

From: [Need To Know](#)
Cc: [Moy, Christopher T](#); [Adams, Maria T](#)
Bcc: allstudentgrp@montgomerycollege.edu
Subject: Creating an Inclusive Environment
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Attachments: [Inclusive Environment Memo - Fall 2021 Final.pdf](#)



Memorandum

Office of Compliance, Risk, and Ethics

To: The College Community
From: Christopher Moy, Director of ADA and Title IX Compliance
Subject: **Creating an Inclusive Environment**
Date: September 8, 2021

Montgomery College is committed to creating and sustaining a safe, non-discriminatory, and inclusive learning environment for all students, including those who identify with a gender that is different from their sex, gender-assigned-at-birth, or express their gender identity in a non-binary way (not limited to polar opposites of masculine and feminine). This memo provides guidance in accordance with MC policies as well as procedures that demonstrate equity and inclusion. While this memo speaks primarily to interactions with students, it is best practice to apply this approach when engaging with colleagues. Not only does this respect the identities of those who are transgender or gender non-conforming, but it creates a culture of inclusion and diversity that benefits all students, staff, faculty, and administrators.

MC Policies – The College’s Equal Employment Opportunity and Non-Discrimination Policy (31006) and Equal Education Opportunity and Non-Discrimination Policy (41002) affirm that **discrimination against persons on the basis of gender, gender identity, or expression in its educational programs and activities is prohibited**. Additionally, LGBTQ+ students are protected by Title IX, meaning students cannot be discriminated against based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. Harassment on the basis of one’s gender identity or sexual orientation constitutes discrimination “because of sex,” and thus, violates MC policy. MC’s non-discrimination policy highlights the need to establish collegewide best practices for respecting gender identity and expression.

MC Practices – It is our responsibility to provide a supportive environment where all students are free to be who they are. You cannot know or assume someone’s gender by looking at them. Thus, one aspect of creating such an environment is providing safe, accessible, and convenient restroom facilities. Montgomery College supports individuals in the use of all restroom facilities that correspond to their identity, as well as restrooms that are designated gender-inclusive. Individuals should use the restroom that makes them feel most comfortable.

Please note that gender-inclusive facilities are available to all students, staff, and faculty and serve diverse needs, including privacy; managing child/family, medical, or disability issues; and transgender people. Be aware of the gender-inclusive restrooms located on each campus, and be prepared to provide directions. The list of locations is posted on Montgomery College’s [Title IX website](#).

Chosen Name and Pronouns – To foster a College environment that is inclusive and that encourages self-expression, Montgomery College has established guidelines whereby any

current student or employee may use a chosen first name on campus. It is the practice of the College that students, faculty, staff, and administrators may use whatever chosen first name they want, regardless of whether they have legally changed their name, except where their legal names are required by law, industry standard, or strong business need. **The process for using a chosen name can be found on the [Title IX website](#).**

Pronouns – Everyone has pronouns that are used when referring to them – and getting those pronouns right is not exclusively a transgender issue (Wamsley, Laurel; [A Guide To Gender Identity Terms](#); June 2, 2021, NPR). "Pronouns are basically how we identify ourselves apart from our name. It's how someone refers to you in conversation," "And when you're speaking to people, it's a really simple way to affirm their identity." Mary Emily O'Hara, a communications officer at GLAAD.

Using an individual's chosen pronouns and chosen name is respectful behavior and creates a truly inclusive and welcoming environment for transgender and gender-nonconforming students. Identify yourself and your pronouns in introducing yourself and use the pronouns others want used. Here are some sample questions that can facilitate these interactions (adapted from LGBTcampus.org and Samuel Merritt University):

- Use your pronouns in introductions, and ask for others' pronouns in their introductions.
- "What pronouns do you use?"
- "How should I refer to you?"
- "Will you please remind me which pronouns you use?"
- "My name is Juan, and I use they/them pronouns. What about you?"
- For introductions in a classroom or group setting, you might start with, "Welcome, Everyone! Please introduce yourself to the group by providing your name, pronouns, and one interesting fact about you."
- Include your pronouns in your email signature. Along with your name and any other information you list (such as your title, address, office phone number, etc.), you might also add a section like this:
 - Example 1: your name (she, her, hers)
 - Example 2: your name Pronouns: he/him/his
 - Example 3: your name Pronouns I respond to: they/them
 - Example 4: your name *Please let me know how you self-identify. I go by..., and I use she/her/hers. How should I refer to you?

What happens if I make a mistake?

When you make a mistake, remember this important rule: Oops. Ouch. Educate! In other words, apologize for the error, acknowledge that you are not intentionally disrespecting the person, and correct yourself or ask for a correction. It can be tough to learn pronouns, especially when they are new to you, and people will appreciate your efforts and diligence as you learn and adapt.

A culture of civility is grounded in respect. Misgendering individuals can traumatize them and limit their sense of belonging to the college community. By following the guidance provided in this memo, members of our community will be better positioned to respect the various gender expressions reflected in our diverse community.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Christopher Moy (pronouns: he, him, his)
Director of ADA & Title IX Compliance
Office of Compliance, Risk, and Ethics
Montgomery College
51 Mannakee St., Suite 315 G

Rockville, MD 20850
240-567-5412
christopher.moy@montgomerycollege.edu