

Tips for Creating LGBT-Inclusive Classrooms

Classrooms that are welcoming and productive learning environments for students of all gender identities and sexual orientations are consistent with GVSU's institutional commitment to diversity and inclusion.

A note on pronouns

You have an opportunity to set a classroom tone at the beginning of the semester that makes all of your students feel welcome, validated, and included. Remember that identity is complex, and you cannot tell a person's gender identity just by looking at them. We encourage you to normalize a practice of not assuming names or pronouns. Many students will use familiar pronouns, either "she/her/hers" or "he/him/his," but others may use "they/them/their" or other gender neutral pronouns. Using "they/them" pronouns to refer to a single person has been common in vernacular English for a long time, but it may take some practice!

To create inclusive classrooms, respect pronouns even when you make mistakes or feel uncomfortable doing so. If you make a mistake, acknowledge it, apologize, and move on. See also, gvsu.edu/lgbtrc/classroom.

Note that we do not use the word "preferred" when referencing people's names or pronouns. Describing names and pronouns as "preferred" implies that they are optional. Instead of "preferred name," you might refer to a student's name, use name, or (if they have used the new GVSU process) myName. Similarly, instead of "preferred pronouns," you might refer to a student's pronouns or the pronouns they use.

On the first day of class

- Create opportunities for students to tell you what name and pronouns they use.
- Model name and pronoun use through your own introduction: "My name is Tony Matthews. Please call me Professor Matthews. My pronouns are she, her, and hers."
- Take steps to protect students' privacy by, for example, not reading first and last names off of your roster.
- Emphasize that your classroom is a place where all identities are respected.
- Add information to your syllabus about how and where students can access information about GVSU's myName process: gvsu.edu/lgbtrc/names. This new process allows GVSU students, faculty, and staff to use a name other than their legal name in many areas of campus. However, we still encourage faculty not to pull student information from Banner rosters, in part because those will continue to reflect legal name only. If a student has indicated a myName, it should show up both on Blackboard and under GVSU Faculty/Staff Additional Student Information in Banner (<https://www.gvsu.edu/banner.htm>).

After the first day

- Use the name and pronouns students ask you to use and correct mistakes.
- Avoid segregating or grouping students by sex, gender, or other identity.
- Work to minimize hurtful or derogatory speech in your classroom.
- Remember that no student can speak on behalf of an identity group.
- Avoid referring to students as "Mr," "Miss," "ladies," "gentlemen," "Sir," etc
- Avoid making assumptions about sexual orientation and gender identity. Pay attention to where such assumptions might crop up in your conversations and make intentional shifts to use open language instead. Examples of more open language include the following: Instead of "boyfriend" or "wife" consider "partner" or "significant other," and remember that not all people experience sexual or romantic attraction. Instead of "mother" or "father" consider "caregiver," recognizing that not all people who care for children are their parents or identify in the gender binary.

Outside of Class

- Attend LGBT Resource Center trainings and programs.
- Take responsibility for educating yourself on terminology and concepts around gender identity and sexual orientation.
- Familiarize yourself with campus, state, and national issues impacting the LGBTQIA+ community.
- Report any incidents of bias or harassment. For information about GVSU's policies and links to reporting forms, see gvsu.edu/reporting.
- Reach out to us with questions or to request a consultation!

Participate in Queer & Trans 101: A Training for Allies.
Visit gvsu.edu/sprout or gvsu.edu/lgbtrc to learn more.
Contact us at lgbtcenter@gvsu.edu, (616) 331 - 2530, or visit us Monday - Friday 9 am - 6 pm 1161 Kirkhof Center

