



UMassAmherst
The Commonwealth's Flagship Campus

UMass Pronoun Policies and Practices for Staff

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(they/them)

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Why Pronouns Are Important

- As a society, we commonly assume the gender of others by their appearance and indicate these assumptions by using gendered language, such as she/he, ma'am/sir, Ms./Mr., and ladies/gentlemen.
- This practice results in many individuals, especially trans and gender-nonconforming individuals, being misgendered, which makes them feel marginalized and invisible.
- As an institution that is committed to the inclusion of historically underrepresented groups and ensuring a respectful, safe, and inclusive campus for all members of the community, UMass is working to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to indicate their pronouns and to have their pronouns be respected.

Pronouns in SPIRE

- UMass was one of the first colleges in the country to enable students to indicate their pronouns on campus records. Since 2018, students have been able to go into SPIRE and add their pronouns.
- The UMass undergraduate and graduate applications give students the ability to indicate their pronouns, and these pronouns will be uploaded to SPIRE.



UMass Amherst Pronoun Options (can choose two options)

Subjective	Objective	Possessive	Reflexive	Examples
He	Him	His	Himself	The book is his. He identifies outside a gender binary.
She	Her	Hers	Herself	The book is hers. She identifies outside a gender binary.
They	Them	Theirs	Themselves	The book is theirs. They identify outside a gender binary.
Xe (pronounced "zee")	Xem (pronounced "zem")	Xyrs (pronounced "zers")	Xyrself (pronounced "zerself")	The book is xirs. Xe identifies outside a gender binary.
Ze (pronounced "zee")	Zir (pronounced "zer")	Zirs (pronounced "zers")	Zirself (pronounced "zerself")	The book is zirs. Ze identifies outside a gender binary.

Any Pronouns: Individuals who do not care which pronouns others use for them or want others to vary their pronoun use for them. It is best to ask which option the person desires.

Name Only: Individuals who do not use pronouns and want to be known by their name only.

Choose Not to Disclose

Where Pronouns Appear

- Class Rosters
 - Advisee Lists
 - Student Services Center
 - Other administrative pages in SPIRE
- Pronouns are thus available to instructors, advisors, academic deans and department administrators, and the staffs of administrative offices, including, but not limited to, the Registrar's Office, the Bursar's Office, Financial Aid, Residential Life, and UMPD.

Pronouns in SPIRE

The screenshot shows the SPIRE website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'SPIRE University of Massachusetts' and a breadcrumb trail: 'Favorites | Main Menu > Campus Profiles > Student Services Center'. Below this, a user profile is displayed with a red arrow pointing to the text '(He/Him)'. To the right of the pronouns is an 'ID:' field. Below the profile are two buttons: 'student center' and 'finances'. A 'Student Center' link is also visible. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column has an 'Academics' header and a 'Fall 2018 Schedule' table. The right column has a 'Message Center' section with a link 'About the Message Center' and the text 'You have NO messages in your Message Center.', a 'SEARCH FOR CLASSES' button, a 'Holds' section with 'No Holds.', and a 'To Do List' section with 'No To Do's.'. A 'Mobile View' button is located in the bottom left corner.

Navigation: Favorites | Main Menu > Campus Profiles > Student Services Center

Profile: (He/Him) ID: [REDACTED]

Buttons: student center, finances

Section: Student Center

Academics

Message Center

SEARCH FOR CLASSES

Holds: No Holds.

To Do List: No To Do's.

Mobile View

Fall 2018 Schedule	
Class	Schedule
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

weekly schedule ▶

Where pronouns appear in the Student Services Center in SPIRE

- In interacting with a student, it is unlikely you will have a reason to refer to them in the third person. But if you need to do so, be sure to see if they have pronouns listed and always use those pronouns.
- In interacting with a parent/guardian, **do not** use the pronouns listed, if these pronouns are “ze/zir,” “xe/xem,” or “the opposite” of the sex assigned to them (i.e., someone assigned female who uses “he/him” or someone assigned male who use “she/her”), **until** you hear how the parent/guardian genders their child. To do otherwise might out that student to their parent/guardian. Until you hear how the parent/guardian genders their child, you should use “they/them” as generic pronouns, the student’s name, and phrases like “your child” and “the student.”
- If a parent/guardian uses the pronouns listed, begin to do so likewise. If the parent/guardian misgenders their child, do not correct them. You can continue to use “they/them,” the student’s name, and phrases like “your child” and “the student” so that you do not misgender the student too.

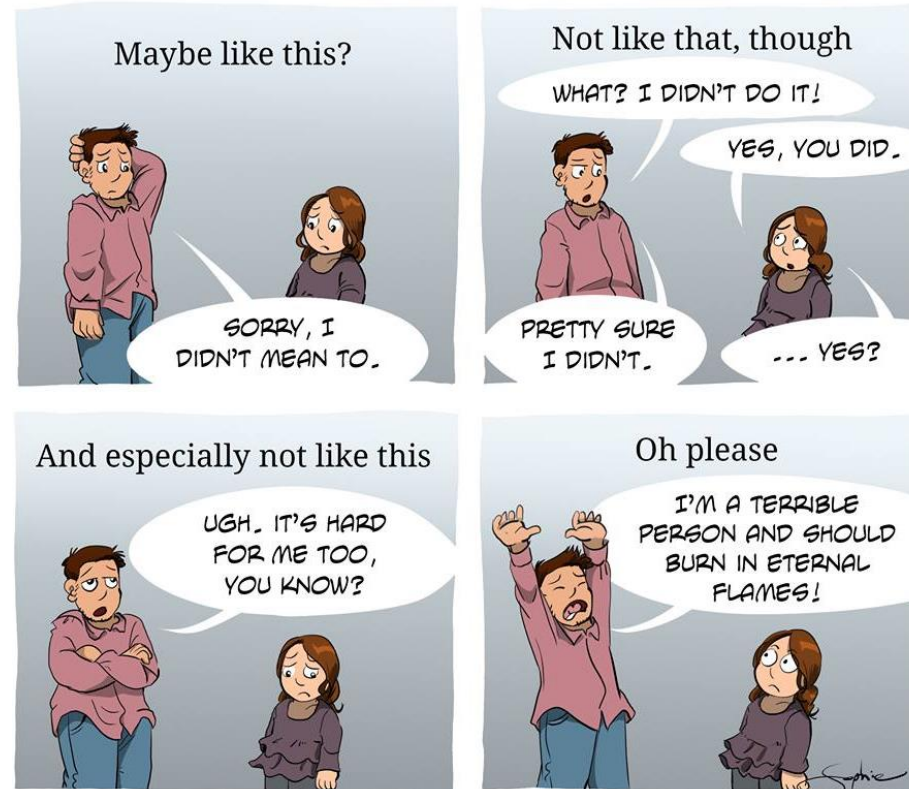
What If I Mistakenly Use the Wrong Pronouns for Someone?

- ❑ The best thing to do if you realize you just used the wrong pronoun for someone in a conversation with them is to say something right away, such as “**Sorry, I meant they.**” Fix it, but do not call special attention to the error. If you realize your mistake after the fact, apologize to the person at your next opportunity.
- Do not go on and on to the misgendered person about how bad you feel that you messed up or how hard it is for you to get it right. It is inappropriate and makes the person who was misgendered feel awkward and responsible for comforting you, which is not their job. It is your job to remember people’s pronouns.

What If I Mistakenly Use the Wrong Pronouns for Someone?

How to react
when you misgender a trans person

- If someone indicates to you that you have misgendered another person, thank them for letting you know, as correcting someone is an act of care and can be risk-taking.



What If Someone Else Mistakenly Uses the Wrong Pronouns for a Person?

- ❑ In most cases, the best thing to do if you hear someone misgender another person is to gently correct them without further embarrassing the individual who has been misgendered. You can say something, such as “**Actually, Xena uses she/her pronouns for herself,**” and then move on. If a person refuses to use the appropriate pronouns for someone, **do not ignore it**. It is important that the harassment of others not be tolerated. It may be appropriate to speak to the person in private to correct the misgendering behavior.
- ❑ It may also be appropriate to check-in with the person who has been misgendered and say something, such as “**I noticed that you were being referred to by the wrong pronouns earlier, and I know that this can be really hurtful. Would you be okay with me taking the person aside and reminding them about your appropriate pronouns? I want to make sure that this space is safe for you.**” Take your cues from the comfort level of the person who has been misgendered.

Keep in Mind

- ❖ Say “the pronouns someone uses” or “their personal pronouns,” rather than “their preferred pronouns,” because the pronouns someone uses are not a preference.
- ❖ Not everyone feels comfortable indicating their pronouns in every setting and they should not feel forced to do so. If you ask students to indicate their pronouns when they indicate their names, say something like, “please say your name and, if you want, please provide the pronouns you use for yourself.” You can set an example by stating your pronouns first or including your pronouns on your syllabus.
- ❖ There is more information about pronouns on the UMass Amherst Pronoun FAQ on the front page of the Stonewall Center’s website under the icon at right.



Questions?

Feel free to email me:

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