

**MODEL ADMISSIONS  
POLICY ON  
TRANSGENDER  
STUDENTS AT  
WOMEN'S COLLEGES**

**TSER**  
Trans Student Educational Resources

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# INTRODUCTION

## WHY DO TRANS PEOPLE WANT TO GO TO WOMEN'S INSTITUTIONS?



Many trans people feel safer in institutions dedicated to the needs of marginalized genders (people who are not cisgender men). Even if the individual does not identify as a woman, they can feel safer living and learning among other people of marginalized genders due to upbringing, socialization, life experiences, or political ideology.<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, some trans people do not realize they are transgender until a later age. Often, this can be from stigma surrounding the issue, safety concerns, or simply not making the connections earlier on. In the safe environment of college, it is common for transgender students to come out.

Finally, trans people may want to go to women's colleges in order to become a part of an empowering environment that will nurture their academic, social, and personal success. In turn, these schools directly benefit from academic and cultural contributions made by trans students.

The recommendations of this model policy are based on the input and collaboration of dozens of students, community members, and faculty at women's colleges.

**Trans Student Educational Resources** is a youth-led organization dedicated to transforming the educational environment for trans and gender nonconforming students through advocacy and empowerment. In addition to our focus on creating a more trans-friendly education system, our mission is to educate the public and teach trans activists how to be effective organizers. We believe that justice for trans and gender nonconforming youth is contingent on an intersectional framework of activism. Ending oppression is a long-term process that can only be achieved through collaborative action. Learn more at [www.transstudent.org](http://www.transstudent.org).

# DEFINITIONS

**CISGENDER/CIS:** Adjective that means “identifies as their sex assigned at birth,” derived from the Latin word meaning “on the same side.” A cisgender/cis person is not transgender. The word cisgender was developed to avoid saying that there are transgender people and “normal people,” which would stigmatize trans people as “abnormal.” In discussions regarding trans issues, one would differentiate between women who are trans and women who aren’t by saying trans women and cis women.

**CISSEXISM:** The social system that privileges and normalizes cisgender bodies and identities, and by extension, brands trans people as abnormal, deviant, and unnatural. Cissexism can include assumptions about people’s bodies and how they relate to them, and what sort of transgender bodies are deemed “acceptable” in society.

**NONBINARY:** Preferred umbrella term for all genders other than female/male or woman/man; used as an adjective (e.g. Jesse is a nonbinary person). Many but not all nonbinary people consider themselves trans.

**TRANSGENDER:** An adjective describing people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth (e.g. Janet is a transgender woman). Someone identifying as transgender gives no indication of that person’s sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy, or how one is perceived in daily life. Transition paths and identities differ from person to person. Note that transgender does not have an “-ed” at the end and should never be used as a noun.

**TRANSPHOBIA:** Systemic violence against trans people, associated with attitudes such as fear, discomfort, distrust, or disdain. This word is used similarly to homophobia, xenophobia, misogyny, etc.

**TRANS WOMAN/TRANS MAN:** Trans woman generally describes someone assigned male at birth who identifies as a woman. Trans man generally describes someone assigned female at birth who identifies as a man. Sometimes trans women identify as male-to-female (also MTF, M2F, or trans feminine) and sometimes trans men identify as female-to-male (also FTM, F2M, or trans masculine). Please ask before identifying someone. Use the term and pronouns preferred by the individual.

For more definitions, you can visit [www.transstudent.org/definitions](http://www.transstudent.org/definitions).

# INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

## FACULTY, STUDENT, & SECURITY TRAININGS

We highly recommend comprehensive training for faculty and students, preferably in the beginning of the year during orientation. This can be taught by local Gender/Sexuality/LGBTQ Centers, transgender activists, and transgender organizations. Campus police, local law enforcement, and security staff should also receive trans-specific training in order to effectively and knowledgeably keep campus safe for all students.

## INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL

It is incredibly important that students learn about transgender issues. Encouraging professors to include transgender literature in class can help educate the community as a whole. Resources can be found at [www.transstudent.org](http://www.transstudent.org).

In addition to creating a strong admissions policy, we urge colleges to promote other changes necessary for trans students' well-being on campus. A policy on transgender admissions alone, while critically important for institutions of higher learning to have, cannot change the rampant transphobia and cissexism in education systems and society. Education and properly instituted safety measures are vital for a healthy campus community.

In addition to these policies being implemented, it is important that institutions publicize policy changes in order to convey the message that they are creating a safer space for transgender students. This can be done by alerting various media outlets of the changes, making the policy visible on school literature given to prospective students, and advertising changes to current trans students.

In order to create an environment in which everyone is held accountable for the safety of their campus, colleges should implement official policies regarding anti-trans behaviors. These policies should work similarly to existing race- and sexuality-based protections, and should allow for students to request further investigation if necessary.

## SUPPORT FOR MATRICULATED TRANS STUDENTS

If trans students have not been previously enrolled in the institution, it is important that schools work to create resources for their wellbeing. This can take many forms, such as supporting social groups for transgender students, forging relationships with local trans-friendly healthcare providers, and making sure students have adequate facility access.

# POLICY CHANGES

Sex assigned at birth, medical history, and legal status (sex on any documentation) should not influence a trans applicant's eligibility to attend a college meant for marginalized genders. Many transgender people do not have access to or even desire hormones or surgery, which are often required to change legal status. What should matter is an applicant's self-identification.

Using standard, inclusive terminology, this policy provides a straightforward outline for admission. It is based on several different existing policies at women's colleges, along with the input of activists and community members.

## ADMISSIONS POLICY LANGUAGE

**The following academically qualified students are eligible for admission consideration, regardless of sex assigned at birth, medical history, or legal status:**

- Cisgender women
- Transgender women
- Transgender men
- People of nonbinary and all other gender identities, excluding cisgender men

**The following academically qualified students are not eligible for admission consideration:**

- Cisgender men

## FACTS

- Implementing this policy does not change the fundamental nature of a women's institution. The purpose of women's colleges was originally to center women as a marginalized gender, whose histories are erased and whose experiences have been traditionally excluded and neglected in higher education that caters toward cisgender men. Making a women's college more inclusive toward transgender people solidifies that institution's commitment to supporting students of all marginalized genders, including transgender people.

- It is not against Title IX for a women's college to admit a spectrum of genders. This will not affect Title IX or have any influence on funding.<sup>2</sup>

- Several women's colleges have already taken the initiative to create inclusive policies (see existing admissions policies).

- Rates of "trans regret" are extremely low and trans students who apply to institutions are extremely unlikely to detransition, particularly trans women who are opting to go to women's colleges.<sup>3</sup>

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Resources and organizations for trans people:

[www.transstudent.org/sites](http://www.transstudent.org/sites)

Gender, sex assigned at birth, and sexuality:

[www.transstudent.org/gender](http://www.transstudent.org/gender)

Conferences for LGBTQ people:

[www.transstudent.org/conferences](http://www.transstudent.org/conferences)

## EXISTING ADMISSIONS POLICIES:

Mills College: [http://www.mills.edu/academics/undergraduate/catalog/admission\\_applying.php](http://www.mills.edu/academics/undergraduate/catalog/admission_applying.php)

Scripps College: <http://inside.scrippscollege.edu/admissionpolicy>

Mount Holyoke College: <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/policies/admission-transgender-students>

Bryn Mawr College: <http://www.brynmawr.edu/pensby/GenderIdentityandExpression.htm>

Simmons College: <http://www.simmons.edu/admission-and-financial-aid/undergraduate-admission/how-to-apply/admission-requirements-and-deadlines/admission-policy-for-transgender-students-faq>

Wellesley College: <http://www.wellesley.edu/news/>

## RECOMMENDED CITATION

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READ THIS POLICY ONLINE AT:

[WWW.TRANSSTUDENT.ORG/  
WOMENSCOLLEGES](http://WWW.TRANSSTUDENT.ORG/WOMENSCOLLEGES)

1 Spade, Dean. "Trans Students and Women's Colleges." Keynote Speech, Barnard SGA Townhall, New York, NY, April 29, 2014.

2 Kraschel, Katherine. "Trans-Cending Space In Women's Only Spaces: Title IX Cannot Be The Basis For Exclusion." Harvard Journal of Law & Gender 35, no. 463 (2012): 463-85.

3 Close, Colin, Affirming Gender, Affirming Lives: A Report of the 2011 Transition Survey. Santa Rosa, CA: GATE, 2012

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