Recommendations for Collecting Trans Inclusive Data at the University of Minnesota

Unfortunately, there is a not an easy solution or one solution to creating trans and gender non-conforming inclusive forms, especially in a system as large and complex as the University of Minnesota. Transgender communities are very diverse communities and a “one size fits all” approach will not work in many if not all cases.

Here are the Gender and Sexuality Center for Queer and Trans Life and the Trans Advisory & Action Team’s current recommendations:

1. Critically examine if asking sex/gender on a document is really needed.
2. If it isn't possible to remove the question about sex/gender all together, then it is good to be as clear as possible on the form about why the question is being asked and how the information will be used.
3. If the information (sex/gender) is not being used for anything, then the question should be removed from the form.
4. If the information is being used for something (i.e. mandated reporting) and the U of M needs to ask the question, explain on the form what it will be used for and why you are asking. Also, explain what the response options are and why those are the options.
5. If what needs to be collected is a sex indicator that would align with state-issued ID documents, be clear about why, which documents need to align, and ask for "legal sex" or what may be a better statement "sex as indicated on state-issued ID."
6. If data is being collected on how individuals identify, ask “gender identity” and leave open, blank spaces for people to write in their responses.

Resources

Human Rights Campaign

The Human Rights Campaign has guidelines on collecting trans-inclusive gender data in the workplace and on surveys.

“For reporting purposes, employers tend to "over-ask" for demographic data such as age, gender and ethnicity. Particularly when asked for something related to work, the question of gender with seemingly simple "female" and "male" options can pose a challenge for transgender people, particularly those that are in the process of or are considering transitioning genders. Some may be concerned about how that data may be used or compared to personal records, or they may feel
limited by the "female" or "male" options. When evaluating whether to ask employees about gender on non-essential forms, employers should consider:

- What is the business rationale for asking about gender on the particular form?
- How does asking for the data relate to your organization's overall diversity strategy?
- How will that data be used, protected and reported? What legal restrictions might there be on collection or storage of demographic data, in the U.S. or globally?

If the data is not essential, consider removing the question, make sure the question is clearly optional (particularly for online forms) or allow people to self-identify by asking an open-ended question."

The Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals

The Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals currently suggests the following in regards to supporting transgender students. These suggestions may apply to our work with employees as well:

1. Critically examine if asking gender on a document is really needed.
2. Enable students to self-identify their gender on forms. Suggested wording:
   a. Gender Identity: _______________; or, when such an open-ended question is not possible:
   b. Gender Identity (choose all that apply):
      i. __ woman
      ii. __ man
      iii. __ transgender (please specify): ____________
      iv. __ another identity (please specify): ____________
3. Ideally, institutions should only ask about gender identity. But recognizing for example, that many women’s colleges currently limit enrollment to women whose documents identify them as such, it may still be necessary to ask “sex” on admissions forms. In such cases, both “sex” (“female” and “male”) and “gender identity” should be asked.

Penn State LGBT Student Resource Center

In 2011 a similar document was created by Penn State LGBT Student Resource Center and supported by members of the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals stating: “Offer students the ability to self-identify their gender on all student forms, including but not limited to applications, health forms, and grievance forms.

Promising Practices

- Duke University: Students may self-identify their gender on the Duke supplemental application form, which asks only for Gender: ____________ (Duke University, 2011).
- Oregon State University: The Health History and Immunizations form allows students to select ‘male’, ‘female’, or ‘transgender’ (Student Health Services, 2010).