Overview

The profile of trans students in the United States has been steadily increasing in recent years. New scholarship is being published that offers deeper looks at the experiences of these students and work that aims to theorize about trans identity and higher education. In addition, highly public legal battles are being waged regarding the rights of trans students, particularly regarding the protections of Title IX and concerns of equal access to education from primary school through higher education.

As advisors and administrators encounter these students more frequently, there is a dire need for resources that move beyond “Trans 101”, which often focuses primarily on terminology and language use. Practitioners need information and direction on how to progress individually in their competence working with trans students, as well as guidance on how to influence their offices and campuses to become more equitable for trans students.

This webinar will focus on encouraging practitioners to identify opportunities for trans advocacy work on their campuses. The presenters aim to move beyond a “Trans 101” perspective by focusing less on vocabulary and issues of awareness and directing the bulk of their effort toward identifying changes in behavior (individual) and culture (organizational) that could have the effect of increasing trans equity on campus.

This webinar embeds trans concerns in frameworks of social justice advocacy and multicultural organizational change theory with the aim of presenting social justice as a process to engage in, rather than simply an end point or goal.

Pre-Webinar Activity Suggestions

Before the webinar, consider reviewing some resources related to trans identity that focus on identity, terminology, and/or the experiences of trans people. Some options are listed here, with more in the References and Resources section:

- Trans 101 from the Sylvia Rivera Law Project: https://srlp.org/resources/trans-101/
- Video stories from Trans People Speak: http://www.transpeoplespeak.org/
- *Trans* in College by Z Nicolazzo: check your local library, available from most major book retailers
After reviewing one or more of these, consider your current practices around gender as an individual advisor, as an advising office or unit, and as an institution. Use these questions as a guide to reflection and/or discussion:

- How does gendered language or thinking show up in my daily work? Consider everything from how pronouns are used to images of students or advisors on campus.
- What spaces on my campus are gendered, explicitly or implicitly?
- How do I show care for trans students in my practice?
- How often are trans issues discussed on my campus? What are the narratives that arise when trans students are discussed?

Consider those questions as you watch the webinar and begin to think about what equity, not just inclusion, looks like for trans students and colleagues on your campus and in your community.

Post-Webinar Activity Suggestions

Now that the webinar has concluded, consider the questions in the Call to Action:

- What is your campus doing beyond Trans 101 (trainings focused on terminology and the existence of trans people)?
- How can you support existing efforts and start new ones?
- How can you make time to listen to trans students and colleagues on your campus?

Remember to think with the multicultural organizational change theory from Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2014)—consider changes that address both surface-level and long-lasting cultural change. In addition, remember that it is important to work for change on multiple levels: what you can do as an individual advisor or advising administrator, what units can do collectively to change the culture of their office, and what can be done at an institutional level to promote equity for trans students.

Consider creating a map of possibilities. Beginning at the center, list actions that individuals can take to create a more trans-affirming environment in their office. Then, move outward to consider larger, more systemic actions that may require a coalition to implement. Brainstorm ways that trans students can be brought into the process so that the needs specific to your campus are at the forefront, rather than “best practices” that may or may not apply.

Finally, create an action plan. Offer timelines and deadlines for specific steps to be taken. Consider what you will do when you encounter roadblocks from stakeholders. How will you respond to common concerns like “we have few (or no) trans students here” or “trans equity is not a problem on our campus” if they arise? How will you make trans equity a priority among other competing priorities in your work as an advisor or advising administrator? Who will you ask for help? Considering these potential challenges at the outset may help to make the process more feasible and ultimately more beneficial for the trans students you wish to advocate for.

Above all, remember that equity work is challenging and takes deep investments of time and effort. It is not a one-size-fits-all project and demands that advisors and advising administrators persist in putting issues of gender equity, including trans equity, at the fore of diversity and equity efforts on campus. Building coalitions across campus, including trans students themselves, is an essential part of doing equity work that matters. Be persistent and work as though liberation is right around the corner (Love, 2019).
References and Resources


Academic Advising and Trans Equity: Building our Tomorrow

CJ Venable, Kent State University
Jennifer Joslin, Drury University

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A return to sovereignty for indigenous people cannot begin without being able to answer the question, “Whose land am I on?” We are all responsible for enacting relationships that further the return of life and land to those from whom it was taken.
Beyond entry-level knowledge
More than terminology
Action not just attitudes
Equity and justice frameworks

The Politics of Now

What We Mean When We Say...

Trans Oppression
Change
Equity
Justice
Multicultural Organizational Change Theory

• Drawn from *Creating Multicultural Change on Campus* by Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2014)

• Approach change along two dimensions:
  • Target of the change
    • individuals, groups, institutions
  • Type of change
    • surface level, deep cultural level

---

INDIVIDUAL EFFORTS

“Although symbolic inclusions such as the phrase *gender identity and expression* in campus nondiscrimination policies is important, the participants and I suggest college educators could approach diversity and inclusion work in different ways that may better recognize the dignity and worth of highly marginalized student populations” (Nicolazzo, 2017, p. 146)

---

Inclusive Environments

“Although symbolic inclusions such as the phrase *gender identity and expression* in campus nondiscrimination policies is important, the participants and I suggest college educators could approach diversity and inclusion work in different ways that may better recognize the dignity and worth of highly marginalized student populations” (Nicolazzo, 2017, p. 146)
Inclusive Language

World shapes language

Language shapes the world

MOVING TO COLLECTIVE ACTION

Equity is a Collective Project

• Change comes through coalition-building and sustained efforts across time
• Individual actions are important but can put advisors at risk (Ahmed, 2012; Venable, Inselman, & Thuot, 2019)
• Need to take a “trickle up” approach to equity and justice work (Spade, 2011)
Radically Local Practices

LISTEN

UNDERSTAND

ACT

“Listen, Understand, Act” by Steven Summers is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Creating Multicultural Change on Campus

Image courtesy of CJ Venable

Shifting Culture

• Moving gender equity and justice to the fore for all students
• Demands that we question our practices and ask questions about outcomes not just intent
• Addressing how oppressive gender regimes affect us all
Partnerships Beyond Advising

- Architect
- Local Communities
- Bursar
- IT
- Registrar

Making Impossible Students Possible

- Assessment
- Systems
- Forms
- Policies

CALL TO ACTION
Questions to Consider

What is your campus doing beyond “Trans 101”?

How can you support existing efforts and start new ones?

How can you make time to listen to trans students and colleagues on your campus?

Forthcoming Resources

Academic Advising and Trans Equity: Building Our Tomorrow
• NACADA Pocket Guide
• Coming 2020!