



Acknowledging LGBTQIA+ Identities & Needs in the Classroom

SITT 2023
Melissa Bender, Ph.D. and Alison Bright, Ph.D.
University Writing Program



Today's Presentation

- Discuss the current state of campus climate for LGBTQIA+ students using the DEI framework at UCD
- Consider the costs of not addressing and meeting UC Davis's DEI mission for our LGBTQIA+ students
- Share resources for better meeting the needs of our LGBTQIA+ student population

Background

LGBTQIA+ Students' Needs
Within the Diversity, Equity, and
Inclusion at UC Davis



Background

- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at UCD
 - Clear message and programming
 - Strong focus on diversity of students of color
- DEI mission for students of color focuses includes developing relevant resources as well as retention and graduation rates
- The needs of UCD's LGBTQIA+ students are less clear in our campus' DEI programming.
- As instructors, we want to consider how UCD can approach the campus climate needs as well as retention and graduation rates for the LGBTQIA+ community.

Background

Survey of 87,996 university students (Greathouse et al., 2018)

	[University name] is a safe and secure campus.	[University name] is a welcoming campus.	I feel like I belong at this university.
Heterosexual	56%	66%	55.4%
Queer-spectrum	43%	51.5%	47.9%
Cisgender	55.3%	64.6%	54%
Trans-spectrum	33.1%	39.8%	37.8%

Background

Hostile treatment—including microaggressions—can contribute to increased negative outcomes including mental and physical health problems and lower academic engagement and performance (Dessel, Goodman & Woodford, 2017).

Shaun (on telling instructors their preferred pronoun and name):

“Some of them respected that and some of them didn’t and the ones that didn’t, I immediately, totally checked out of their classes and just did the bare minimum to pass” (Chronicle of Higher Education).

Pat (a trans student):

“Constantly at school, I’m forced to think about the necessities of my own well being versus thinking about being in my classroom and what I should be studying” (Chronicle of Higher Education).

Acknowledgement Matters

- As educators, we need to move the responsibility of education of LGBTQIA+ students' needs away from students
 - Doing this can free up students' mental and emotional labor
 - For example: Charlese: "During gender studies, they try to get some of us...who are part of the LGBTQIA community, to sometimes even speak out and try to teach the other students. I feel that this is wrong. Why should we ask students to tell their personal experiences?"
- "[W]hat would it look like if queer and trans people felt support, belonging, and sustenance across campus, rather than only in certain spaces?" (Lange et al., 2019).
- Educators can create safe spaces in which students can focus on learning at the university level

Dearth of Practical University Pedagogical Practices

- Growing body of resources of LGBTQIA+ curriculum and pedagogical practices focus primarily on K-12 (i.e., GLSEN and Gay/Straight Alliances (GSAs))
- University-level instructors, particularly those who teach disciplines that may not include content directly related to LGBTQIA+ content, may not conceptualize addressing LGBTQIA+ students' needs as part of their teaching responsibilities
- Student engagement and retention is our responsibility as educators

What Happens When We Fail to Meet the Needs of our LGBTQIA+ students?

- Lack of interest in and connection to coursework
- Missed opportunities to develop a sense of identity
- A sense of isolation
- Mental and physical health may suffer
- A lack of allies and/or mentors
- Potentially a separation from the university
- Fewer LGBTQIA+ students pursuing careers in academia

**Meeting
LGBTQIA+
Student Need**

Small Acts, Big Impacts

Welcome

**This is a safe
space for
LGBTQIA+**



Strategies: Small Acts, Big Impacts

Mindset

- Flexible in your understanding of who your LGBTQIA+ students may be and what their needs may be
- Power structures of universities still privilege white, cis-gender, heteronormative people—don't be afraid to ask your students what they need
- Our LGBTQIA+ students may be working from a place of several intersectionalities
- Move away from a deficit model

Morgan, on what they would like to tell instructors:

“Have a peak inside of the way the world works for us. And let them know that we are a part...we're not separate. We're here” (Chronicle of Higher Education).

Strategies: Small Acts, Big Impacts

Focus on practical steps, rather than theoretical ones

- Syllabus statement
- Space to share pronouns and preferred name
 - Offer support on how to change this in Canvas or in the registrar
- Knowledge of students' physical needs (e.g., gender-inclusive restrooms)

Pat (on what gets them excited to learn):

"I definitely look forward to classes that are inclusive right off the bat. So if a professor goes out of their way to...establish a safe space, to establish an inclusive space, I definitely will look forward to coming back every day and learning what I have to learn in that class" (Chronicle of Higher Education).

Strategies: Small Acts, Big Impacts

Sample Student Questionnaire Questions:

- Preferred Name:
- Preferred Pronouns:
- Year in School (third, fourth, etc.):
- Major:
- Minor:
- Are you a first gen college student?
- Hometown:
- Is there anything that could prevent you from being successful in this course?
- Is there anything else you would like me to know about you?

First course meeting:

- Identify your own pronouns
- Include an icebreaker in which students share their preferred pronouns with each other



Strategies: Small Acts, Big Impacts

Become an Outward Facing Ally—Actions Speak Louder Than Words

- Try your best to meet your students' needs—once you have asked them what they are
- Being an ally can mean making mistakes
- Acknowledge mistakes when you make them
- Recall—gender is public and outward facing, it is not the same as sexuality
- Don't make assumptions
- Consult the Ally Tips on the UCD LGBT Resources site for assistance

Search for Ways to Develop a More Inclusive Curriculum

- Work to reflect the people, history, and accomplishments of the LGBTQIA+ community in your curriculum
- Offer space for reflection on identity in curriculum
- Create space in your courses to share relevant narratives (both students and instructors)

Strategies: Small Acts, Big Impacts

Become a Mentor

- Research suggests mentors are most effective when they share similar backgrounds as mentees (Graham, 2019)
- Smaller number of queer folks in academics necessitates that straight allies also become mentors
- LGBTQIA+ students report that peers often serve as mentors, or that they develop self-reliance to support themselves
 - Mentoring may be able to reduce this emotional labor of our students
 - Mentoring may also be able to increase the number of LGBTQIA+ students who pursue careers in academics

National Resources

- GLSEN
 - Educator Resources: <https://www.glsen.org/resources/educator-resources>
 - Videos from student perspectives:
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQUQI0BrKnA&t=58s&ab_channel=GLSEN
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kq19QdOfH1Y&ab_channel=GLSEN
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7gJP1L99k6Q&t=79s&ab_channel=GLSEN
- Chronicle of Higher Education, Ask Me: What LGBTQ Students Want Their Professors to Know
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rnbnF8QAnsY&t=6s&ab_channel=ChronicleofHigherEducation

National Resources

- Campus Pride
 - Resources for students and organizations
- Campus Pride Index
 - Database on LGBTQIA-friendly colleges
- LGBTQIA Teaching Resources
 - Suggestions for incorporating LGBTQIA content into university-level coursework across the disciplines

UC Davis Resources

- LGBTQIA Ally Tips
 - <https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/ally-tips>
- Name and gender change at UC Davis
 - <https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/name-gender-changes>
- Locations of gender-inclusive restrooms
 - <https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/support/restroom>

References

- Dessel, A., Goodman, K., Woodford, M. (2017). LGBT discrimination on campus and heterosexual bystanders: understanding intentions to intervene. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 10 (2): 101-116.
- Chronicle of Higher Education (2015). "Ask Me": What college students want their professors to know [video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rnbnF8QAnsY&t=6s>
- Graham, B. (2019). Queerly unequal: LGBT+ students and mentoring in higher education. *Social Sciences*, 8 (171):
- Greathouse, M., BrckaLorenz, A., Hoban, M., Huesman, R., Rankin, S., Stolzenberg, E. (2018). Queer-spectrum and trans-spectrum students' experiences in American higher education: an analysis of national survey findings [white paper]. Rutgers University.
- Lange, A., Duran, A., Jackson, R. (2019). The state of LGBT and queer research in higher education revisited: current academic houses and future possibilities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 60 (5): 511-526

Questions?

Contact us:

Melissa Bender: mmbender@ucdavis.edu

Alison Bright: asbright@ucdavis.edu