

Pronouns, Names, and Gender Inclusivity in the Classroom

Names and inclusive language are an essential piece to mattering within any environment. Shepherd University's non-discrimination policy includes gender identity and as such we encourage faculty to consider inclusive language and procedures when addressing issues of gender, gender identity, and gender expression within the classroom. The roster is the official names of students based on state and/or international documents. These documents are essential for record keeping, but not essential when creating a welcoming atmosphere in the classroom, lab, studio, or any other learning environment. Two easy ways to increase mattering around gender in the classroom are:

1. Ask the preferred name someone chooses to be called. It could be a middle name, a shortened version of a name, a preferred new name, or a nickname. Respect comes from honoring the name that someone else has chosen even if it may be more difficult to remember at times.
2. Practice using pronouns that each student prefers to use. The complexity of gender encourages the use of standard pronouns, but also adopts the less gendered versions of pronouns such as zhe, xe, hir and the plural version (they, them, their) to address an individual as well.

These steps may seem like simple tasks to perform in the classroom, and in fact they are, but while simple to manage on the part of a faculty who holds power in the classroom, they set an important tone for students and create the beginnings of respect and mattering to the students most impacted based on their own gender identities.

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