

2023 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

Harvard University

Expanded Gender-Inclusive Options for Employees

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

1. Prevention (Embedding the Values of Diversity, Inclusion, and Respect into Recruitment, Hiring, Admissions, Retention, Promotion, and Advancement)
2. Response (Improved Policies)

Description of Work:

In collaboration with Harvard Human Resources, Harvard University Information Technology, and the Office for Gender Equity (OGE), the Office for Equity, Inclusion, Diversity and Belonging, (OEIDB) coordinated an initiative to integrate more inclusive self-identification options for employees into PeopleSoft, one of Harvard's internal people management systems. With input from the LGBTQ+ Community Coalition, expanded non-binary, gender identity, and pronouns options became available within the system to employees in July 2022. This initiative acknowledges that binary options cannot encompass the broad diversity — specifically gender diversity — that creates the Harvard community. The expanded gender-inclusive options for employees within University technical systems is a step towards aligning administrative systems with Harvard's vision and values, and helps to ensure the University is not only being inclusive but also accurate in its data collection, an essential data point in informing future diversity and inclusion programs.

A principal goal of this initiative was to cultivate an environment where individuals feel safe to participate fully in University life — whether within the realm of studying, teaching, conducting research, or working to support the community's individual and collective goals. To this end, the various offices who worked collaboratively to see the project through emphasized the importance of not simply speaking about the intention of honoring gender diversity but intentionally creating the space where people can bring their whole selves to where they work and learn.

When new employees join and are welcomed to the community, PeopleSoft is often the first touchstone that individuals encounter. This systemic change is one way in which the University can demonstrate that all dimensions of its community members' identities are welcome.

Almost a year into its implementation, the website regarding self-identification at Harvard now reads, "As part of Harvard's commitment to creating an inclusive environment that welcomes the diversity of individuals and fosters belonging and equity, the University invites you to self-select your gender identity and add pronouns. Providing this information is entirely voluntary; no one is required to provide this information." This initiative and its resulting systems improvement fits directly within the rubric area of *Prevention* by embedding the values of diversity, inclusion, and respect into recruitment, hiring, admissions, retention, promotion, and advancement; these expanded options for employees also fit within the *Response* rubric indicator related to improved policies.

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As stated by Harvard's Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer in the July 14, 2022, [Harvard Gazette article](#) regarding this initiative, "to achieve cultural change, we need to promote better structures and better habits. So now that we have better structures in place, we can all be empowered to do our part to develop better habits around our pronoun use...That should just be commonplace here. It's fundamental, and it's a form of respect to refer to people by the correct pronouns. It's fundamental to human dignity.

An inclusive environment caters fully to every member...For our trans, nonbinary, gender nonconforming, and gender queer faculty, staff, researchers, and students, who in many cases not only are experiencing threats of violence in the world but also threats to other forms of their civil rights, the smallest thing that we can do to support and include them is to acknowledge all aspects of their full humanity and human dignity." The future of this initiative is to continue to build upon these improved systems to further embed inclusive practices into every corner of the Harvard community.

Website for further information (if applicable): <https://edib.harvard.edu/gender-id-pronouns>

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