PROMISING PRACTICES FOR COLLECTING AND MANAGING NAMES, GENDER, PRONOUNS, HONORIFICS, AND SEXUAL IDENTITIES

This resource page was developed by the Gender and Sexuality Campus Center staff team at Michigan State University and is intended to provide information for LGBTQIA2S+ inclusive practices to campus partners. These recommendations are based in current and emerging better practices in the field of LGBTQIA2S+ inclusion.

NAME

A *name* is a person's chosen form of address. A *legal name* is the name listed on a person's legal documentation.

Terms to avoid:

- *Preferred* **name** implies that a person's name is optional.
- *Nickname* implies that a person's name is a casual substitute for their legal name.
- Terms to use:
- Use *Name* when asking for the name a person goes by. If it isn't possible to use *Name*, consider using *Chosen Name*.
- Use *Legal Name* only when you need to use a person's legal name. In most cases, you should be able to use *Name* only.

NAMES FOR UNIVERSITY SYSTEMS
- Allow students, faculty, and staff to select their name for internal university systems, regardless of its alignment with their legal name.
- Name changes should not require legal documentation, such as a legal name change.
- Name changes should be made upon request through one centralized process and shared across university systems.
- Upon entering a new name to university systems, the University should provide information to the user about where those changes will and will not be reflected.
- For example, upon changing their name, a student should be notified that while the updated name will be used across university systems, the legal name will continue to be used when legally required.
- Where not specifically prevented by law, use names, rather than legal names, in all contexts and university systems.

NAMES FOR SURVEYS AND ASSESSMENT
- Allow students, faculty, and staff to select their name, regardless of its conformation to their legal name.
- Do not collect data on legal names if that information is neither legally required nor relevant.

REQUESTING NAME INFORMATION
When asking for a person's name:

- First ask for their Name

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- Then, only if you need this information and cannot access it another way, ask for their legal name. Do not ask for legal name if you do not need it.

Possible models include:

- Name: _____
- What is your name? _____
- Name: _____
  Legal Name: _____
- Name (if different from legal name): _____
  Legal Name: _____

GENDER

Gender is the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, identities, and attributes that a given society deems masculine or feminine. For the purposes of this document, when we refer to gender we are focusing on gender identity, a person's internal understanding of their gender and the language they use to describe this understanding. This is distinct from their sex.

Legal gender refers to the gender marker on a person's legal documents (such as birth certificate or personal identification). This is frequently, but not always, the same as their *birth-assigned sex*.

Birth-assigned sex, legal gender, and gender are not interchangeable terms.

Terms to avoid:

- "Preferred gender" implies that gender is a personal preference rather than an identity.
- *Male* and *Female* should not be used as gender terms; they refer to birth-assigned sex.

Terms to use:

- Use *gender* when asking for a person's gender. In most instances, you should prioritize gender over legal gender or birth-assigned sex.
- Use *legal gender* when asking for their legal gender marker, but only ask this if it is necessary. The University already captures the legal gender of staff, faculty, and students.
- Use *birth-assigned sex* when asking for the sex they were assigned at birth, but only ask this if it is necessary. In general, it is best to avoid asking this question.

GENDER FOR UNIVERSITY SYSTEMS
- Allow students, faculty, and staff to self-report gender(s) for internal campus records and University systems.
- When asking users to self-report their gender, include definitions (in writing or as hover-over text) of terms.
- Changes to gender should not require legal or medical documentation.
- Changes to gender should be made through one centralized request and shared across University systems.

- Upon entering new gender information to university systems, the University should provide information to the respondent about where those changes will and will not be reflected.
    - For example, on changing their gender with university systems, respondents should be notified that their legal gender will still be reported to the federal government.
- Legal gender information should only be visible to people for whom that information is legally required.
- Birth-assigned sex information should only be visible to people for whom that information is legally or medically required.
- If you include the identity term "transgender," you should also use the term "cisgender."

GENDER FOR SURVEYS AND ASSESSMENT
- Allow students, faculty, and staff to self-report gender(s) for surveys.
- Provide people with a fill in the blank **or** an expansive list of genders to select from, including a fill-in-the-blank option and the opportunity to select more than one gender term.
- When providing a set list of gender terms to select from, include definitions (in writing or as hover-over text) of terms.
    - If you choose to include "Two-spirit" in your list of gender terms, please state the two-spirit identities are from native and indigenous communities and are an identity term that should only be claimed by native people.
- In analyzing demographic data, gender should be prioritized over legal gender.
    - For example, in analyzing responses from women students in a departmental survey, we should isolate respondents who have listed their gender, not legal gender, as "woman." Both Trans Women and Cisgender women would be considered "Women."
- If you do not plan to break out your data based on gender, *do not ask for gender in your demographics section*.
- Do not collect data on legal gender if that information is neither legally required nor relevant.
- Again, if you include the identity term "transgender," you should also use the term "cisgender." Not including cisgender implies that cisgender identities are more real and valid than transgender identities.

REQUESTING GENDER INFORMATION
When asking for gender:

- First, ask for their gender.
- When possible, use a text-limited box.
- If you need to provide terms, please use the model below and allow people to select as many options as apply.
- Then, only if you need this information and cannot access it another way, ask for their legal gender. Do not ask for legal gender if you do not need it. Please remember the University already captures legal gender.

Possible models for asking gender:

- What is your gender? _____
- Gender? _____
- Gender: (Please select all that apply)
    - woman
    - man
    - cisgender
    - transgender
    - non-binary

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- o genderqueer
- o gender non-conforming
- o agender
- o two-spirit
- o prefer not to specify
- o enter your own: _____

Possible models for asking legal gender

- Legal Gender: _____
- Select your legal gender:
  - o Male
  - o Female
  - o X

Subjective	Objective	Possessive	Reflexive	Examples
She	Her	Hers	Herself	She walked the dog. She walked her dog. That dog is hers.
He	Him	His	Himself	He cooked dinner. He cooked his dinner. That meal is his.
They	Them	Theirs	Themself	They drove the car. They drove their car. That car is theirs.
Ze	Hir	Hirs	Hirself	Ze painted the picture. Ze paints hir picture. That picture is hirs.
Per	Per	Pers	Perself	Per went shopping. Per went shopping by perself. That shopping bag is pers.
Fae	Faer	Faers	Faerself	Fae turned on the light. Fae turned on faer light. That light is faers.

PRONOUNS

A *pronoun* is a word that refers to a person in place of their name.

PRONOUNS FOR UNIVERSITY SYSTEMS
- Allow students, faculty, and staff to self-select the pronouns they use for themselves within campus records and university systems.
- Changes to pronouns should not require legal or medical documentation.
- Changes to pronouns should be made through one centralized request and shared across university systems.
- Pronouns should appear on course and grade rosters and advisor lists and should be used in all contexts and university systems.
- Pronouns should not be included in the campus online directory without the permission of the individual.

PRONOUNS FOR SURVEYS AND ASSESSMENT
Do not collect data on pronouns if that information is not relevant.

REQUESTING PRONOUNS

- Do not ask for "preferred pronouns."
- Instead, ask for "pronouns" or "personal gender pronouns."

Possible models for asking gender:

- What are your pronouns? (Please select all that apply)
    - She/her/hers
    - He/him/his
    - They/them/theirs
    - Enter your own: _____

HONORIFICS/SALUTATIONS

An **honorific or salutation** is a title denoting respect and is sometimes aligned with a person's gender. We will use the term *honorific* for the remainder of this section.

Do not automatically populate an honorific for a person based on their gender identity. For example, if Jill (she/her/hers) has selected "woman" and "cisgender," do not automatically assign "Ms." to Jill. If Guillermo (they/them/theirs) has selected nonbinary, do not automatically assign "Mx." to Guillermo. Allow Guillermo and Jill to select the honorific that best suits each of them.

See the appendix for examples of gender terms that may be used in university data collection.

HONORIFICS FOR UNIVERSITY SYSTEMS

- Allow students, faculty, and staff to select honorifics for internal campus records
- Because some people do not feel comfortable being addressed with honorifics, provide them the option of using no honorifics.
- Changes to honorifics should be made through one centralized request and shared across University systems.

REQUESTING HONORIFIC INFORMATION

Do not assume someone's honorific based on their gender or pronouns.

Possible models for asking honorifics:

- What is your honorific? _____
- What is your honorific?
    - Dr.
    - Ms.
    - Mrs.
    - Mr.
    - Mx.
    - Rev.
    - Enter your own: _____

SEXUAL IDENTITY

Sexual Identity refers to the language a person uses to describe themself as a sexual being. This is the preferred term for sexual orientation. One's sexual identity may or may not align with one's sexual behavior or sexual attractions. Sexual identity is distinct from gender identity, and an individual may use multiple sexual identity terms in different contexts. If collecting demographic data on sexual identity, allow for multiple responses.

REQUESTING SEXUAL IDENTITY INFORMATION

Possible model for asking for sexual identity information:

- Sexual Identity (select all that apply):
    - Asexual
    - Bisexual
    - Demisexual
    - Gay
    - Lesbian
    - Pansexual
    - Queer
    - Questioning or unsure
    - Same-gender loving
    - Straight
    - Prefer not to specify
    - Enter your own: _____

RESOURCES

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