LEHIGH UNIVERSITY
FACULTY GUIDE TO GENDER, SEX, & SEXUALITY IN THE CLASSROOM

gender, sex, & sexuality - what’s the difference?
➔ sex: a biological category determined by a combination of chromosomes, hormones, secondary sex characteristics, & internal/external sex organs
➔ gender identity: an individual’s emotional and psychological sense of gender
➔ gender expression: the way in which someone presents their gender and is perceived by society
➔ sexual orientation: level & type of attraction to others

note: these categories are distinct from one another & are not necessarily deterministic (i.e., an individual assigned a male sex may not necessarily identify as a man or have a masculine gender expression)

how do I talk about gender, sex, & sexuality categories?
➔ sex: sex categories are usually designated as male & female; an individual’s sex can also fall outside these categories based on a difference of sex development (DSD) or intersex condition
➔ gender identity: gender identity categories are commonly just called gender categories, and are most appropriately described with words such as man/men & woman/women; some individuals may identify with another gender category, such as being transgender or genderqueer
➔ gender expression: the ways that individuals express their gender are usually referred to using words like masculine, feminine, androgynous, & gender non-conforming
➔ sexual orientation: there are a multitude of categories that individuals may use to identify their sexual orientation; examples may include lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, asexual, & many others

some helpful terms
➔ LGBTQ+: a term that refers to a broad spectrum of gender identities and sexual orientations, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, & pansexual; self-identification and self-definition are paramount when discussing these identities, as preferred terms may vary depending on the individual
➔ cisgender: describes someone whose gender identity aligns with societal expectations based on their assigned sex at birth (i.e., an individual assigned a female sex who identifies as a woman)
➔ transgender: a general term to describe a group of people whose gender identity differs from societal expectations based on their assigned sex at birth; examples may include:
  ◆ transgender man (an individual assigned a female sex who identifies as a man)
  ◆ transgender woman (an individual assigned a male sex who identifies as a woman)
  ◆ genderqueer or gender non-conforming (an individual who does not identify as a man or as a woman)

why are these distinctions important for my classroom?

Whether you are teaching a course on mechanical, chemical, environmental engineering, or another topic, gender & sex categories may show up in unexpected ways. It’s important to be mindful of these topics regardless of your discipline for several reasons:
➔ commitment to inclusion: Lehigh University is committed to the inclusion of and respect for all individuals regardless of sexuality, gender identity, and/or gender expression; as a member of this community, you have a responsibility to uphold that commitment
➔ maximizing student learning: students learn best when their environment is free of barriers; by using inclusive language and respectful practices, you are creating an environment where learning can occur more effectively for everyone
➔ eliminating disparities: LGBTQ+ people are one of many groups underrepresented in STEM; by becoming more inclusive practitioners, we can begin to explore ways to improve the pipeline and eliminate these disparities
tips for creating an inclusive classroom environment

➔ set a tone of respect on the very first day of class
➔ assume that you have LGBTQ+-identified students in your classroom, and work to create an inclusive environment for them
➔ don’t assume that a student identifies as a man or woman based on their appearance, or that your students identify as straight; it’s especially important to guard against language that makes assumptions (“this man said __,” “she just told us that ___,” “if she was married, her husband would ___,” etc)
➔ take attendance / call role only after you have given students a chance to state what they prefer to be called, and allow students to self-identify their name & pronouns before the first day of your course
  ◆ a note on pronouns: individuals may go by she/her/hers, he/him/his, gender-neutral pronouns such as they/them/their, or an additional set of pronouns; if you are unsure of someone’s pronouns, ask
➔ avoid gendered groupings (“men on this side, women on this side”) as these may alienate transgender & gender non-conforming students
➔ hold other students accountable if they use exclusive language or refer to another student using incorrect pronouns
➔ incorporate content from LGBTQ+ individuals in your discipline and highlight the contributions of LGBTQ+ people to your discipline
➔ admit when you’ve made a mistake, apologize, correct yourself, and move on

adapted from Some Very Basic Tips for Making Higher Education More Accessible to Trans Students and Rethinking How We Talk about Gendered Bodies by Dean Spade (Radical Teacher, Number 92, Winter 2011).

additional tips for advising LGBTQ+ students in engineering

1. Be mindful not to make assumptions about students, who may not always be fully open about their identities (40% of LGBTQ+ STEM workers in 2016 had not disclosed their identities to peers)

2. Be honest about what you know & do not know regarding inclusivity in particular sectors of engineering and/or potential workplaces if students inquire about these

3. Provide your students with resources where they can learn more about these topics (consult the Pride Center to learn more)

4. Remember that discrimination based LGBTQ+ identity can and does impact academic success (LGBTQ+ engineering students in a 2011 study overwhelmingly reported isolation and feeling that their institutions were hostile environments)

opportunities through the Pride Center

➔ learn
  ◆ attend an LUally training or request one for your department (opportunities listed at go.lehigh.edu/LUally)
  ◆ invite an LGBTQ+-identified guest speaker into your classroom to lecture
  ◆ screen an LGBTQ+-themed film in your classroom

➔ engage
  ◆ be present at LGBTQ+-related events on campus (find out about these from our newsletter at go.lehigh.edu/pridenews)
  ◆ co-advising one of the Pride Center’s affiliated groups
  ◆ join the Faculty & Staff Pride Network or Pride Faculty Council

➔ act
  ◆ prominently display inclusive images / “ally” symbols in your office
  ◆ don’t tolerate exclusive language from students or other faculty members
  ◆ refer students to the Pride Center as needed