

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, <http://www.gvsu.edu/lgbtrc/classroom-best-practices-182.htm>.

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.
- Avoid referring to students as "Mr," "Miss," "ladies," "gentlemen," "Sir," etc.

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.
- Remember that you can't tell a person's gender or sexual orientation just by looking at them.
- Work to minimize hurtful or derogatory speech in your classroom.
- Remember that no student can speak on behalf of an identity group.
- Report any incidents of bias or harassment. For information about GVSU's policies and links to reporting forms, see www.gvsu.edu/reporting.htm.

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.

Participate in Queer & Trans 101: A Training for Allies.
Visit gvsu.edu/sprout or gvsu.edu/lgbtrc to learn more.

