



UMass Boston Pronoun Policies and Practices for Staff

Georgianna Meléndez, PhD

Pronouns: She/Ella

Assistant Chancellor, Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In partnership with: Registrar's Office, Student Affairs, UITS

NOTE: This presentation borrows from the UMass Amherst materials.

*Used with permission.

Gender Identity and Expression: The Basics

The University of Massachusetts Boston is committed to **validating** and **valuing** the gender identity and expression of members of the campus community.

Gender identity refers to an individual's internal sense of gender, regardless of the sex assigned to them at birth or the sex designation on their legal documents. (*Linguistic and descriptive*)

Gender expression is defined as the way in which a person expresses their gender identity, typically through appearance, dress and behavior. (*Performative*)

Why Pronouns are important?

- Respecting gender identity and expression affirms an individual's existence.
- Misgendering retraumatizes and leads to the person feeling disrespected, invalidated and marginalized.
- What seems like a minor mistake happens over and over.
- As an institution that is committed to the inclusion of historically underrepresented groups and ensuring a respectful, safe, and inclusive campus for all members of the community, UMass is working to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to indicate their pronouns and to have their pronouns be respected.

Inclusive Identity Project

- **Project Sponsors** – Multi-campus representation from Registrar Offices, Student Affairs and Offices of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
- **Goal** – deliver a more inclusive, respectful and welcoming experience for *all Student Identities* that includes development of necessary processes, practices and support systems to maintain that environment.
- **Objectives** –
 - Partner with UITS, Dartmouth and Lowell campuses to review best practices for collecting **Inclusive Identity** data and modify existing or create new Student Self-Service fields in WISER.
 - Perform Campus Readiness activities to support these values and notify campus stakeholders of changes so they can prepare to assist Students where needed.

Pronouns: Definitions

- **Gendered pronouns** specifically reference someone's gender: he/him/his
- **Non-gendered or non-binary pronouns** are not gender-specific and are often used by people identifying outside the male/female binary
 - Ex: *Jadzia identifies as genderqueer; **they** do not see **themselves** as either female or male.*

Pronouns:	In a sentence:
she/her/hers	She wants you to use her pronouns.
he/him/his	He wants you to use his pronouns.
ze/hir	Ze wants you to use hir pronouns.
they/ them/ theirs	They want you to use their pronouns.
co/cos	Co wants you to use cos pronouns.
No pronoun/name (use the person's name instead of a pronoun)	_____(name) wants you to use _____(name) pronouns.
xe/xem/xyr	Xe wants you to use xyr pronouns.
hy/hym/hys	Hy wants you to use hys pronouns.

- **Any pronouns:** individuals who do not care which pronouns others use for them or want others to use for them or want others to vary their pronoun use for them. It is best to ask which options the person desires.
- **Name only:** Individuals who do not use pronouns and want to be known by their name only.
- *Choose not to disclose*

WISER – Class Roster/Reports in Faculty/Advising Centers

Class Roster

2022 Fall | Regular Academic Session | University of Mass Boston | Undergraduate

ENGL 101 - 01 (1002)
Composition I (Lecture)

Days and Times	Room	Instructor	Dates
----------------	------	------------	-------

*Enrollment Status [Email this roster](#)

Enrolled Students Personalize | Find | First 1-16 of 16 Last

Select	ID	Name	Pronoun	Grade Basis	Units	Program and Plan	Level
--------	----	------	---------	-------------	-------	------------------	-------

Report ID: SRCLSRST University of Massachusetts Boston Page No. 1
Institution: UMBOS **CLASS ROSTER REPORT** Run Date 08/30/2022
Run Time 10:46:52

Term/Session: University of Mass Boston
Course:
Class#/Section:
Instructor:
Class Dates:

ENROLLED Students

Student ID	Name	Pronoun	Units	Program	Academic Plan	Note
------------	------	---------	-------	---------	---------------	------

How to Use the Pronoun Information

- In interacting with a student, it is unlikely you will have a reason to refer to them in the third person. But if you need to do so, be sure to see if they have pronouns listed and always use those pronouns.
- In interacting with a parent/guardian, **do not** use the pronouns listed, if these pronouns are “ze/zir,” “xe/xem,” or “the opposite” of the sex assigned to them (i.e., someone assigned female who uses “he/him” or someone assigned male who use “she/her”), **until** you hear how the parent/guardian genders their child. To do otherwise might out that student to their parent/guardian. Until you hear how the parent/guardian genders their child, you should use “they/them” as generic pronouns, the student’s name, and phrases like “your child” and “the student.”
- If a parent/guardian uses the pronouns listed, begin to do so likewise. If the parent/guardian misgenders their child, do not correct them. You can continue to use “they/them,” the student’s name, and phrases like “your child” and “the student” so that you do not misgender the student too.

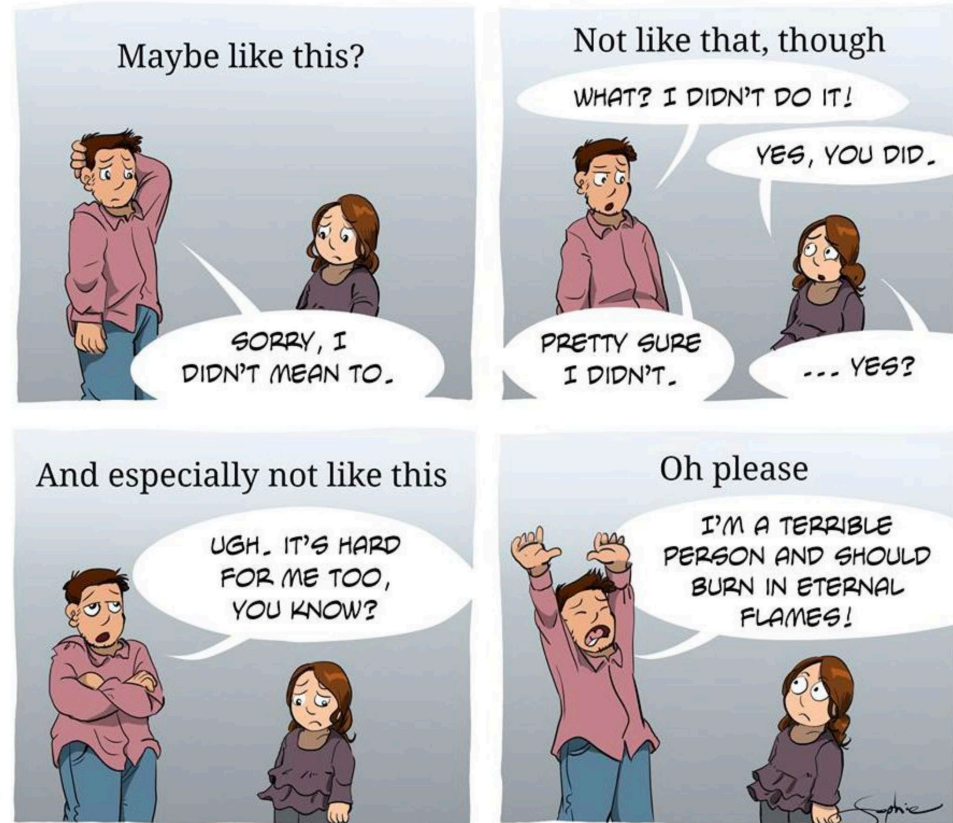
Misgendering Mistakes

- The best thing to do if you realize you just used the wrong pronoun for someone in a conversation with them is to say something right away, such as “**Sorry, I meant they.**” **Fix it**, but do not call special attention to the error. If you realize your mistake after the fact, apologize to the person at your next opportunity.
- **Do not go on and on** to the misgendered person about how bad you feel that you messed up or how hard it is for you to get it right. It is inappropriate and makes the person who was misgendered feel awkward and responsible for comforting you, which is not their job. It is your job to remember people’s pronouns.

Misgendering Mistakes

If someone indicates to you that you have misgendered another person, thank them for letting you know, as correcting someone is an act of care and can be risk-taking.

How to react
when you misgender a trans person



Sophie Labelle

What If Someone Else Mistakenly Uses the Wrong Pronouns for a Person?

- In most cases, the best thing to do if you hear someone misgender another person is to gently correct them without further embarrassing the individual who has been misgendered. You can say something, such as “**Actually, Xena uses she/her pronouns for herself,**” and then move on. If a person refuses to use the appropriate pronouns for someone, **do not ignore it.** It is important that the harassment of others not be tolerated. It may be appropriate to speak to the person in private to correct the misgendering behavior.
- It may also be appropriate to check-in with the person who has been misgendered and say something, such as “**I noticed that you were being referred to by the wrong pronouns earlier, and I know that this can be really hurtful. Would you be okay with me taking the person aside and reminding them about your appropriate pronouns? I want to make sure that this space is safe for you.**” Take your cues from the comfort level of the person who has been misgendered.

Keep in Mind

- If you're going to invite people to share their pronouns, **DO** try to **ask everyone**, not just the person whose pronouns are unclear.
- **DON'T** refer to “they/them” or “ze/hir” pronouns as *gender-neutral* pronouns. **Non-binary pronouns** is a better description, as some trans people identify as gendered.
- **DON'T** use the the phrase “preferred pronouns” or “preferred name.” A particular pronoun is **not a preference** for trans people; it affirms their identity.
- **DON'T** indicate that you don't care what pronouns people use for you if you identify as cisgender. This **reinforces privilege and invalidates the experience** of trans people who repeatedly encounter misgendering.

Keep in Mind

Not everyone feels comfortable indicating their pronouns in every setting and they should not feel forced to do so. If you ask students to indicate their pronouns when they indicate their names, say something like, “please say your name and, if you want, please provide the pronouns you use for yourself.” You can set an example by stating your pronouns first or including your pronouns on your syllabus.



PRONOUNS
AREN'T
PREFERRED
THEY'RE
MANDATORY



Questions?

Please don't hesitate to reach out at:

diversity@umb.edu

or

Georgianna.Melendez@umb.edu