PROMISE 2014: Transgender Inclusion at 14 Land-Grant Institutions

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INTRODUCTION:
The organization of institutions of higher education is deeply rooted in a binary system of gender. For the increasing number of transgender and gender non-conforming students on college campuses, this system of organization leads to a lot of obstacles and barriers to success. This is further exacerbated by the fact that many administrators and faculty members often remain uneducated about the specific needs and concerns of transgender students. The purpose of this study is to assess what is being done (or not done) in regards to transgender inclusion at Oregon State University and 13 peer institutions.

A note on terminology: For the purposes of this assessment, the term “transgender” is used as an umbrella term to describe those whose gender identity, gender expression, and/or sex does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth.

METHODOLOGY:
For this assessment I developed a 92-question survey based upon best-practice recommendations found in the literature, as well as feedback and input from several individuals*, most of whom have done similar research regarding transgender individuals at institutions of higher education. I contacted nearly 200 offices across these 14 institutions in order to obtain responses to the assessment questions.

WHAT’S NEXT?
Through September I will be gathering the final data, writing up a report of the findings, and presenting the research to key offices at Oregon State. We ultimately hope to publish the study.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCLUSIVITY:
- Enable individuals to indicate gender identities beyond M/F on applications and other forms
- Make gender inclusive restrooms, locker rooms, and housing available and easily accessible
- Training for administrators and faculty members on transgender identities and issues

FINDINGS (preliminary trends)*:

- Institutions that include “gender identity” in their anti-discrimination policy: 93%
- Institutions that include “gender expression” in their anti-discrimination policy: 43%

How many institutions have gender-inclusive facilities?
- Gender-inclusive restrooms required in new buildings: 73%
- Gender-inclusive housing: 67%
- Gender-inclusive locker rooms in rec centers: 43%

Have staff received training on transgender issues, needs and resources?
- Professional staff for LGBT support: 100%
- Physical healthcare providers: 78%
- LGBT resource center staff: 75%
- Career counselors: 10%

Institutions surveyed:
- Colorado State University, Fort Collins
- Cornell University, Ithaca
- Iowa State University, Ames
- Michigan State University, East Lansing
- North Carolina State University, Raleigh
- Ohio State University, Columbus
- Pennsylvania State University, University Park
- Purdue University, West Lafayette
- Texas A&M University, College Station
- University of Arizona, Tucson
- University of California, Davis
- University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
- University of Wisconsin, Madison

HIGHLIGHTS:
- Having the opportunity to connect and collaborate with individuals who are also passionate about working toward transgender inclusivity in higher education
- Encouraging people think about transgender inclusion on their campus
- Being able to do very important research that has not been done before

LEARNING AND GROWTH:
- Purpose and Vision: While I still do not have a clear plan for my career, this experience has helped me to more clearly think about and articulate who I am and what I want to accomplish through my work.
- Networking: I not only had the opportunity to connect with higher education professionals across the country, but I was also able to participate in the Professional Development networking session which was a great confidence booster.
- Growth: Throughout this experience I gained confidence in myself and in my ability to work in a self-directed and professional environment.

MY PURPOSE:
To help make life easier for those within marginalized groups.

VISION:
I envision that my work will help to remove barriers to success in the lives of these people.

PROMISE AND MY PURPOSE:
I hope that this assessment will lead to more inclusive practices at these universities, thus removing barriers to success for transgender individuals on campus.

Sources:
3. These percentages represent the number of universities that responded “yes” to these questions. They are based off of the responses that have been received so far.
4. These individuals include: Dr. Brenda McComb, Whitney Jones, MA, DIII Pamp, M.S., Dr. Genny Beemyn, and Dr. Daniel Newhart

PROMISE EXPERIENCE

How many institutions provide student health insurance that covers HRT, counseling, and surgeries?