VISION

To ensure equal access to employment and educational opportunities in support of the university’s commitment to equal opportunity, affirmative action, and diversity.

MISSION

Iowa State University’s Office of Equal Opportunity is committed to promoting a working and learning environment free of discrimination or harassment by complying with all federal, state and local laws pertaining to anti-discrimination, the American with Disabilities Act, and Title IX. To that end, we work toward a campus climate that is supportive of equity through complaint resolution, advice, education, outreach, and intervention.

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Hello Iowa State Community,

I was overwhelmed by the task of discussing something so massive and so fluid in a newsletter form. I have, during my time as the Assistant Director of the Margaret Sloss Center for Women and Gender Equity, given a few workshops on gender--specifically on understanding and creating space for gender diversity in programming and community organizing. These hour-long workshops are full of questions that encourage attendees to think about themselves in relation to gender, the life-long experience of gender, and how to support gender diversity.

It is important to recognize that every individual person experiences their gender differently. I often ask people who attend my workshops, “What is gender?” to give and share all the different understandings we have of gender in our society. To me, gender and the understanding of gender in our daily lives is always changing, so it would be reasonable to say that gender in the workplace and in the classroom is also always changing. It is also important to note that Indigenous people and cultures around the world have their own social structure for gender. A binary gender system consisting of two genders--man and woman--is not universal. I also want to acknowledge that discussions on gender are not independent of discussions of race, socio-economic status, ethnicity, size, and the many other intersections of identities we have as people. I invite you, my community, to have this conversation with me, to learn and talk about gender, and to develop a workplace and classrooms that supports the experiences and individuality of your community here at Iowa State.

So, where do I start? I have chosen to start with pronouns and resources for sharing pronouns. These resources are neither exhaustive nor perfect, and I encourage you to think critically and explore the expansive, and constantly changing field of gender studies, if you are so inclined. The last thing I would like to share is the Margaret Sloss Center for Women and Gender Equity offers programs and opportunities to continue the conversation with us about gender equity on campus.

Sincerely,
Andra Castle
they/them/theirs
Assistant Director of the Margaret Sloss Center for Women and Gender Equity

Pronouns Resources:
https://sloss.dso.iastate.edu/resources/pronouns
https://www.diversity.iastate.edu/who/gsdi/pronoun
https://center.dso.iastate.edu/resources
https://www.mypronouns.org/
In the English language, pronouns are used often in place of a proper noun to talk about someone in the third person. Pronouns are essentially another form of someone’s name, yet we often assume someone’s pronouns and imply their gender based on their appearance. Like a name, we do not know what pronouns someone uses without asking them and no one knows what pronouns we use without telling them. Making assumptions about pronouns is disrespectful just like calling someone by the wrong name.

It is important that all people take steps to limit assumptions about pronouns. You cannot determine the pronouns a person uses by looking at them. Sharing your pronouns when you meet someone new, having pronouns in your email signature, and putting pronouns on your business cards are all ways to limit assumptions about pronouns. The Office of the Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion has a pronoun project with guidelines for including pronouns on university printed materials and email signatures. The Margaret Sloss Center for Women and Gender Equity and The Center for LGBTQIA+ Student Success have web resources for more information on pronoun usage.

The relationship between gender and pronouns is implied. When we use pronouns the gender of the pronouns is implied but language is limited and using pronouns to describe gender is not perfect. For example, the pronouns she and he often imply a woman and a man, respectively, but people can use she and he pronouns and may/may not identify as a woman or a man. Additionally, people can have other pronouns besides she or he as a way to better reflect their gender identity. Pronouns like they/them/their, zi/zim/zirs, sie/hir/hirs and many others. These pronouns are all grammatically correct to use when referring to a singular person. Most importantly, if a person shares their pronouns with you those pronouns, like their name, are the way you must refer to them. Using pronouns you are not used to or familiar with will require practice and mistakes will happen. If you make a mistake and refer to someone using incorrect pronouns, apologize for your mistake, use the correct pronouns, and continue to work on using the correct pronouns. Intentionally using the incorrect pronouns when referring to someone is harassment.

www.policy.iastate.edu/policy/discrimination#Defined
Engage in conversations and resources around you: Margaret Sloss Center for Women and Gender Equity and The Center for LGBTQIA+ Student Success at Iowa State are a couple places that provide an extensive range of services and provide advocacy for the community. Centers like these may have ideas about how to address homophobia in the classrooms and other workplaces, they may also be able to provide educational materials and serve as a link to other local organizations that provide services. The Chronicle of Higher Education has a video called, "Ask Me: What LGBTQ Students Want Their Professors to Know", where transgender and gender-nonbinary students share what keeps them from feeling safe and thriving on campus. This video can be a first step into learning and understanding how people of the LGBTQIA+ community feel and actions to take to increase the comfort and safety of all people in a workplace or classroom.

Creating gender inclusive environments may include updating the ways we introduce ourselves in professional settings and managing our work spaces so that they are accessible to our coworkers and guests. An example of this practice includes adding one's pronouns to email signatures, pre-printed nametags and business cards, or leaving space for people to add their own pronouns to name tags for conferences, meetings, and events. The same technique can be used for someone's preferred name. Refrain from using gendered language that might mis-gender someone. Substitute gendered references such as “you guys,” “ladies and gentlemen,” “ma’am” or “sir,” with non-gendered terms like “you all,” “folks,” “everyone,” or simply use a person’s first name.

Take the time to educate yourself. There are so many resources available from books to articles to guides from LGBTQIA+ nonprofits, as well as podcasts and documentaries. Here are a couple examples: “Beyond the Gender Binary” by Alok Vaid-Menon, Gender Identities Around the World article by Madison Mason, and Gender Stories podcast by Alex Iantaffi. Knowing about various cultures, LGBTQIA+ history, and being conscious of societal shifts will help with becoming more informed about others in everyday life and on campus. Although it is great to ask questions and have open discussions, it is not the responsibility of people in the LGBTQIA+ community to educate you. Professionals are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. Utilize the resources referenced and do your own research exploration. If you have further questions you can't find the answers to, contact the Center at center@iastate.edu and the Sloss Center at slosscenter@iastate.edu


Gender and Sexual Diversity Initiatives: https://www.diversity.iastate.edu/who/gsdi
Key Terms to Discuss Gender with Inclusivity

Gender vs. Sex

Many people conflate the terms gender and sex, using them interchangeably when the words are defined in distinct ways. To discuss gender in a more inclusive and unbiased way, knowing and acknowledging the difference between gender and sex will create room in your speech for all ISU students, staff, and faculty, including those who are non-binary, gender non-conforming, and transgender.

Sex

The social construction of a binary system (male/female) based on a collection of biological traits and factors, either known or assumed. Sex is usually defined as relating to reproductive organs, appearance of genitalia at birth or earlier, chromosomes, hormones, and/or secondary sex characteristics (i.e. breast development, body hair, etc.). Sometimes referred to as “biological sex,” it is important to keep in mind that sex is a cultural construct as much as it is biological. The fact that dominant Western culture prescribes a binary system with only two sexes obscures other ways to conceptualize sex, and ignores people who do not neatly fit into the categories “male” and “female.”

Gender

The social construction of masculinity, femininity, and other gender categories (i.e. androgyny, “third sex,” etc.) in a specific culture. It involves gender assignment (the gender one is assigned at birth or earlier), gender roles (the social expectations imposed on someone based on their gender), gender attribution (how others perceive someone’s gender), gender identity (how someone defines their own gender), and gender expression (how someone expresses their gender).”

Gender Identity

This is a component of gender that refers to a person’s psychological sense of their gender. It is important to remember that gender identity is not only a term used for non-binary or trans people. All people have a gender identity. It is important to include words like cisgender (a term for people whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth) in everyday language as well as transgender and non-binary to ensure inclusion of other gender nonconforming people.

Gender Expression

This is how a person publicly expresses or presents their gender. It can include the style in which a person wears their hair, uses make-up, dresses, or exhibits mannerisms.
Marsha P. Johnson was born Malcolm Michaels, Jr. on August 24, 1945 in Elizabeth, New Jersey. Johnson experienced a difficult childhood when she started wearing women's clothing at an early age, she was quickly reprimanded due to her families beliefs. Johnson moved to Greenwich Village in New York City after graduating from high school. In New York, Marsha struggled to make ends meet. However, she found joy as a drag queen amidst the nightlife of Christopher Street. Johnson designed all of her own costumes (mostly from thrift shops). She quickly became a prominent fixture in the LGBTQIA+ community serving as a “drag mother” by helping homeless and struggling LGBTQIA+ youth and touring the world as a successful drag queen.

Marsha P. Johnson was an African American transgender woman who was an LGBTQIA+ rights activist and an outspoken advocate for trans people of color. Johnson spearheaded the Stonewall uprising in 1969 and along with Sylvia Rivera, she later established the Street Transvestite (now Transgender) Action Revolutionaries (STAR), a group committed to helping homeless transgender youth in New York City.

An eccentric woman known for her fun hats and glamorous jewelry, she was fearless and bold. Whenever she was asked what the “P” in her name stood for and when people pried about her gender or sexuality, she quipped back with “pay it no mind.” Her forthright nature and enduring strength led her to speak out against injustices. She was tragically found dead on July 6, 1992 at the age of 46. Her life has been celebrated in numerous books, documentaries and films, one being, *The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson*, which can be seen on Netflix.
“We should indeed keep calm in the face of difference, and live our lives in a state of inclusion and wonder at the diversity of humanity” - George Takei

- Starting August 24th, employees can re-take Title IX Training on Learn @ ISU
- Reminder: masks are required for the protection of everyone!
- Get Involved at Sloss sloss.dso.iastate.edu/programs---
events:
Feminist Fridays each week this summer with Margaret Sloss Center for Women and Gender Equity
- Want to guest write for OEO Newsletter? Call or email us with the contact info provided below

Shout out to Andra Castle at Margaret Sloss Center for their help drafting this month's newsletter. Many thanks from OEO!!!

Keep an eye on our social media for more resources and ways to educate oneself on gender identity!

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