducted as well as the student experience on campus. Research addressing issues of inclusivity on campus is essential to improving the student experience as well as the experience of ALL University community members.

DISCUSSION

The intent of this project was to highlight the importance of gender inclusivity with contributions from the disciplines of psychology, social services, and criminology; all while focusing on University's mission, where opportunity is presented without exclusion based on gender. These different, yet intersectional disciplines, provide a scope of analysis ranging from: the impact of language on an individual, the risks of exclusive language on both the individual and society, and the insight of policies and how they impact students. Appropriately inclusive language in policy helps create an expectation for an overall more inclusive campus culture and constructs a strong foundation for future policy making.

University's transition from a single sex institution to a coeducational one created an immediate need for reevaluation of gender inclusive policy. After a thorough analysis of University's policy, we found a strong need to update policy language from a single sex standing to a more inclusive one that implements its coeducational standing. However, University has coeducational standing, and it must not limit itself to a mere male and female categorical gender binary. We must be reminded that many people are unrepresented in the binary system, which has prompted gender to be studied as a continuous characteristic with many variations, including deviation between gender and biological sex (Hines, 2010). Even after some language in policy was updated in order to fit co-educational needs, the University still failed to think outside of the gender binary. Multiple sections in policy only used feminine and masculine pronouns such as he and she. Gendered language, such as the utilization of "feminine" and "masculine" pronouns, can have a negative impact on individuals not fitting into the traditional gender binary. Additionally, the degree to which groups of people and institutions accept an individual's identity can have direct benefits (such as self-esteem and improved

academic performance) but also negative consequences (social out casting, withdrawal, and alienation) (Stets & Burke, 2014; Hine, 2010). Thus, we recommend the institution avoid using gendered language such as "women and men," "he and she," and "her and his." Instead, we recommend using more gender-neutral terms such as they, them, and theirs, or "students."

Our team noticed that demographic and crime statistics are reported for "males" and "females" only, which seemed to be a trend seen at many other institutions. In the United States, transgender individuals are likely to be victims of violent crime including homicide, rape and assault (Duncan, 2014). The risk of victimization increases when an individual is both transgender and a member of an ethnic minority (Meyer, 2003). Research evaluated in this section builds a foundation for understanding the need for a safe community on campus, as well as the threats to physical, mental, and emotional safety that gender nonconforming students experience. In order to actually create a safe community based on inclusivity, we must include every demographic when considering statistics like those of crime. If we fail to include those outside of the gender binary, then we fail to build the foundation based on inclusivity that we seek to create. Although not required by law, it is recommended that the institution include statistics on gender non-conforming individuals as well as men and women. In addition, we urge the university to specify if the statistics on men/women are based on biological sex or gender identity.

Creating inclusivity requires us to focus on specifics, the language in University's motto is representative of the University's maxim and thus imperative in creating this inclusive infrastructure. The university was founded to provide women with an education comparable to that a man could receive in 1869. Cornerstone refers to an anchor or foundation. In historical context, cornerstone refers to the daughters of University as the foundation and pillars

of the University and society. Therefore, the best suggestion to make here is providing historical context to provide understanding on the retention of the motto after becoming a co-educational institution. Mindfulness of gender and language can facilitate a more meaningful experience in the classroom and improve the sense of safety for individuals with variant gender representations (Dylan, 2012).

It is imperative for academic institutions to be aware of the way gendered language influences the classroom (Ball, 2013). Gender binary language can also be found within University's mission statement, which can be considered exclusive to individuals who do not identify as male or female. We recommend changing "men and women" to "students" to be more inclusive. Transgender students often have to spend a great deal of energy advocating for themselves and coping with stress. High amounts of stress can interfere with academic performance and classroom learning (Rands, 2009). Students perform better in a classroom that is inclusive and free from hostility or harassment (California School Board Association, 2014).

Title IX is a component of the Education Amendment of 1972. It is a policy enforced by the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. Title IX ensures equal access to education and activities funded by the Department of Education with regards to gender (U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Implementation of Title IX policy prevents gender-based hazing, bullying, social exclusion, and academic exclusion. Institutions should advance these directives by offering other resources to faculty, staff, and students regarding diversity and inclusion, as well as awareness of social issues such as bullying and hazing (Kimmel, 2016). Even with more universal policy there is always room for improvement. We recommend that University continue to support the interpretation that Title IX protects any person from sex-based discrimination, regardless of their real or perceived sex, gender identity, and/or

gender expression. The student handbook specifically states "all university students – male and female, straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender…." will be protected from sex discrimination. Furthermore, we recommend the university amend its non-discrimination policy. The policy currently states, "It is the policy of University to not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, marital status…" (University Student Handbook, p. 176). This policy should be amended to specify protections based on both gender identity and gender expression.

Although there was ample success in finding ways to improve upon inclusive language within policy, we can always do more. For future directions, we suggest further research focusing on gender inclusivity and expanding collaboration with other university departments and centers that were not examined during this project. This could be done through a similar research model, but with a more thorough and specific focus. It is imperative to note that there are many other identities that need to be examined and included as well. The roles different university departments take must be acknowledged and used in a more collaborative configuration. With more universal and inclusive policy across all dimensions of the community, the University will be able to further its success in creating an inclusive community for all identities.

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Appendix F

2017 Dear Colleague Letter

U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division

U.S. Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights

Dear Colleague Letter
Notice of Language Assistance

If you have difficulty understanding English, you may, free of charge, request language assistance services for this Department information by calling 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) (TTY: 1-800-877-8339), or email us at: Ed.Language.Assistance@ed.gov.

Aviso a personas con dominio limitado del idioma inglés: Si usted tiene alguna dificultad en entender el idioma inglés, puede, sin costo alguno, solicitar asistencia lingüística con respecto a esta información llamando al 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) (TTY: 1-800-877-8339), o envíe un mensaje de correo electrónico a: Ed.Language.Assistance@ed.gov.

給英語能力有限人士的通知： 如果您不懂英語，或者使用英语有困難，您可以要求獲得向大眾提供的語言協助服務，幫助您理解教育部資訊。這些語言協助服務均可免費提供。如果您需要有關口譯或筆譯服務的詳細資訊，請致電 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) (聽語障人士專線：1-800-877-8339),或電郵: Ed.Language.Assistance@ed.gov。

Thông báo dành cho những người có khả năng Anh ngữ hạn chế: Nếu quý vị gặp khó khăn trong việc hiểu Anh ngữ thì quý vị có thể yêu cầu các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ cho các tin tức của Bộ dành cho công chúng. Các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ này đều miễn phí. Nếu quý vị muốn biết thêm chi tiết về các dịch vụ phiên dịch hay thông dịch, xin vui lòng gọi số 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) (TTY: 1-800-877-8339), hoặc email: Ed.Language.Assistance@ed.gov.

영어 미숙자를 위한 공고: 영어를 이해하는 데 어려움이 있으신 경우, 교육부 정보 센터에 일반인 대상 언어 지원 서비스를 요청하실 수 있습니다. 이러한 언어 지원 서비스는 무료로 제공됩니다. 통역이나 번역 서비스에 대해 자세한 정보가 필요하신 경우, 전화번호 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) 또는 청각 장애인용 전화번호 1-800-877-8339 또는 이메일주소 Ed.Language.Assistance@ed.gov 으로 연락하시기 바랍니다.

Paunawa sa mga Taong Limitado ang Kaalaman sa English: Kung nahihirapan kayong makaintindi ng English, maaari kayong humingi ng tulong ukol dito sa inpormasyon ng Kagawaran mula sa nagbibigay ng serbisyo na pagtulong kaugnay ng wika. Ang serbisyo na pagtulong kaugnay ng wika ay libre. Kung kailangan ninyo ng dagdag na impormasyon tungkol sa mga serbisyo kaugnay ng pagpapaliwanag o pagsasalin, mangyari lamang tumawag sa 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) (TTY: 1-800-877-8339), o mag-email sa: Ed.Language.Assistance@ed.gov.

Уведомление для лиц с ограниченным знанием английского языка: Если вы испытываете трудности в понимании английского языка, вы можете попросить, чтобы вам предоставили перевод информации, которую Министерство Образования доводит до всеобщего сведения. Этот перевод предоставляется бесплатно. Если вы хотите получить более подробную информацию об услугах устного и письменного перевода, звоните по телефону 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) (служба для слабослышащих: 1-800-877-8339), или отправьте сообщение по адресу: Ed.Language.Assistance@ed.gov.

February 22, 2017

Dear Colleague:

The purpose of this guidance is to inform you that the Department of Justice and the Department of Education are withdrawing the statements of policy and guidance reflected in:

- Letter to Emily Prince from James A. Ferg-Cadima, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Office for Civil Rights at the Department of Education dated January 7, 2015; and

- Dear Colleague Letter on Transgender Students jointly issued by the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice and the Department of Education dated May 13, 2016.

These guidance documents take the position that the prohibitions on discrimination "on the basis of sex" in Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), 20 U.S.C. § 1681 et seq., and its implementing regulations, see, e.g., 34 C.F.R. § 106.33, require access to sex-segregated facilities based on gender identity. These guidance documents do not, however, contain extensive legal analysis or explain how the position is consistent with the express language of Title IX, nor did they undergo any formal public process.

This interpretation has given rise to significant litigation regarding school restrooms and locker rooms. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit concluded that the term "sex" in the regulations is ambiguous and deferred to what the court characterized as the "novel" interpretation advanced in the guidance. By contrast, a federal district court in Texas held that the term "sex" unambiguously refers to biological sex and that, in any event, the guidance was "legislative and substantive" and thus formal rulemaking should have occurred prior to the adoption of any such policy. In August of 2016, the Texas court preliminarily enjoined enforcement of the interpretation, and that nationwide injunction has not been overturned.

In addition, the Departments believe that, in this context, there must be due regard for the primary role of the States and local school districts in establishing educational policy.

In these circumstances, the Department of Education and the Department of Justice have decided to withdraw and rescind the above-referenced guidance documents in order to further and more completely consider the legal issues involved. The Departments thus will not rely on the views expressed within them.

Please note that this withdrawal of these guidance documents does not leave students without protections from discrimination, bullying, or harassment. All schools must ensure that all students, including LGBT students, are able to learn and thrive in a safe environment. The Department of Education Office for Civil Rights will continue its duty under law to hear all claims of discrimination and will explore every appropriate opportunity to protect all students and to encourage civility in our classrooms. The Department of Education and the Department of Justice are committed to the application of Title IX and other federal laws to ensure such protection.

This guidance does not add requirements to applicable law. If you have questions or are interested in commenting on this letter, please contact the Department of Education at ocr@ed.gov or 800-421-3481 (TDD: 800-877-8339); or the Department of Justice at education@usdoj.gov or 877-292-3804 (TTY: 800-514-0383).

Sincerely,

/s/   /s/
Sandra Battle   T.E. Wheeler, II
Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights   Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education   U.S. Department of Justice

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Appendix G

Gender Inclusive Student Policies, Practices, and Recommendation Memo

To: Diversity & Inclusion Council

From:

Date: October 24, 2018

Subject: Gender Inclusive Student Policies, Practices and Recommendations

In an effort to create a university environment that is supportive and inclusive for students who identify across the gender spectrum – including those who identify as trans, gender non-binary, gender queer, and gender non-conforming (sometimes abbreviated as TGNC) – we recommend that we implement a series of measures to create a gender inclusive campus.

The work group was initially formed by you in early October of 2017. Since then we convened as a group and conducted research about best practices at colleges and universities throughout the country. Based on these findings we drafted an initial proposal and had the Diversity and Inclusion Council review it and solicited feedback from students, specifically those who identify as TGNC. Based on the feedback we received, as well as reviewing current gender scholarship and researching best practices in campus gender inclusion, we formally recommend the following action items and implementation plan.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Names and Pronouns:
- Create a system for students to change their name and to drop their "dead name" across university systems.
- Develop a class roster policy encouraging faculty to collect students' preferred names and their gender pronouns at the beginning of the term; avoid calling attendance based on the class roster. A suggested best practice is to call students by their last name, or in small classes to go around have students introduce themselves; ask students to share their preferred name and pronouns, record these, and use them.
- Encourage faculty and staff to put their gender pronouns in their email signature and in website bios.
- Have RAs put pronouns on their door signs and provide space for students to do the same on their door decorations.

Housing and Facilities:
- Eliminate the use of co-ed floors. Have only All-Gender floors.
- Change the roommate search feature so students can define their own gender and that allows students to change their name.
- Re-examine bathroom signage. Presently there are still buildings that don't have All-Gender restrooms or have signage that is outdated.
- Create a bathroom usage policy that indicates anyone can use any bathroom they want and that is no one's responsibility to enforce the use of specific bathrooms.
- Create a neutral space in AFC for TGNC students to change.

Education and Training:
- Provide professional development to all faculty and staff about gender as a social construct, terminology, pronouns, and difference between gender identity, biological sex, and sexual identity.

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- Provide education on gender to all students at multiple points in the curriculum and co-curriculum. Consider re-introducing a required gender course for all students.
- Train RAs, OLs on gender inclusion, particularly TGNC. Where possible, all training programs should be led by individuals who are TGNC.
- Provide education on gender inclusive policies, such as the All-Gender restrooms (why the policies exist, the purpose of facilities, etc).

Campus Climate:
- Update all policies, procedures, websites, catalogs, and documentation to include and address TGNC students, faculty, and staff.
- Where formal policies exist, develop a system where students can report other students, faculty, and staff who are violating those policies with an emphasis on education and training.
- Make students aware that they can request that their pictures in publications or online be revoked for no further use.
- Hire more TGNC people at ▮▮▮▮▮▮. As part of the process when recruiting faculty and staff, assess competencies, behavior, and commitment to our value of gender inclusivity.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

1 to 3 Months:
1. Form a work group comprised of faculty, staff, and students, which will include members of the TGNC community. This work group will review the current recommendations and develop further recommendations.
2. Distribute an email to the campus community that lists the recommendations and our proposed strategy to solicit feedback. This will present an opportunity to get additional thoughts and perspectives from the larger community, while providing transparency.
3. Work with the Diversity and Inclusion Council to educate campus community on gender terminology and the use of pronouns and what they mean. Distribute educational information to all faculty, staff, and students. Encourage faculty and staff to post their gender pronouns on their office doors and/or within their email signatures.
4. Provide OLs and offices stickers for students who wish to change their gender pronouns on their nametag for New Student Orientation.
5. Educate campus community on the philosophy and purpose of all-gender restrooms.
6. Implement gender inclusive training for RAs and OLs that addresses how they can be support students who identify as TGNC.
7. Develop and distribute a faculty and staff toolkit to provide tips, suggestions, and strategies for creating a gender inclusive environment within their professional context.
8. Create document that outlines who students, faculty, and staff can speak with if they have issues or concerns with the conduct or behavior of another member of the ▮▮▮▮▮ community, with particular attention to gender inclusive biases and micro-aggressions. Consider what a reporting system would be.
9. Request RAs disclose their gender pronouns on their room door.
10. Send an email to all students that informs them how they can change their email address and username at ▮▮▮▮▮ to coincide with their identity.
11. Continue to distribute gender pronoun ribbons for faculty and staff and orientation events and faculty and staff meetings.
12. Develop a university statement related to providing a supportive and inclusive environment for students of all gender identities and expressions; publish on the new gender equity website, and on the values section of the main website.
13. Update the 2019-2020 online housing application to provide information about gender identity and provide students information about who to contact in Residence Life if they have housing questions, concerns, or requests related to their gender identity.
14. Include information about gender identity in the residence hall meetings.

15. Formalize policy and workflow process based on best practices we are currently using that outlines how Residence Life works with students and their housing requests/needs.

3 to 6 Months:
1. Develop a class roster policy asking faculty to collect students' chosen names at the start of the class, versus calling attendance based on the class roster. The goal would be to pilot the policy for the Spring 2019 term.
2. Create an online presence and resources for students who are trans, gender non-conforming, gender queer, and gender non-binary. This information should be housed on the new gender equity website created by the Women's Institute in partnership with Marketing and Communication.
3. Develop a picture and likeness policy that discloses how students' image will be used and formalize the current request protocol that allows students to rescind the use of their likeness.
4. Create an Information Systems and Student Records work group that will be tasked with developing the following policies, protocols, and systems for the 2019-2020 academic year:
   a. Develop a policy and system that allows students to change their name within institutional systems based on how they identify versus their legal name.
   b. Review where gender identity is maintained in our student information systems and create a policy on who should have access to this information for educational purposes. Implementation goal of 2019-2020 academic year.
   c. Create a system that allow students to record and update their pronouns so that this information can be shared with faculty and staff.
5. Form a Training and Education work group that will be tasked with developing gender inclusive training for faculty and staff, student leaders/employees, student-athletes, and university administration starting in the 2019-2020 academic year. This group will work together to develop and identify printed and online resources that can be utilized by different constituents to ensure gender inclusive practices.
6. Have departments review paperwork, websites, documents, and online resources to ensure they utilize gender inclusive language; update any information that is not gender inclusive.
7. Form a work group to assist Marketing and Communications in creating the online presence and printed resources to distribute to current and incoming students; ensure institutional website and printed materials are gender inclusive.
8. Conduct an assessment of the location of all-gender restrooms to ensure every building has one and that there is a fair distribution of all-gender restrooms in comparison to male and female designated restrooms.
9. Explore the feasibility of developing a roommate matching system in StarRez that allows incoming students to search for a roommate that aligns with their gender identity versus their sex assigned at birth.

6 to 9 Months:
1. Develop a gender inclusive restroom and locker room policy that outlines individuals can use facilities based on their gender identity, rather than their sex assigned at birth.
2. Create a programming and resource guide and checklist that student organizations and departments can utilize to ensure programs, activities, and events are gender inclusive.
3. Work with Title IX Office, Women's Institute, and Diversity and Inclusion Council to implement a campus climate survey that includes TGNC issues.

9 to 12 Months:
1. Purchase restroom signage for residence halls that allows for signage to be updated each year based on the gender designation of the floor. These signs would ideally have the ability to slide the gender designation in and out so they can be changed and replaced.
2. Update gender restroom signage in other campus buildings to ensure all-gender restrooms are denoted as "all-gender" versus "gender-neutral." Restroom signage should be permanent and not temporary.
3. Create a gender inclusive section on the ▮▮▮▮▮▮ Mobile App that provides students links to the gender equity website, as well as other resources that promote gender inclusion.

3

4. Bring ███████ facilities and athletic participation policies into alignment with NCAA policy, which indicates that intercollegiate athletic programs need to allow students to utilize locker rooms based on their gender identity and not their sex assigned at birth.
5. Create and designate a changing space in the AFC for students who do not feel comfortable using the male or female locker rooms.
6. Explore the feasibility of developing a gender inclusive course as part of the academic curriculum at ████████.

Appendix H

Email, Roster, and PeopleSoft Procedures for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming

Students Memo

████████████████

TO: ████████████████, Chairs, Diversity and Inclusion Council

FROM: Gender and Sexual Violence Prevention Subcommittee

DATE: October 24, 2018

RE: Email, Roster, and PeopleSoft Procedures for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming
         Students

Allowing students to identify the name they wish to be called is an important way that universities can
create a welcoming and inclusive climate for all students. While some campus systems may need to use
students' legal names – such as financial aid documents that are governed by federal requirements – we
know that best practice is to permit students to self-identify wherever possible.

Members of our subcommittee are both personally concerned and have received student concerns
regarding the University's formatting of student rosters and email addresses. Class rosters may not
accurately provide students' chosen names and instead may provide their "dead names." In addition, the
current email format may provide both their "dead" and chosen names—thus "outing" students who have
transitioned or are currently transitioning. We are concerned about the threat to student psychological and
physical wellbeing as this practice creates a micro-aggression that students are forced to contend with on
a daily basis and can lead to bullying and violence. We have already seen evidence of students choosing
not to use their ████ email addresses (which can create its own set of complications for faculty and
administrators).

Our subcommittee is requesting permission to organize meetings to discuss our concerns with key
stakeholders (Student Accounts/Registrar, IT, Student Affairs, etc.) in order to develop an understanding
of the current procedures/policies and to provide recommendations for reducing potential harm to
students.

Please let us know if you have any questions. We thank you for your help and look forward to your
response.

Statement in Support of Non-Discrimination

Statement in Support of Non-Discrimination

Dear ██████Students, Staff & Faculty,

The <u>New York Times</u> recently reported that the Federal Government is considering narrowing the definition of gender exclusively to a binary (male and female). You can read more on the issue and its possible impact on higher education institutions in this <u>Chronicle of Higher Education article</u>.

While this policy change may or may not become a reality, we want to reiterate that does not and will not discriminate on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Our mission and core values commit us to welcoming students of all genders within our campus community and to always strive to create a diverse and inclusive campus that is a positive and safe learning, living, and working environment for all.

In addition, we have proposed to our statewide Association that Pennsylvania private colleges and universities come together to make a collective statement on this issue. We also encourage you to contact your legislators and vote in the upcoming election to make your voice heard on this and other issues that matter to you.

We think it is also important to recognize that the marginalization of trans and gender non-conforming people has led to gender and sexual based violence in our culture. At ██████, the Gender and Sexual Violence Prevention Committee of the Diversity and Inclusion Council and many other campus partners are committed to creating a culture of mutual respect, equity, and justice to prevent gender violence. For more on ██████'s Campus Climate initiatives, please visit: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

If you are a campus member and would like to speak with someone about these issues or need additional support, please do not hesitate to contact <u>Student Affairs</u>, the <u>Diversity & Inclusion Council</u>, the <u>Women's ██████</u>, the <u>Office of Multicultural Affairs</u>, or the <u>Title IX Office</u>.

We continue to stand with our trans and gender non-conforming / non-binary students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members. In support, we would ask anyone who is able to join us and others from the community on the quad at 3 PM today to join in students' advocacy on this matter and to take a photo of support and solidarity.

Finally, to move forward our work in this area of Gender Inclusive Student Policies and Practices, we welcome meeting with individual students and student groups to update them with current initiatives/recommendations and to hear how we can best support our students on campus.

Sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
VP of Student Affairs/Dean of Students
Co-Chair, Diversity & Inclusion Council

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Dean of School of Arts, Science & Business
Co-Chair, Diversity & Inclusion Council

XXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Director, XXXXXXXXXX University Women's Institute
Co-Chair of Gender and Sexual Violence Prevention (GSVP) Subcommittee, Diversity and Inclusion Council

XXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Assistant Professor
Co-Chair of Gender and Sexual Violence Prevention (GSVP) Subcommittee, Diversity and Inclusion Council

XXXXXXXXXXXXXX
President

Appendix J

Gender Inclusive Student Policies, Practices, and On-Going Efforts Memo

███████████████████████

To: ██████████ Assistant Professor, Chair, Subcommittee on Gender & Sexual
Violence Prevention, Diversity and Inclusion Council
██████████, Director of Multicultural Affairs
██████████, Director of Residence Life
██████████, Director of the ██████████

From: ██████████, VP for Student Affairs and Dean of Students & Co-Chairs Diversity and
Inclusion Council

Cc: ██████████, Dean of School of Arts, Sciences and Business & Co-Chair,
Diversity and Inclusion Council
██████████, VP for Enrollment Management
██████████, VP for Marketing and Communications
██████████, VP for Planning, Title IX Coordinator & Secretary of the Board
██████████, President
██████████, Senior VP for Finance and Administration
██████████, VP for Advancement
██████████, VP for Academic Affairs

Date: June 6th, 2019

Re: Gender Inclusive Student Policies, Practices and On-Going Efforts

On October 24th, 2018, the Diversity and Inclusion Council received your
recommendations for making ██████████ a more inclusive campus for students and
community members who identify across the gender spectrum (trans, gender non-binary, gender
queer, and gender non-conforming, etc - TGNC). The time, effort, and research that went into
providing these recommendations to make ██████████ a better place for our TGNC
community is greatly appreciated.

The recommendations were reviewed and discussed by members of the President Council (PC). You have given the Council a thoughtful, considered recommendations and the members of PC have given a similar deliberation that merit your outstanding efforts. Below, please find a report on what is currently in place at ███████████, what steps we are proposing to take before the start of the new academic year, and a suggested process for moving forward to consider outstanding issues.

SUMMARY OF CURRENT PRACTICES / SERVICES / RESOURCES

All Gender Bathrooms on ███████████████████████████**campuse**s.

Currently existing **All Gender Housing & Amenities** include:
- All-Gender restroom facilities are available in every Residence Hall.
- Students are not restricted to requesting roommates based on gender and can request a roommate of any gender.
- The outdated terminology "co-ed" has been removed from all Room Selection information, replaced with the term "all-gender" to better reflect gender identity as a spectrum.
- RAs have been requested to include pronouns on their own door signs and leave space on dorm door decorations to allow students to designate their pronouns. Each building will also have a bulletin board that educates about pronouns, and the topic will be addressed at floor/residence hall meetings.

Health Benefits
All employee health benefits are available to an employee's legal spouse, regardless of gender identity. This has been in place since 2006.

Admissions Gender Identity Policy
Admissions continues to track biological sex at birth, as per federal reporting requirements. Since 2016-2017, the Common Application has given more options to allow students who do not identify as either male or female to better "express their gender identity in several ways including within the Profile page, optional free response text field, as well as in member colleges' specific sections." The Common Application asks students their "sex assigned at birth," rather than gender and includes a "free response box for students to indicate additional information, such as transgender status."

Consistent with enrollment best practices, ███████████'s application, inquiry, and event forms map in a similar fashion as the Common App question – Gender assigned at birth, with Male or Female responses and follow the same logic as the Common App asking the student to tell us more if they are comfortable. Student form responses are tracked in school-defined forms within ███████████'s Student Information System (SIS), CampusVue, including use of the "nickname" field to reflect a student's preferred name.

INITIATIVES TO BE COMPLETED BY AUGUST 31st, 2019

By August 31st, 2019, an updated list of policies, services, and resources available to Transgender Non-Conforming (TGNC) students and community members will be published to ███████████'s Diversity & Inclusion Council website.

Additional initiatives are listed below, by category.

All Gender Bathrooms ███████████████████████████**campuse**s. A list of All Gender Bathrooms will be prepared & made readily available.

Preferred Name on University ID. Complete the policy and procedure for ███████████ members to print their preferred name on their University ID in time for new student arrival this Fall.

Educational Literature on Gender Identity and Pronouns. Actions will include:
- The Office of Student Affairs will have educational literature on gender identity and
- pronouns, as well as preferred pronoun ribbons, available upon request, when printing new Student and Staff IDs.
- A clear process for students to request for their "dead name" to be hidden from public view will be put into writing by July 2019.
- Educational literature on gender binary / preferred name / gender pronouns will be developed and distributed via employee and student handbooks, a topic-specific brochure, and on the Diversity and Inclusion Council website. This literature will include suggested actions to be taken by faculty and staff, including:
  - Listing preferred gender pronouns on email signatures
  - Placing preferred gender pronouns on nametags, as well as where faculty
- and staff can obtain pronoun buttons/ribbons to affix. An email will be sent to the campus community at the start of each semester to inform and provide a gentle reminder about this practice.
- An annual Educational Session/Training around names and pronouns will be established and provided at the opening faculty week and other appropriate times through the academic year. This session may include the following:
  - Providing faculty and staff with the option to include their gender pronouns in their email signature, in website bios, and on their ███████ nametags.
  - A class roster format that includes students' preferred names that could be in place by Fall 2019. Until then we encourage faculty to collect students' names and their gender pronouns at the beginning of the term, rather than calling attendance based on the class roster. A suggested best practice is to call students by their last name, or in small classes, faculty can ask students to introduce themselves; faculty can also share a sheet of paper and ask students to submit their names (with ID number); ask students to share their names and pronouns, record these, and use them.
  - An email will go out at the start of every school year, sharing relevant practices to display respect and inclusiveness, which will include information on gender pronouns and to visit the Office of Student Affairs to pick up educational literature and preferred pronoun ribbons.

Names & Pronouns. A Preferred Name Policy will be drafted and submitted for review and approval by the President Council.

Housing.
- The roommate search feature in StarRez software will be updated so that students can define their own gender and change their name in the system. This will only take place I the StarRez software and will be completed by the students themselves.
- Bathroom signage in all residence halls will be updated so that All-Gender restrooms are properly identified.
- Resident Assistants (RAs) and Orientation Leaders (OLs) will be trained on gender inclusion, particularly TGNC. These programs will be led by TGNC individuals whenever possible.

Amended Syllabus Language

The ▮▮▮▮▮▮ Academic Policy (CAP) Committee has reviewed and recommended amended language for the course syllabus (Statement of Inclusion; Policy Statement and ssibility Statement.) The final syllabus template will be posted on My.▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ when completed.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

We understand your memo included many additional recommendations. The above initiatives are priorities which we hope will be accomplished by the time-line stated. We have also appointed ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮, to facilitate and work in partnership with the chairs of the subcommittee on Gender & Sexual Violence Prevention, Diversity and Inclusion Council and if needed, convene a work group to review progress and complete the projects listed above plus submit additional recommendations in phases.

Please plan to provide a progress report to the Diversity and Inclusion Council by July 31st, 2019 for review and submission to the President Council. Thank you for your hard work and commitment to ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮s value of respect and inclusiveness.

Appendix K

Affirmed Name Policy for Students

AFFIRMED NAME POLICY FOR STUDENTS
Date: *12/5/2019*

████████████ is committed to providing an environment that is inclusive and affirming. As part of this commitment, the University supports students seeking to use their affirmed names.

Affirmed name is the name a person uses that represents (affirms in a positive way) who they are and how they wish to be referred to and identified. Whereas, legal name is the name that is reflected in legal documents, such as birth certificates, social security card, passport, driver's license and other such documents controlled by local, state, or federal agencies. Not everyone who has an affirmed name can change their legal name to their affirmed name.

Providing students with the option to change their name contributes to a safe and non-discriminatory college experience. Reasons for name changes may include identifying as transgender or gender non-conforming; experiencing stalking, violence, or other safety needs; being an international student or other student who wishes to adopt an English language name; being known by a name that is different from their legal name; or having a popular name and wishing to use a different name. Some records may require the use of legal names only, such as all of those associated with federal and medical documentation.

Due to either federal, state, or local policies, to comply with legal standards, ████████████ is restricted to the use of a legal name in the following documents:
- Academic Records, Forms, and Documents including Transcripts and Official Class Rosters
- Financial Aid Records, Forms and Documents
- Payroll and Student Employment Records, Forms, and Documents
- Student Health Insurance Records, Forms and Documents (if purchased)
- SEVIS Records, Forms and Documents (if international student)
- Admissions enrollment management Records, Forms, and Documents
- Any other federal, state, or local records, forms, and documents that require the use of the legal name

If a ████████████ community member declines to recognize a student by their affirmed name, the student should contact the Vice President for Student Affairs & Dean of Students for resolution purposes.

Additional, resources and advocates for students include:
- Gender and Sexual Violence Prevention Subcommittee of the Diversity and Inclusion Council
- Director of Multicultural Affairs
- Director of the Women's Institute
- Academic Deans
- Title IX Coordinator and Deputy Title IX Coordinators
- Executive Director of Counseling and Wellness Services
- Assistant Dean of Students
- Director of Residence Life

Students have the option to request that their affirmed name be used within designated ████████████ technology systems. To complete this process, students must submit the *AFFIRMED NAME REGISTRATION FORM.* This is an online application, which you will log into using your Portal credentials. Students should allow at minimum two weeks from the date they received confirmation of their affirmed name

2019 05 12

change request for necessary ███████████ systems to be updated. After the two-week period if the student encounters a situation where the affirmed name change has not taken placed in the areas noted in this policy, they should follow-up with the Office of Student Affairs.

The change from legal name to an affirmed name will be displayed in all electronic system where technologically feasible:
- Student Portal Username
- Office365 Username and Email Address (█████ University email system)
- Moodle Username (█████ University Learning Management System)
- Unofficial Class Rosters (An official class roster list students' legal name. However, Information Technology (IT) is able to provide a report that list students' affirmed name for faculty members)
- StarRez housing system display name
- █████ University ID
- Athletic systems and websites
- Institutional Advancement management systems

███████████████████████████
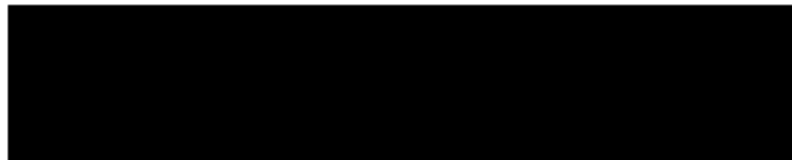
2019 05 12

Open Letter to President

OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT ███████████ ABOUT PROBLESM TRANS STUDENTS FACE THAT ██████████ OVERLOOKS

Dear President ████████,

Students under the trans umbrella face inadequate campus climate, policies, and facilities at ██████████ University which produce inequality. Trans students include Transgender – including Nonbinary trans – plus nonbinary, genderqueer and Gender NonConforming students who may identify as trans (TNGNC).

New affirmed name policy acknowledges problems faced by students who haven't changed their legal name due to various associated hardships. The name TNGNC students were assigned at birth may be a dead name if it's incorrect to their gender. Dead names have persisted on school records, resulting in TNGNC students being deadnamed and misgendered by faculty, staff, and students who assume displayed names are correct. It's positive that administration implemented policy but it's not substantial or transparent enough. The policy asserts that Moodle and my must display deadnames but cites no government policy.

Comprehensive affirmed name policy would still be inadequate. Some who have updated their name with ████████'s Financial Aid Department see their deadname months later because account administrators don't coordinate, forcing students to figure out who fixes each problem, repeatedly communicating their deadname.

Some faculty misgender students in class, modeling behavior even after being asked to use correct pronouns. Students are misgendered between departments – then the next person misgenders them. This tends to cause distress and gender dysphoria. It produces internal conflict between correcting and saying nothing. By correcting, the student does emotional labor so the other person won't get defensive and tell the student to be more understanding. Aspiring allies who haven't been trained subject students to their mistakes, distressing themselves as well as the students.

Fellow students aren't educated on the problem of assuming others' genders, requiring TNGNC students to educate peers. They're often met with pushback, told that they're overreacting.

The all-gender bathrooms are inadequate. TNGNC must leave █████ or the library, or be seen as the wrong gender while using a bathroom that doesn't match their gender identity. All-gender restrooms are often occupied. Lines are common. Hygiene is low, with urine on the toilet and floor and strong odors because exhaust fans turn off or don't function. TNGNC often can't access restrooms during class because it takes too long, whereas students who quickly use binary restrooms return to class better able to learn. It's even worse for students with mobility or gastrointestinal problems at the intersection of gender and disability. TNGNC students often "hold it," which is distracting, dehumanizing, and produces health risks.

Poorer academic outcomes and physical/mental health, suicide, and reduced matriculation occur among TNGNC students in unjust environments. The student health plan's mental healthcare copay is $30. Gender care isn't covered. The deductible is high; a standard sexual health visit can cost over $500 in swab testing. Lack of vision/dental adds to out-of-pocket costs TNGNC students pay, especially those with disabilities.

We appreciate that things have begun to shift, and value the work of the Gender & Sexual Violence Prevention Committee for making policy recommendations and the Diversity & Inclusion Council for pushing to roll out some of these policies. Yet we urgently need significant changes including faculty training, student education, discipline for transphobic conduct, effective student records management, and adequate facilities and healthcare.

Signed, TNGNC students and aspiring allies.

To sign, email ████████@████████.edu from your ████████ email with your affirmed name and, if you want, your pronouns or gender.

[Visit mypronouns.org for information on the importance of pronouns. Signatories' gender/pronouns are posted in the format they provide because that is most accurate to them.]

1. █████████ – they/them/theirs
2. █████████ – a girl
3. █████████ – she/her/hers
4. █████████ – It/Its
5. █████████ – she/her/hers
6. █████████ – she/her/they/them
7. █████████ – He/They
8. █████████ – she/her(s)

201

9.	████████	– she/her/hers
10.		– he/they
11.		– she/her/hers
12.		– she/her/hers
13.		– she/hers
14.		– she/her/hers
15.		– he/him/his
16.		– she, her, hers
17.		– she/her
18.		– she/her/hers
19.		– she/her
20.		– she/her/hers
21.		– she/her/hers
22.		– he/him/his
23.		– She/her/hers
24.		– she/her/hers
25.		– They/he
26.		– she/her
27.		– she/her
28.		– they/them
29.		– she/her/hers
30.		– she/her/hers
31.		– she/her
32.		– he/him/his
33.		– she/her/hers
34.		– she, her, hers
35.		– she/they
36.		– she/they
37.		– she/her/hers
38.		– She/her/hers
39.		– she/her/hers
40.		– she/her
41.		– she/her
42.		– she/her/hers
43.		– She/Her/Hers
44.		– she/her/hers
45.		– She/her/hers
46.		– she/her/hers
47.		– She/Her
48.		– she/her/hers
49.		– they/them/theirs
50.		– she, her, they
51.		– He/Him/His
52.		– She/Her/Hers
53.		– he/him/his
54.		– He, Him, His

55. ███████ – she/her/hers
56. ███████ – she/her/hers
57. ███████ – she/her
58. ███████ – she/her
59. ███████ – She/Her/Hers
60. ███████ – He/Him/His
61. ███████ – She/Her/Hers
62. ███████ – They/Them/Theirs

Appendix M

University Strategic Plan
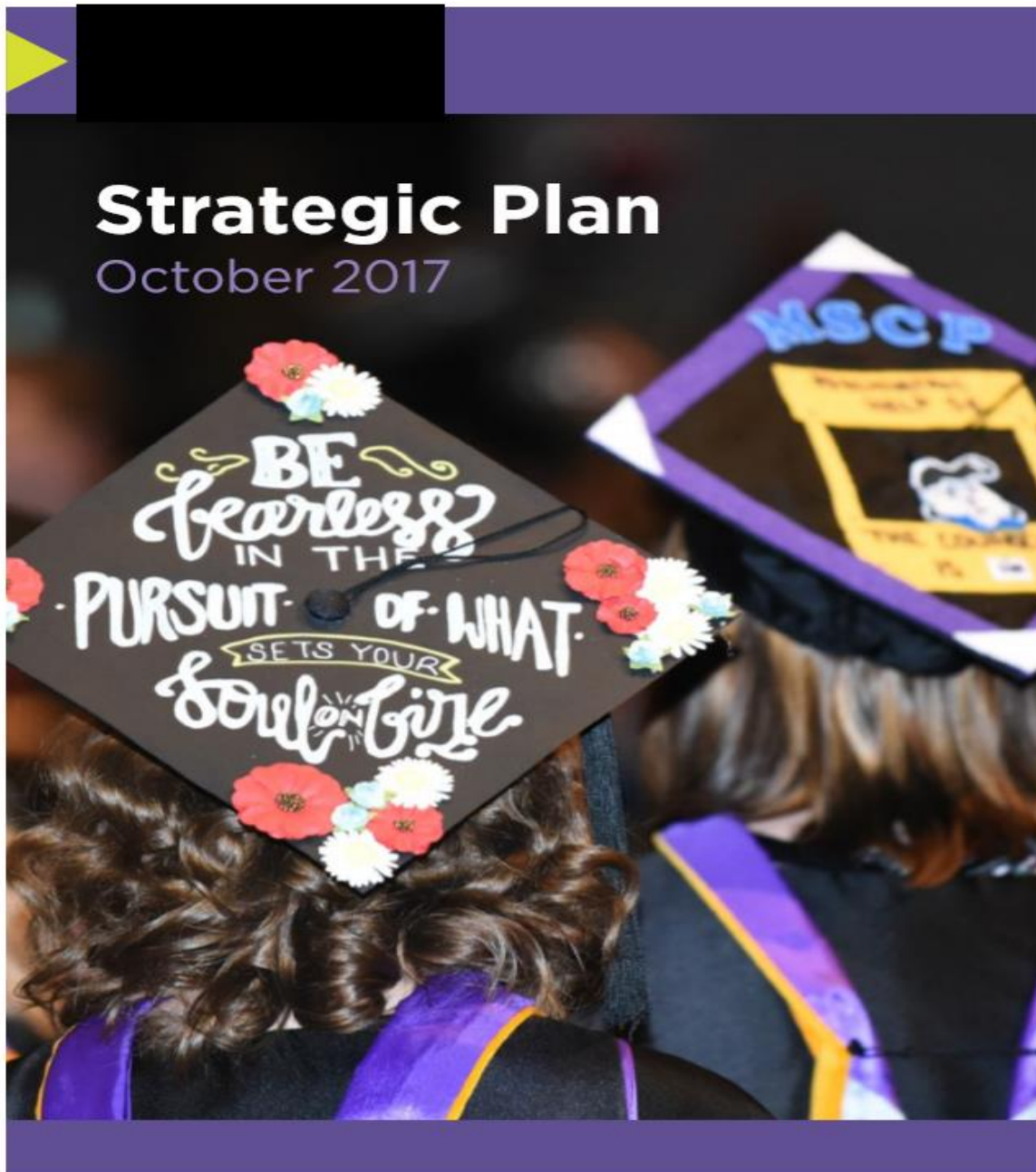
UNIVERSITY VISION

██████ University will be recognized as an outstanding private university whose graduates are sought-after leaders and professionals committed to building a more equitable, healthy, and sustainable global future.

UNIVERSITY MISSION

██████ University prepares its students to build lives of purpose, value, and fulfilling work. Through professional skill development and liberal arts learning, ██████ prepares its graduates to be informed and engaged citizens in their communities; to recognize and respect diversity of culture, identity, and opinion; and to live sustainably.

██████ VALUES

Community & Public Engagement

Sustainability

Culture of Collaboration & Innovation

Health & Wellness

Student Centered

Women's Leadership & Gender Equity

Global & Critical Thinking

Diversity, Inclusion, & Respect

Active & Lifelong Learning

A PLAN FOR OUR FUTURE, ROOTED IN OUR PAST

NEARLY 150 YEARS AGO, ███████ was founded on the ideals of **access and equity** by ensuring the transformative impact of a high-quality liberal-arts education was available to women who were denied access to the educational system at the time.

OVER 20 YEARS AGO, ███████ expanded our educational mission with the addition of professional, graduate programs focused on **improving the health of people** and the quality of patient care.

10 YEARS AGO, building on the legacy of ███████ '29, ███████ once again expanded our educational mission with a University-wide commitment to sustainability and **improving the health of the planet** through the founding of the ███ School of Sustainability & Environment and the creation of ███████ Campus.

3 YEARS AGO, ███████ expanded our educational mission by opening all of our undergraduate programs to men, while strengthening our historic commitment to women's leadership and gender equity by establishing the ███████ University Women's Institute.

OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS, ███████ will build upon our mission of creating educational opportunities and transforming lives through access, equity, health, and sustainability as we:

1. Enhance Academic Excellence and the Student Experience
2. Expand Our Leadership in Sustainability and Health
3. Improve Access and Affordability Through Innovation
4. Deepen Partnerships for Student and Alumni Success
5. Build University Capacity and Capabilities

1. Enhance academic excellence and the student experience

In this time of great change and challenge for higher education and the workforce, ███████ will continue to offer a top quality educational experience, both in and out of the classroom, that prepares students for successful lives and careers.

- **Provide students a high-quality, relevant educational experience through integration of the liberal arts and professional skills**

  ██████'s combination of liberal arts and professional preparation is more relevant and more important than ever. The ██████ Plan, our general-education curriculum, and a range of accelerated paths to graduate degrees will continue to enhance the undergraduate experience as we prepare our students for success.

- **Enrich the undergraduate experience as ████████ grows**

  ██████'s undergraduate programs have grown significantly since becoming coeducational in fall 2015. As growth continues, we must retain another distinction of a ██████ education – the close relationships between faculty and students that bring about individual transformation – while enhancing the overall undergraduate experience through more academic offerings, more co-curricular activities, and additional support for academic and career advising.

- **Provide cutting-edge academic offerings to meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's students**

  As today's economy and society evolve, ██████ is adding to its degree offerings to ensure that students are well prepared for emerging new career opportunities. Five new majors and degrees will be launched over the next five years. We will also continue to rigorously assess all undergraduate programs to ensure that students are learning what they need to succeed not just for graduation, but after, when our graduates are likely to have several careers in their lifetime.

- **Ensure graduate education at ████████ continues to be an institutional strength**

  Graduate programs have been a key to ██████'s strong growth and reputation over the last 25 years. We must retain the distinct characteristics of a ██████ graduate education, which include excellent professional preparation, close relationships between faculty and students, and a focus on active and experiential learning. We must also enhance the graduate student experience through teaching and graduate assistantships, faculty research and artistic endeavors that engage with and address real world challenges, and innovative online learning opportunities.

- **Enhance the quality of students' learning environment, through investing in excellence in teaching and scholarship**

  Excellent teaching, enriched and informed by scholarship, is what brings about student success in the classroom, in research, and in life. We will build on our successful Technology Fellows program-model, which helps faculty integrate the latest technologies into their teaching, to provide additional supports for innovative pedagogy and scholarship that actively engages students in research.

- **Revamp the Honors Program to attract and challenge high achieving and driven students**

  Tutorials, capstone projects, and the ██████ Scholars and STEM scholars program have long provided opportunities for ██████ students to enhance their critical thinking and develop their leadership skills. We will seek to integrate these elements into a new, unified honors program to attract and retain the most academically talented students to ██████, and give them a personal, transformational learning experience.

- **Enhance the Arts**

  Generations of ██████ graduates recall the great value and importance of arts education in their personal and professional growth. A strong arts program is also a key component of a vibrant liberal arts campus environment. Over the next five years, we will invest in and develop partnerships with key players in Pittsburgh's thriving arts scene to strengthen the arts at ██████, including theater, music, dance, and visual arts.

- **Further develop ████████'s historic commitment to developing women leaders and gender equity**

  We will continue to develop the Women's Institute, the Center for Women's Entrepreneurship, and the ███████████████ ████████████████, and to connect them more closely with the core academic offerings of the University, so that ██████ becomes *the* preferred destination for individuals who want to advance gender equity within Pennsylvania and beyond.

- **Foster a campus culture of diversity, inclusion, and respect**

  We will strengthen efforts to create a diverse campus community so that ██████'s students, staff, and faculty reflect as much as possible the diversity of the communities we serve. All members of the ██████ community must feel welcomed to express, critically examine, and debate a wide spectrum of views in an environment of mutual respect.

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List of Institutional Documents Reviewed for Document Analysis

DOCUMENT NAME	DOCUMENT TYPE
Student Handbooks (5) • 2014-2015 Academic Year • 2015-2016 Academic Year • 2018-2019 Academic Year • 2019-2020 Academic Year • 2020-2021 Academic Year	Institutional Publication
Employee Manual	Institutional Publication
Campus Pride Index	External Ranking
Affirmed Name Policy	Institutional Publication
Open Letter to President about Problems Trans Students Face	Student Publication
Program Support for Long Purple Line Research Project: Data Analysis Team	Research Report
A Context Analysis of Gender Inclusive Language in Forms/Policies	Research Report
Housing Survey Article	Student Newspaper
Zero Tolerance for Trump Transgender Ban Articles	Student Newspaper
Non-Gender Specific Bathrooms Article	Student Newspaper
Gender Inclusive Housing Policy	Institutional Publication
All-Gender Restrooms Location List	Institutional Publication
Strategic Plan	Institutional Publication
University Non-Discrimination Policy	Institutional Publication
2020-2021 Student Health Insurance Plan	Institutional Publication
University Website	Online Resource
Gender Inclusive Policies, Practices and Recommendations Memo	Gender Inclusive Task Force Publication
Gender Inclusive Student Policies, Practices, and On-Going Efforts Memo	Institutional Publication
Statement in Support of Non-Discrimination	Institutional Publication
Email, Roster, and PeopleSoft Procedures for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Students Memo	Diversity and Inclusion Council Publication

Appendix O

Interview Consent Form

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Purpose: You have been invited to participate in an interview sponsored by the University under the direction of principal investigator Shawn McQuillan. The purpose of the interview is to discuss your experience at the University and identify the changing or consistent needs of trans* students while pursuing their collegiate studies at the University.

Procedure: As part of this study, you will participate in one 60-minute interview. The principal investigator will ask you a series of questions related to your experiences at the University. If you approve, the interview will be audio-recorded, and the principal investigator will take handwritten notes to record your responses. However, responses will remain confidential and assigned a pseudonym. Participant affirmed, or legal names will not be included in the report.

You can choose whether to participate in the interview, and you may stop at any time during the study. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers to the interview questions. The University wants to hear the many varying viewpoints and would like for to contribute by providing your perspective.

Risks and Benefits: There are no foreseeable risks associated with this research study, and you will not receive any payment for participation. This research project will provide no direct benefit to you; however, your participation will provide information that will be utilized to better understand and ultimately improve the trans* student experience at the University in the future.

Confidentiality: The principal investigator (Shawn McQuillan) will analyze the data, but—as stated above—your responses will remain confidential, and no names will be included in any reports.

Contact: If you have any questions about this study or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact the principal investigator, Shawn McQuillan, at ███████ or the research advisor for this study, Dr. Jill Perry, at ███████. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the University of Pittsburgh Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 412-383-1480. This research study has been approved by the University of Pittsburgh IRB and supported by the ██████ University IRB. IRB consists of a group of people that reviews research studies and protects the rights of people involved in the research.
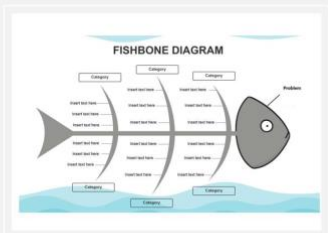
I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the research project described above. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement, and possible risks and inconveniences have

been explained to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. My signature also indicates that I have received a copy of this consent form

Sign name: _____   Date: _____

Print name: _____

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Introduction/Consent Script for Interview:

Thank you for sitting down with me and participating in a research study I am conducting as part of my EdD program at the University of Pittsburgh. The purpose of my research study is to identify the needs and challenges that trans* students encounter while in college, specifically at the University. My name is Shawn McQuillan, and I serve as the principal investigator for this research study. For this 1-hour interview, I appreciate any insights you can provide regarding the needs of trans* students (including yourself) during their collegiate career.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. You can stop the interview at any time or skip any questions. As we speak, I will be recording the interview if you agree and will be writing observation notes in written form. I will keep the recording, notes, and any transcripts confidential and will not share them outside my project group. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this research study, and you will not receive any payment for participation. This research project will provide no direct benefit to you; however, your participation will provide information that will be utilized to better understand and ultimately improve the trans* student experience at the University in the future.

All data received from you will be given a pseudonym, which is a fictitious name. All stored data will be associated with this pseudonym on it and not your affirmed or legal names. All your responses are confidential, and data will be maintained under lock and key. I will not associate the information you provide with your name in reports, but it may be possible for someone to think they can identify you. Upon satisfactory completion of all data collection activities, you will receive a brief synopsis of the findings from the research study.

Based on what we have shared and given these conditions, do you agree to participate in today's interview? [If YES, continue and provide interview consent form. If NO, stop the interview and thank them for their time.] Do you have any questions before we begin? [Field questions, or say you'll reach back after consulting with project team members or course instructors]. I want to audio-record the conversations to check the accuracy of my notes. Do you agree to this? [If they disagree, do not record and be prepared to take detailed notes].

This research is being conducted as part of my dissertation in practice for my EdD. from the University of Pittsburgh. As I conduct this research is under instruction and guidance from Dr. Jill Perry, Associate Professor of Practice, and my research advisor at the University of Pittsburgh. If you have any questions or concerns now or in the foreseeable future, you can

contact me as the principal investigator by phone at ███████ or, my research advisor, Dr. Jill Perry at ███████.

Interviewer:
Shawn McQuillan

Interview Purpose:
To identify the changing or consistent needs of trans* students while pursuing their collegiate studies at the University.

Participants:
Participants will be students who identify as transgender, gender non-conforming, gender non-binary, or genderqueer. For the inquiry study, trans* is utilized as an umbrella term to capture students who do not identify as either a cisgender female or male. Participants will be solicited through a call for volunteers by email, invites to members of the Queer Straight Alliance, and through personal invites from the principal investigator (Shawn McQuillan), who has built extensive relationships with trans* students.

Constructs of Interest:
Perceived Needs- An individual's self-reported needs as someone who identifies as trans* from social, academic, psychological and personal perspectives.

Sections/Flow of the Protocol:

Section 1 – Participant and Context:
1. Please state your affirmed name
2. Please state your pronoun
3. Please state the gender by which you currently self-identify
4. Please state your age
5. Please state your class standing (first-year, sophomore, junior, senior, or graduate) – If an alumnus, state when you graduated.
6. Please state how you would classify your race and ethnicity
7. For this study, I will be maintaining confidentiality by assigning each participant a pseudonym (a fictitious name) as a method to record responses. I can either assign you a pseudonym, or you can select one. Which would you prefer? (If they provide a pseudonym – record that name)

Section 2 – College Adjustment:
1. Tell me about your college adjustment process.
   Probes: How have you adjusted to college? Were there any specific challenges? What was rewarding?

2. What did you have the most anxiety over as you started college?
   Probes: Did your gender identity/expression play a role in any anxiety? If so, how so? What was the most challenging within that first semester?

2. What helped you succeed within your first year of college?
   Probes: Why did it help you succeed? Why do you think your experience would have been different if you were cisgender? Was there a specific office or faculty/staff member that helped?

3. How do you think your college adjustment was in comparison to your peers?
   Probes: Thinking back to friends or classmates who are cisgender or trans* – How did it differ? How was it similar?

4. Do you think to identify as trans* has an impact on your college adjustment and persistence? If so, how?
   Probes: What was your experience as a trans* individual before college? How do you think it impacted your experience?

Section 3 –Student Needs:
1. What resources do you utilize to be successful in college?
   Probes: Are these university or community resources? Do you utilize any outside resources (i.e., family, community services, etc.)? Are there any resources you utilized in the past that you don't any longer – if so, why or why not?

2. How do you cope and navigate the challenges you encounter on-campus?
   Probes: What resiliency strategies have you employed? When stressed or feeling anxiety over an issue, what do you do? How do you interact with your peers, faculty, and staff?

3. Do you feel your needs have changed since you started college? If so, how so, and what changed?
   Probes: If a sophomore or higher – how have your needs changed from your first year? What did you need in high school in comparison to college? What factors do you think have caused your needs to change or remain the same?

4. Do you perceive the University to be a gender-inclusive and affirming environment towards your gender identity?
   Probes: Please tell me why or why not.

5. As a trans* individual, what do you need to be successful at the University?
   Probes: What would help you navigate campus better? Are there specific resources that you utilize? Are there resources that you feel need to be developed? Are there specific needs that you feel are not being addressed as a trans* student?

6. If I asked you to provide a list of five things the University does well in gender inclusion and five things it needs to improve upon what would they be and why?
   Probes: Specific services, programs, or resources?

7. If you must plan one program or event related to gender identity, what would it be and why?

Probes: Would this event be for trans* students? Would this event be to educate about trans* issues?

8. How would you describe your experience as a transgender student on-campus?
    Probes: What is it like to be trans* at the University? How have these experiences been shaped by your gender identity/expression?

Focus Group Activity Email Instructions

Dear Participant,

I hope you are well. I am contacting you regarding the Trans* Student Needs Assessment. I'm writing to see if you would be interested in the next step of the research study, which is a virtual Focus Group. To make it easier and increase confidentiality, I have transitioned the in-person focus group into a virtual exercise. Through this method, Focus Group participants will be able to login to an online platform to complete the activity individually at their own time.

The exercise consists of participants completing an online interactive Fishbone diagram, a cause-and-effect visualization tool used throughout the world by countless organizations. This specific fishbone diagram examines while colleges and universities, specifically ████████ in this case, is perceived as not being an affirming space for Trans* students. As part of the exercise, I have identified eight categories based on research findings on this topic that may contribute to this problem.

As a participant, you would be asked to identify root causes that you believe impact why ████████ may not be Trans* affirming. This exercise will take place in two phases:

PHASE 1:

You will be assigned a participant number and would log in to the online platform. Once logged in, you write the root causes you have identified on post-it notes and place them under the appropriate category. Participants can write as many post-it notes as they would like. If you agree with a post-it note that someone else has written, you will indicate that by placing the number you are assigned at the bottom of it with a + symbol.

Detailed instructions can be found in an online video I created:
██
███████████. Attached is a PDF of the Fishbone you would complete online as a reference. Phase one would ideally be completed by no later than [DUE DATE].

PHASE 2:

After the Fishbone has been completed by all participants and finalized, participants will be sent a link to login again to review the finalized diagram. At that time, participants will be able to add

comments or additions and review and provide possible solutions to address the root causes identified. Phase two would be sent to participants by [DUE DATE]. Detailed instructions would be sent to you by email.

 I hope you are interested in participating in this research activity. If you are, **please email me back, and I can assign you a participant number and send you the link to the online platform**. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Shawn McQuillan
Principal Investigator
Trans* Student Needs Assessment Research Study

EMAIL ATTACHMENT:

Focus Group Activity PowerPoint Instructions

Appendix S

Completed Fishbone Diagram Exercise

Phase 1:

Listed below is the Fishbone Diagram exercise you recently participated in. Please do the following (if applicable):
· Add your comments using the comment feature in the upper right hand corner.
· Add a post it if something is missing or you came up with a new root cause to the problem.
· Put a + and your number on a post it if you agree with what someone posted or would have posted it yourself it wasn't already there.

Fishbone Diagram

Buildings & Facilities
- Not using affirmed names / Pronouns on dorm doors
- Only placing pronouns on the doors of trans students and outing them to their peers +3 +5
- Lack of gender neutral bathrooms that are not single-stalled +5
- 6- Placing students in non-affirming housing (ie "all-women floor") against their request
- 5 - Lack of housing options w/ private bathrooms +6

Programming & Activities
- Trans people outside of chatham alumni are only invited to host events when the event is the topic of their identity and hardship +5
- Lack of intersectionality +3 +5 +6
- 4- Few trans* mentors for students +5

Faculty & Staff
- Using gendered language to refer to groups of people (ie "hello, ladies!") +5 +6 +3
- Registration/Rosters from sites like Moodle or Blackboard having students' deadnames +6 +3
- 4- Tokenism in the classroom +5
- 4- Using binary language when discussing course content and research (without adressing binarism in reseach as a flaw) +3 +6

Student Support Services
- Poor mental health resources +5 +3
- 6- No pathway to report/ deal with transphobia coming from other students (if there was, it needs to be more efficient)
- No legal resources for name / gender change on legal documents +3
- 4- Difficult to indicate queer identity to potential roomates during first year roomate selection +6 +3
- Lack of transparency concerning name change policies

Emergency fund inaccessible for students who are disowned or in financial hardship +3

[redacted] is not an affirming space for Trans* students

- 4- Discomfort when a professor asks class to introduce themselves with pronouns, and you have to do the mental gymnastics of deciding whether or not to out yourself +5 +6 +3
- 5 - Deadname on incoming mail, or affirmed name on Chatham mail (outing someone) +6
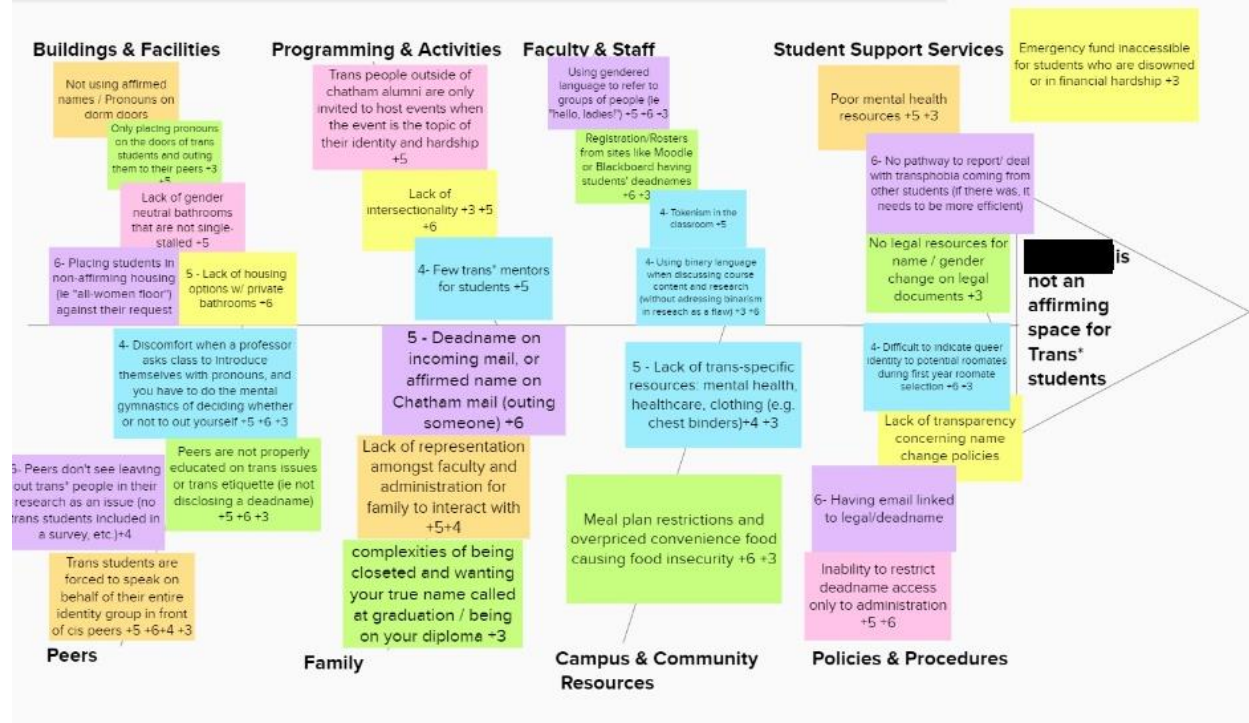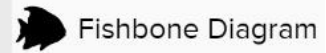- 5 - Lack of trans-specific resources: mental health, healthcare, clothing (e.g. chest binders)+4 +3

Peers
- 6- Peers don't see leaving out trans* people in their research as an issue (no trans students included in a survey, etc.)+4
- Peers are not properly educated on trans issues or trans etiquette (ie not disclosing a deadname) +5 +6 +3
- Trans students are forced to speak on behalf of their entire identity group in front of cis peers +5 +6+4 +3

Family
- Lack of representation amongst faculty and administration for family to interact with +5+4
- complexities of being closeted and wanting your true name called at graduation / being on your diploma +3

Campus & Community Resources
- Meal plan restrictions and overpriced convenience food causing food insecurity +6 +3

Policies & Procedures
- 6- Having email linked to legal/deadname
- Inability to restrict deadname access only to administration +5 +6

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Phase 2:

Prompt: In looking at the Fishbone diagram on the left. What tangible services or resources do you think could make ▇▇▇▇ a more Trans* affirming space? (For example, maybe an online website that list policies and resources, etc.)

6- Let Trans* students choose the name they want in their email, the one displayed on Moodle, and the one sent to family members, and not always have it linked to their legal name. This would allow students to control who they're out to as well (not having mail sent with affirmed name to family) +3

3- Allow currently enrolled trans students to have an active voice and opinion on on-going policies and procedural changes at the university such as a committee or direct line of communication with staff

6- Have better diversity among staff- hire more Trans* faculty and staff, especially in student health and counseling. Or even create a new position that specifically deals with Trans* issues that students can go to. +4 +3

6- Have set repercussions in place for students who are transphobic towards Trans* peers, or students that may be a danger to their Trans* peers. Depending on the severity, either require the student to take a Trans* affirming educational course, or remove them from the school. Trans* students fall under Title IX protection. +4 +5

4- Specifically address transphobia and its consequences in the Honor Code +5 +6 +3

4- Have yearly trainings for professors on how to create an inclusive environment in the classroom (ie. adressing binary research, learning how not to tokenize students, genedered language, proper terminology. Introducing selves with pronouns at the start of the semester, etc. +6

4- Increase trans* specific mental healthcare through the counseling center, and provide tangible resourcrese (ex. gender affirming donated clothes) to transitioning students +3.

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List of Tangible Solutions

Listed below are tangible solutions yielded from this study based on participant feedback, findings that emerged from the data, and best practices in trans* inclusive services identified by existing research and literature.

Research and Assessment:
- Conduct an in-depth campus climate assessment related to sexual and gender identity that examines the perceptions and beliefs of all students, faculty, and staff.
- Mandate departments to assess their existing services and practices to ensure they provide embedded trans* affirming care and support and are inclusive of all marginalized identities.
- Promote and provide opportunities to conduct institutional research around the needs and experiences of trans* individuals at the university.
- Encourage faculty to incorporate research and literature around individuals with trans* and diverse gender identity in their course curriculum. In situations where it does not exist, faculty should name this and provide a disclaimer to their class to ensure they understand that the literature and research being reviewed is lacking in representing the experiences and challenges trans* individuals face.
- Examine the feasibility of creating a track within the women and gender studies program that focuses on trans* issues and rights.

Institutional Policies:
- Develop an institutional restroom and locker room policy that recognizes and affirms individuals' rights to utilize whichever bathroom and restroom that best aligns with their gender identity and expression.
- Revise the Student Honor Code to specifically name and addresses transphobia as a policy violation and develop corresponding education and punitive sanctions.
- Create a classroom attendance-taking policy that is gender inclusive and requires faculty to utilize a process where they do not take attendance using student legal names.
- Review and revise the email and username naming convention. Develop a process where students either self-select their email and username or are assigned one that does not require the full use of a legal name (i.e., Joe.Smith@univeristy.edu could be js456@university.edu). The process should also allow students the flexibility to request a change while enrolled at the University through the existing affirmed name process.
- Develop a policy that requires the University to ask permission before using a student's likeness and image in institutional publications. This same policy should spell out a

method for students to request that their likeness be removed from electronic and printed publications.

- Examine documents and forms that inquire about sex or gender identity and determine if this information is a necessity for records management or deliver of services.
- Develop an intercollegiate athletics and intramural/club sport policies that visibly outlines and names how trans* students can compete and participate. These polices should comply with NCAA rule and regulations.

Online Systems:
- Allows students to select and change the name displayed when they log in to students' portals and online learning tools.
- Develop an online tool that allows students the ability to self-disclose their pronouns and gender identity and include them on the class roster. This same tool should not require pronoun usage or gender identity disclosure, as it should be at the discretion of the individual to disclose their pronouns and gender identity.
- Update the counseling center scheduling system to allow students to select the name they wish to be identified for their appointments.
- Create an online reporting tool for trans* students to submit complaints, concerns, and suggestions. Presently students can submit online complaints and reports to Title IX and Student Conduct, but these reporting tools are not adequately marketed as a resource for trans* students.

Education and Training:
- Develop and implement required gender-inclusive training for all faculty, staff, and student leadership positions. Training should be conducted yearly and provide continuous learning opportunities. Specific departments that have increased interactions and access to current and prospective students should receive targeted training, such as admissions, financial aid, registrar, student affairs, student accounts, career development, accessibility services, dining services, athletics, and international affairs.
- Increase gender identity education, specifically around trans* individual needs and issues. This education should be embedded into existing courses curriculum and new student orientation.
- Sponsor educational programs, such as lectures and campus events, to increase awareness around trans* issues and rights and gender-inclusive etiquette.
- Develop a concentration in the women and gender studies program that focuses on trans* gender identity.
- Require faculty to either identify research and literature that is trans* inclusive or provide a disclaimer for research that does not recognize or acknowledge the needs and perceptions of trans* individuals.
- Educate students on the importance of including perspectives and participants from all identity groups, including trans* individuals, in research projects and studies.
- Develop career and professional development programming that helps trans* students navigate the internship and career search process.
- Design a course within the core curriculum that explores and engages students in dialogue around gender identity and expression.

Inclusive Practices:

- Allow students the option to request to have their affirmed name listed on the graduation booklet and provide students an opportunity to request how they would like their name displayed on their university degree.
- Provide residential students the option to select whether they would like a door decoration that includes their name and pronouns posted on their residence hall or apartment door.
- Market the existing student emergency funds as a resource for trans* students, explicitly spelling out how they can be accessed to support the needs of multiple marginalized identity groups.
- Diversify employee recruitment efforts to increase the representation of trans* individual among faculty and staff.
- Make an intentional effort to invite trans* alumni and guests to all campus events, not just those related to their gender identity.
- Restrict access to legal name or deadname to only offices that need it for legal reasons, such as financial aid and the registrar.
- Incorporate trans* students in developing and revising ongoing policies and procedural changes, especially those related to trans* affirming care and support.

Campus Facilities:

- Increase access and availability of gender-inclusive restrooms, ensuring each building has multiple restroom options.
- Renovate existing gender-inclusive restrooms in residential, academic, and administrative buildings to ensure they are set up and have amenities that promote inclusivity.
- Identify and renovate existing restrooms in academic and administrative buildings so that students have a multi-stall gender-inclusive restroom option.
- Replace restroom signage on gender-inclusive restrooms to indicate either gender-inclusive or all gender, instead of gender-neutral.
- Build or renovate existing residence halls and apartments so that students have an option to obtain a room or apartment where they have their private restroom.
- Create gender-inclusive locker rooms in the fitness center and athletic facilities, including development of single use restroom and locker room facilities. Assess these facilities and the machines and equipment within them to ensure they are affirming and inclusive to all gender identities.

Support Services and Resources:

- Create a physical and virtual LGBTQ resource center/space on-campus to increase social interaction and access to trans* affirming support and resources.
- Hire or designate a staff member responsible for providing support, advocacy, and assistance to trans* and LGB students.
- Provide trans* students access to legal resources to assist individuals who want to change their legal name and gender identity.
- Create a mechanism that allows trans* students to select the housing that best meets their needs and an avenue to submit a complaint if they feel it is not being addressed.

- Develop a process where trans* students experiencing financial hardship can request a single room at the double room rate.
- Increase mental health resources by providing additional training to current counseling staff and hiring a counselor who specializes in providing affirming care to marginalized identities, like trans* individuals.
- Develop a roommate matching resource for trans* students to identify a roommate who is either trans*, LGB, or trans* affirming.
- Partner with local healthcare providers that are trans* affirming and gender-inclusive, such as Central Outreach Wellness Center and Allies for Health.
- Develop a clothing donation program to increase access to gender-affirming clothing for trans* students through the existing essential needs program and professional dress closet.
- Obtain a student health insurance plan that provides access to trans* affirming care and that covers these expenses or minimizes the co-pay cost for enrolled students.
- Create a trans* student mentorship program that partners trans* students with faculty and staff who identify as LGBTQ and are trans* affirming. The same mentorship program could also connect new and returning trans* students through peer mentorship.
- Increase LGTBQ leadership opportunities, including re-establishing the Queer Straight Alliance to ensure trans* and LGB students have an opportunity for social interaction.

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