

Policy Scan of North American Universities Regarding Gender Diversity and Inclusion

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November 26, 2012



Trans* Needs Committee

Executive Summary

Who we are

The Trans* Needs Committee is a grassroots organization comprised of students and faculty from Memorial University of Newfoundland, service providers, and community members. We are an initiative committed to raising awareness of issues facing trans and gender variant individuals, and to the advancement and understanding of trans perspectives on our campus and in our surrounding community. The term trans* (or trans) is an umbrella term meant to encompass many people on the gender spectrum including those who are transsexual, transgender, genderfluid, and transitioning, with an asterisk to represent the many identities included under the umbrella (Davidson, 2007).

Objectives

This policy scan was proposed to the Deputy Provost of Student Affairs and Services by the Trans* Needs Committee of Memorial University. Funding for the policy scan was provided by Memorial through the Student Innovation Fund. The issue at the heart of this work is that, "Transgender students typically feel isolated and marginalized, rather than welcomed and included, at most institutions" (Beemyn, 2005). With Memorial University's Teaching and Learning Framework articulating core values of "Inclusiveness" and "Respect", the institution is poised to affect change and to create a safer and more inclusive environment for all students on campus, including trans and gender variant people.



Goals

This policy scan reviews seven areas identified as having an impact on the daily life and wellbeing of trans* students. The identified policy areas are:

- Non-Discrimination Policies
- Health Care
- Housing
- Washrooms
- Records and Documents
- Programming, Training, and Support
- Athletics and Facilities

Solutions

Key recommendations identified in the policy scan revolve around the university taking formal leadership over this process, while collaborating with the Trans* Needs Committee and other stakeholders involved through the implementation processes.

To begin the policy change process, the first step, based on best practices and first-hand experiences of other institutions, is to:

- Assign a full-time staff member at Memorial University to be responsible for making the campus more inclusive for trans people, and;
- Establish a Trans Inclusion Working Group on campus, co-chaired by the full-time staff member identified above in collaboration with a member of the Trans* Needs Committee.

Short and long-term recommendations for each policy area identified can be found in the policy scan, including best practices and examples from North American institutions.



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Introduction

The Trans* Needs Committee of Memorial University was formed in 2010 and is a grassroots-driven group. The terms trans* (or trans) is, "Understood as an umbrella term encompassing those whose gender identity differs substantially from that ascribed to their biological sex." (Pyne, 2011, p.129). This includes people who identify as transgender, transsexual, genderfluid, gender queer, transitioned and some two-spirited people (Pyne, 2011).

Through the early work and meetings of the Trans* Needs Committee, a need was identified for policy changes at Memorial to make our campus a more welcoming and inclusive place for trans students. After consultation with Dr. Rob Shea, Deputy Provost, the committee was encouraged to apply for a grant under the Student Innovation Fund. This application was successful and has allowed the Trans* Needs Committee to hire a recent graduate to conduct a Policy Scan of gender-inclusive policies at North American post-secondary institutions.

This report is the summary of this Policy Scan, completed by Andrew Harvey, a graduate of the post-degree Bachelor of Social Work program, class of 2012. The report has been informed by research on policy changes made at post-secondary institutions, academic literature on the subject of transgender students' experiences, and four interviews conducted with Student Services professionals from post-secondary institutions in the US which made policy changes to make their campuses more inclusive for trans students. Interviews were conducted with: Genny Beemyn (University of Massachusetts), Ted Lewis (University of North Carolina), Gabriel Javier (University of Wisconsin), and Ed Warwick (University of Virginia). They have each given permission for their comments to be shared in this report.



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The report is divided into three main sections:

- Context: The basis for the suggested policy changes are outlined and the need for such changes is demonstrated
- Policy Areas: Areas that affect trans students are identified based on a literature search, the current policy situation at MUN is discussed, best practices are presented, and short- and long-term recommendations are provided
- Conclusion: Final remarks on process and next steps for Memorial's administration.



Context

Increasing numbers of students are identifying as transgender, transsexual, gender queer, and other gender-variant identities (Beemyn, 2005; McKinney, 2005; Schneider, 2010). It is critical for post-secondary institutions to change to meet the needs of students.

In Wendy Schneider's article entitled "Where do we belong?: Addressing the Needs of Transgender Students in Higher Education", she discusses how "the college years" are a common time for young people to explore their gender identity. This occurs as young people are often away from home for the first time and are establishing various facets of their identity during these years (Schneider, 2010). Support and protection for these students is especially important during these years, as transgender students can become targets for discrimination and harassment (Schneider, 2010).

Beemyn describes how many campuses are physically and socially structured to enforce a binary gender system (2005). A "binary gender system" is one that recognizes only traditional female and male genders. The effect of having structures that are not inclusive of gender non-conformity is that "Transgender students typically feel isolated and marginalized, rather than welcomed and included, at most institutions" (Beemyn, 2005, p. 78).

With representation from the students, faculty, and the community, the Trans* Needs Committee is working in line with the values, principles, and recommendations of Memorial University's Teaching and Learning Framework. In particular, this report addresses the core values of:

- Inlusiveness: recognizing and engaging with individual and group diversity



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- Respect: having respect for individuals, ideas, and the institution as a whole.

Additional principles include a:

- Focus on the Learner
- Foster Transformation

These principles speak to the necessity of developing “curricula, programs, support services and spaces that address learner needs” and “a supportive and inclusive environment that fosters individual transformation” (p.9). For some students these transformations may be very literal, and require exactly the Inclusiveness and Respect articulated as core values.

To have student support services and orientations that are both comprehensive and appropriate, they need to be inclusive. Ensuring that the needs of all students are being met, including trans* students, is vital to the values expressed above.



Policy Areas

Through interviews completed with student services staff and research on transgender-inclusive policies, especially the Transgender Law and Policy Institute (2012), and Beemyn (2005), the following list of policy areas has been created. These areas are areas in which a need for policy change has been identified. Examples of policy changes at other institutions have been included to show best practices and alternative approaches to change.

For each policy area, the current status here at Memorial is discussed, examples of possible changes to be made are examined, and both short and long-term recommendations are suggested.

1. Non-Discrimination Policies

Memorial University currently has a Sexual Harassment Policy (<http://www.mun.ca/policy/site/policy.php?id=192#>). This policy is limited to sexual harassment and does not cover gender-based discrimination or violence. Best practices identified in both Canadian and American institutions are to have a university-wide non-discrimination policy to protect trans individuals from discrimination based on their gender identity or expression.

In Canada, Brock University has become a leader in this area, adopting their own Respectful Work and Learning Environment Policy (http://www.brocku.ca/webfm_send/3474), which includes “gender identity” as a grounds for human rights discrimination. The policy



also states “Brock University will establish mechanisms to give effect to this policy” which include staffing for the Office of Human Rights and Equity Services, training, and awareness related to the policy for students and staff. These mechanisms put some weight and resources behind the policy, making it more than a piece of paper.

Best practices identified in American institutions are the inclusion of “gender identity and expression” in such a policy. The University of Iowa alternatively states “gender identity or associational preference”.

University of Iowa – Changed Policy in 1996

“The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination in employment, educational programs, and activities on the basis of race, national origin, color, creed, religion, sex, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or associational preference. The University also affirms its commitment to providing equal opportunities and equal access to University facilities.” (<http://www.uiowa.edu/~eod/policies/non-discrimination-statement.html>)

University of Massachusetts – Revised in 2011

“The University of Massachusetts Amherst prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, sex, age, marital status, national origin, mental or physical disability, political belief or affiliation, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information and any other class of individuals protected from discrimination under state or federal law” (<http://www.umass.edu/eod/aapolicy.html>)

In speaking with Beemyn, she identified the change in the university-wide non-discrimination policy as a turning point for making the campus more inclusive. “Once the non-discrimination policy was changed, that opened peoples mind... they recognized that this was complying with the non-discrimination policy” (Beemyn, Personal Communication,



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2012). In order to affect change within a campus community, Warwick, Beemyn, and Lewis all recommended that university staff be involved in the process. Lewis (Personal Communication, 2012) stated “it’s harder when you don’t have a staff member” regarding appointing a dedicated staff member for oversight when changing university policies.

Beemyn emphasized that having a staff member solely responsible for driving the process of trans inclusion was critical: “So that there was someone who was there, as a part of their job, so that there was that consistency. That there was someone in a position to advocate for it, so it wasn’t left to the students.” (Personal Communication, 2012).

Recommendations:

Short-term –

- 1) Assign a full-time staff member at Memorial University to be responsible for trans inclusion on campus.
- 2) This staff member will co-chair the Trans Inclusion Working Group made up of staff, administrators, students, service providers and community members.
- 3) There will be staff representatives on the Trans Inclusion Working Group from each university department that has control over an identified policy area.

Long-term –

- 1) Draft and implement a university-wide non-discrimination policy. Include protection for discrimination based on “gender identity and expression”.
- 2) Include provisions in policy to ensure resources allocated for appropriate staff, training, education, and awareness around the policy.



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2. Health Care

Memorial University has a Student Health Centre which provides primary health care to students. At Memorial health insurance is provided by the students unions (MUNSU, GSU), in addition to services covered by the provincial MCP program. Memorial University also has a Counselling Centre which provides personal counselling to students.

University of North Carolina Charlotte

Counselling Centre has three counsellors who have received training in working with trans individuals. <http://counselingcenter.uncc.edu/about-us/meet-the-staff>

Harvard University

Student Health Plan includes gender reassignment/confirmation surgery (top surgery since 2010, bottom surgery since Aug 2012).

<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2011/11/17/Health-Lower-Surgery/>

Issues regarding insurance coverage for gender reassignment/confirmation surgery and hormone therapy are outside of the control of Memorial University, but should be taken up by Students Unions, to make changes in their own health insurance plans, and to advocate for changes to provincial coverage.

In regards to the provision of health care, Memorial University is often the first point of contact for individuals, either through the Student Health Centre or Counselling Centre. It is important that when trans students come to these services they feel welcomed and are met by staff who can understand the issues they are experiencing.



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Recommendations:

Short-term –

- 1) Ensure that at least one staff from both the Student Health Centre and Counselling Centre receive training in:
 - 1.1. assessment methods for gender dysphoria;
 - 1.2. how to act as an advocate for trans clients navigating transphobia;
 - 1.3. how to provide trans-positive counselling to individuals, couples, and families;
 - 1.4. methods for assisting trans clients with documents, forms, and navigating systems barriers, and;
 - 1.5. how to design and facilitate a support group for trans clients.

- 2) Appoint a staff member to sit on the Transgender Health Services Network of Providers of Eastern Health.

Long-term –

- 1) Ensure that all staff from both the Student Health Centre and Counselling Centre receive training in:
 - 1.1. assessment methods for gender dysphoria;
 - 1.2. how to act as an advocate for trans clients navigating transphobia;
 - 1.3. how to provide trans-positive counselling to individuals, couples, and families;
 - 1.4. methods for assisting trans clients with documents, forms, and navigating systems barriers, and;
 - 1.5. how to design and facilitate a support group for trans clients.



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3. Housing

There is no formal housing policy for transgender students at Memorial University. While individuals who self-identify as transgender on application forms will be assisted in finding appropriate accommodations on a case-by-case basis, there is no formal procedure for ensuring access to appropriate accommodations for students on campus.

Examples from American institutions include San Diego State University, which will provide gender-neutral housing for returning students, and University of Massachusetts which has created a LBGTQ Living-Learning community at their Amherst campus. This LBGTQ Living-Learning community provides “gender-free” housing for students, including housing students with “opposite genders” together.

San Diego State University

Provides gender-neutral housing for returning students (not available for 1st year students)
http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/housing/gender_neutral.html

University of Massachusetts – Amherst

LBGTQ Living-Learning community in a residence. Students may request “gender-free” housing. <http://www.umass.edu/stonewall/transguide/#Housing>

Gabriel Javier (Personal Communication, 2012), from the University of Wisconsin discussed their own establishment of a “gender learning community”. This step was a contentious one, because there were state laws in place which prevent the co-habitation of the sexes. Javier states that the learning community was allowed to set their own



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norms, which can include roommate selection. Javier says that creative solutions such as this are often needed to accommodate trans students:

“What we often do is look at the policy and see what are the ways the policy allows us to accomplish what we need to accomplish” (Javier, Personal Communication, 2012).

Recommendations:

Short-term –

- 1) All residences will be accessible to the transgender students in their self-defined gender, and that residential staff will work toward improving access to this group.
- 2) Residential staff will support the choices of trans residents to gain access to housing in the gender they identify will best preserve their safety.
- 3) Ensure that staff are aware of this procedure and are able to inform students of it upon application.
- 4) Change Housing application to allow non-binary gender options.

Long-term –

- 1) Create a “gender learning community” such as the one at uWisconsin, within residence.
- 2) Allow roommates of any gender to live together.



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4. Washrooms

The Trans* Needs Committee has completed a washroom scan of Memorial University Campus, to identify single-stall washrooms. This document is not yet available through the Memorial University website.

University of Toronto

University has compiled list of gender neutral washrooms and have it posted online.

<http://www.sgdo.utoronto.ca/washrooms/Locations.htm>

McGill University

Instituted policy to mandate inclusion of at least one gender-neutral washroom in all new buildings and to modify existing buildings to have at least one gender-neutral washroom. They are striving for one per floor, and have a campus map directing students to gender-neutral washrooms. http://www.mcgill.ca/equity_diversity/lgbtq-resources-and-programs/washrooms

Recommendations:

Short-term –

- 1) Put Washroom Scan completed by the Trans* Needs Committee online and advertise its existence.
- 2) Convert all single-stalled washrooms to gender-neutral washrooms.
- 3) Ensure design of new residence includes gender-neutral washrooms.



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Long-term –

- 1) Have facilities management commit to include gender-neutral washrooms in all new buildings.
- 2) Modify existing buildings to have at least one gender-neutral washroom.

5. Records and Documents

Students at Memorial University can currently indicate their preferred name on their application. Application forms for both the university and housing require students to indicate male or female for gender. Government issued ID is required to change gender for official university records.

University of Toronto

Students can change name/gender on official/academic records by writing a letter to the registrar (no proof of legal change required). <http://www.sgdo.utoronto.ca/Trans.htm>

University of Massachusetts – Amherst

Students can change preferred name without documentation, “primary” name will still be listed on academic records followed by preferred name in brackets. Full name change requires legal forms from state to be presented to registrar.

<http://www.umass.edu/stonewall/transguide/#Records>



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Recommendations:

Short-term –

- 1) Change university and housing application forms to allow non-binary gender markers.
- 2) Make sure that the language of your website and printed material refers to “people of all genders”, rather than simply “men and women.”
- 3) If demographic information is taken by phone, be sure to ask and not presume gender.

Long-term –

- 1) Change university policy to allow name and gender change on university records without providing government documentation.

6. Programming, Training, and Support

In recent years Memorial University has provided training to Residence Assistants and Proctors regarding trans issues. In 2011, Teo Drake, a guest speaker was brought in to offer training to Resident Assistants and Proctors about trans students experiences. MUNSU operates LGBT MUN, a student resource centre for Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgender students and community members. This Centre is also funded by Student Affairs and Services. The Counselling Centre is available to support students, but does not provide specialized services or staff with training related to trans issues.



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University of Massachusetts

Ally Training for students, faculty, and staff. Training has a large focus on trans issues.

<http://www.umass.edu/stonewall/trainings/>

New York University

Two different training modules on trans issues. Also celebrate Transgender Awareness Week in November. <http://www.nyu.edu/life/student-life/diversity-at-nyu/lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-and-queer-student-center/trainings-workshops.html>

Recommendations:

Short-term –

- 1) Enlist Planned Parenthood, or another organization with experience in Ally Training (or similar training), to provide training related to creating a trans inclusive campus for a minimum of two staff and/or administrators from each of the identified policy areas.
- 2) Include education and awareness around trans issues regularly in University events such as Transgender Day of Remembrance and Student Orientation.

Long-term –

- 1) Establish an office or Trans Inclusion Working Group under the umbrella of Student Affairs and Services, staffed by a full-time employee of the University. This office and position would be responsible for awareness, education, and training around trans* issues.
- 2) Provide training to staff, faculty, and students related to trans experience and creating a trans inclusive campus.



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7. Athletics and Facilities

Memorial University falls under the purview of Canadian Intercollegiate Sports (CIS) for varsity athletics. Currently, there is currently no policy regarding trans* students and their use of university locker rooms at Memorial University.

NCAA

Athletes may receive medical exemptions from rules normally prohibiting use of hormones and compete as their gender identity.

<http://www.ncaa.org/wps/wcm/connect/public/NCAA/Resources/Latest+News/2011/September/Transgender+policy+approved>

Canadian Intercollegiate Sports

Transgender athletes can compete but only as their legally identified gender.

<http://cupwire.ca/articles/47902>

MIT

Transgender individuals may use the locker room facility that is in agreement with their gender identity. A family locker room is also available for private changing area.

<http://web.mit.edu/trans/lockerroom.html>

Grinnell College

Separate gender-neutral locker room to be used by anyone.

<http://www.grinnell.edu/news/grinnell-in-the-news/where-gender-doesnt-matter>



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Recommendations:

Short-term –

- 1) Create a policy stating that individuals may use the locker room consistent with their gender identity.
- 2) Memorial University should petition CIS to implement changes to regulations to allow trans athletes at MUN to compete as their identified gender.

Long-term –

- 1) Convert or create private changing areas for individuals who do not wish to use gender-segregated locker rooms.
- 2) Memorial University should actively work to increase use of The Works facilities by trans students through innovative programs, events, and campaigns to increase an atmosphere of inclusion.



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Conclusion

Policy change at any large institution is a long process. One of the great strengths of Memorial University is its ability to connect with the community to affect change. Memorial has already taken several steps towards becoming a more inclusive institution, including working with the Trans* Needs Committee to fund this report.

By implementing the recommendations of this report Memorial can move towards becoming a leader in Canada when it comes to trans* inclusion at post-secondary institutions. Beyond following identified best practices for creating a more inclusive campus, these measures will go a long way to creating a positive learning environment where all students feel accepted.

In short, this report represents the start of a conversation at Memorial. Keeping the goal of trans* inclusion in mind this report identifies how we can achieve this goal by working together as a campus and a community. The Trans* Needs Committee looks forward to continuing this dialogue with Memorial University.



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