



Edwards Business
Students' Society
University of Saskatchewan



Call to Introduce Steps for Trans and Non-Binary Inclusion at Edwards

Thursday, Dec. 21, 2023

via email to: willoughby@edwards.usask.ca
and bourassa@edwards.usask.ca
and delbaere@edwards.usask.ca

To Dean Keith Willoughby and the Dean's Office at the Edwards School of Business,

As a founding Headperson of the Edwards Queer Students' Society (EQSS) and current VP of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization (EDID) at the Edwards Business Students' Society (EBSS), I wanted to recognize the growing commitment that Edwards leadership has displayed towards the 2SLGBTQ+ community, namely your willingness to learn and to exemplify learnings through your significant role within the college.

In taking this opportunity to follow up, I am emphasizing recommendations in three areas, which were actively and specifically identified by a number of trans, non-binary and Two-Spirit students¹ at Edwards and, are supported by vast research on EDI practices. Some of the following concerns have been previously raised at the Dean's Tuition Townhall² and in EQSS-led spaces³, as 2SLGBTQ+ students at Edwards face numerous gaps in the fulfillment of their basic needs.

1. **Faculty, classroom and curriculum**: Introducing mandatory training on gender, implementing consistent steps related to proper use of pronouns, and dedicating resources towards developing a trans-informed curriculum and pedagogy.
2. **Infrastructure and physical space**: Building inclusive bathrooms in Edwards
3. **Employment, career services and advising**: Introducing inclusion criteria and/or recommended guidelines for potential employers when promoting their companies to Edwards students and improving advising support for trans students.

The following recommendations are fundamentally rooted in Edwards' commitments to Indigenous perspectives and knowledge, critical thinking, and open inquiry⁴, which cannot be fulfilled without tangible actions towards dismantling the gender binary⁵ and inclusion of Two-Spirit and Trans people.

¹ See Appendix E for definitions of terms and concepts used

² Held in the Winter 2023 term

³ Particularly, EQSS' first Gala in February 2023

⁴ Values outlined in the [Edwards Strategic Plan](#)

⁵ [The Colonial Project of Gender \(and Everything Else\)](#)

Detailed Recommendations for Trans and Non-Binary Inclusion at Edwards

1. Faculty, classroom and curriculum

a. Training and sustained professional development

Faculty should receive mandatory paid training and education on the basics of gender and sexuality. They should receive professional development sessions, reading materials or a combination thereof, to increase their understanding and awareness of gender and enable them to take informed steps in creating gender inclusion in their classrooms. See Appendix A for potential training objectives and delivery options⁶.

Faculty training should be followed by/done alongside the addition of gender-inclusion-related questions for course evaluations as well as the incorporation of EDI-related performance measures.

While I understand institutional barriers to implementing this recommendation, it hinges on the recognition of our College's new strategy to "enrich our teaching and learning environments to position all students for success"⁷ and their historical willingness/ability to be innovative in the face of university-level inadequacies⁸.

b. Pronoun use

Misgendering causes anxiety, distress, gender dysphoria, and is a significant contributor to high suicide rates⁹. Trans, gender nonconforming, Two-Spirit, and non-binary students within the Edwards community face this dehumanizing and isolating experience every day—in the classroom, among peers in group projects, at networking events, and beyond.

While some faculty members make more of an effort to use appropriately-gendered language, placing the onus on individual professors to make their classes more inclusive does not ensure that marginalized students feel safe, validated, and respected in their time at the college. An accepting learning environment is a key aspect of job effectiveness for faculty members and of the college's effectiveness as an educational institution and employer. Having students feel that they must out themselves in order to be accommodated has the potential to increase surveillance of trans and non-binary bodies and hence enhances the very risk of being victimized¹⁰.

In order to provide more support and allyship on a college-level, I urge:

- Faculty and staff introduce themselves with their pronouns in-person as well as add their pronouns to syllabi, email signatures, and any other written communications such as the [Edwards Faculty & Staff Directory](#).
- Faculty to set a precedent for students and encourage students to include their own pronouns in presentations, name cards, group introductions, etc.¹¹; and

⁶ See subsection 3 of letter re: extending training to Edwards staff as well

⁷ Goal 2, Point 1 in the [Edwards Strategic Plan](#)

⁸ For example, the use of a degree planning system (Online Folder Reports) and Career Services team, both of which are separate/independent of the University norm.

⁹ [Misgendering, a not so silent killer - The Chronicle](#)

¹⁰ Appendix C Source

¹¹ Something similar could be created for Accessibility. Some Edwards faculty use best practices for accommodation independently/intentionally, while some create excessive barriers for students with disabilities.

- Edwards leadership to create and implement a consistent guideline of best practices for Queer/Trans inclusion in teaching, with faculty/professors¹².

c. Curriculum and Pedagogy

While steering Edwards to create an accepting learning environment with respect to embracing gender diverse expression is important, it may not necessarily equate to developing a trans-informed curriculum. As a higher-ed institution aiming to foster innovation and inclusion, Edwards leadership and faculty need to recognize how the current absence of a trans-inclusive curriculum impacts trans inclusivity and livability in the Edwards community and in the organizations employing Edwards alumni. Not only is there a need for professional development for faculty as mentioned above, the need for a shift in our curriculum and pedagogy requires that such training should be sustained and explicitly address gender identity and gender complexity to be effective.

Many employers remain ill-equipped to create the policies and workplace cultures that would support trans employees, largely due to a lack of knowledge and focus on trans issues¹³. This remains true for workplaces in Saskatchewan, where many Edwards alumni hold leadership and HR roles with no education on trans issues in the workplace. In addition to the gaps in our HR and Management curricula, many faculty still need to rectify basic issues, such as using he/she in place of they in teaching material in classes and the use of exclusionary/misinformed gender categorization in research surveys/studies, especially in marketing.

There is an alarming need at Edwards to focus on and commit to trans-informed curriculum development and pedagogical intervention. After attending trans-informed professional development, faculty may resist gender-affirming and -informed pedagogy and be fixated on the logistics of accommodating trans students. This necessitates a commitment to integrate trans awareness and trans positive advocacy training into curriculum development. Such a commitment must be accompanied by specific accountability measures or allocation of resources¹⁴ (see Appendix C).

Examining transgender narratives in curriculum will result in a more expansive discussion of gender and gender embodiment, leading to a deeper understanding of the spectrum of identities. By becoming proactive in addressing systemic issues through actively promoting and suffusing trans-affirmative resources, curriculum, and pedagogy, schools can ensure the climate is significantly more positive for sexual and gender minority students.

Lastly, the content and asks in this letter should be shared and discussed openly among the Faculty Committee, and any Strategic Planning discussions. It should also eventually be discussed with all of the Department Heads, and involve every level of faculty.

¹² While this can/should be co-created with students, developing it requires labour as well as specialized skillsets and knowledge (like any strategic document/work valued by an organization). Ensure adequate compensation is provided for such work and prioritized from a HR lens (as opposed to committees or employees doing unpaid labour in addition to their primary role). The primary onus to resource the creation and implementation of such a guideline must lie with the College leadership and dept. heads.

¹³ [Creating a Trans-Inclusive Workplace. HBR](#)

¹⁴ For additional considerations and source referenced here

2. Infrastructure and space

Trans students face severe accessibility problems when it comes to gender-segregated facilities, like restrooms, locker rooms, shelters, treatment facilities, etc., and avoid using gender-segregated bathrooms because they feel unsafe and uncomfortable¹⁵. Many times, having the option to use only a specific bathroom at a specific location is stigmatizing and unintentionally outs those who do not share their gender identities with peers, faculty or staff. Some may opt to not go to the bathroom at all, making it harder to concentrate in class and in some cases, leading to urinary tract infections or more severe medical issues¹⁶. Some students skip class altogether due to these barriers as naturally, it causes additional anxiety and takes away from trans students' learning experiences.

ESB remains one of the few buildings on campus without an inclusive washroom, and the need for gender-neutral bathrooms remains imminent and unmet. Upon raising this issue in the Tuition Town Hall¹⁷, Edwards promoted the presence of "gender-neutral bathrooms" in the faculty wing in their Weekly Newsletter¹⁸. There are a few issues with this response.

First, students spend most of their time in the classroom wing and typically, do not use the faculty bathrooms. This means that they are not of utility, but also that trans students (and those visiting) would likely out themselves in using those bathrooms. Expecting trans and non-binary students to use these washrooms fundamentally defeats the point of inclusion, since our normal is needing to go out of our way to meet basic needs, often at the cost of our safety. There is also no proper signage in the building or in the Edwards map, making this solution even more inaccessible.

Second, notice that in the University Inclusive Washroom Map (see Appendix D), there are no Edwards bathrooms listed and there are requirements besides gender neutrality for a bathroom to be legitimately inclusive (See Appendix B). There has been no evaluation of this for the recommended faculty bathrooms being not only gender-neutral, but wheelchair accessible and having baby change tables, providing menstrual products¹⁹, which is quite standard²⁰. Hence, there also is no clear signage for these requirements, leading to more barriers to access them.

While Edwards is connected to the Arts and Law²¹ buildings; both colleges have large student populations and only one gender-neutral bathroom each, underscoring this need in the Edwards Building. **When our college decides to build an extra staircase, an exclusive finance room, and renew classrooms instead of investing in merely one infrastructure change that is essential for our safety and basic needs, it sends a crucial message—that we are not a priority.** While we understand certain changes are donor-driven, we regularly feel the effects of being constantly deprioritized and neglected in Edwards' strategic planning and decision-making. Everyone deserves equal access to public facilities, without fear of violence or harassment for using an affirming bathroom, and to have this basic need met.

¹⁵ [Inclusive Use Restrooms, Delgado Community College](#)

¹⁶ [Why gender-neutral bathrooms benefit all young people, LA Times](#)

¹⁷ Held in the Winter 2023 term

¹⁸ No additional marketing was done beyond this, to the best of our knowledge

¹⁹ [USask launches Period Equity Project](#)

²⁰ [Inclusive Washrooms & Change Rooms | UBC](#)

²¹ Law's sole gender-neutral bathroom is on a floor locked after 4:30

3. Employment, Career and Advising

a. Employment and Career Services improvements

Trans people experience extreme levels of poverty and unemployment. More than one in four transgender people have lost a job due to bias, and more than three-fourths have experienced some form of workplace discrimination²². Refusal to hire, privacy violations, harassment, and even physical and sexual violence on the job are common occurrences, and are experienced at even higher rates by trans people of color. Many people report changing jobs to avoid discrimination or the risk of discrimination²³.

There are many gaps in our career services that prevent trans and non-binary people from participating and thriving in existing programs, as well as a lack of dedicated resources to ensure we thrive in the workplace. In the Co-operative Education (Co-op) Program, there is no standard of inclusion that employers are expected to maintain. In leaving it up to trans students to find out the degree to which an employer may be inclusive, Edwards puts them in unsafe and discriminatory situations. There is little to no dedicated support in navigating tough employment situations for trans students and in asserting and knowing their rights in the workplace. Outside of the Co-op Program, this oversight carries into jobs posted on Careerlink and The Latest.

This calls for introducing inclusion criteria and/or ensuring guidelines for potential employers are in place as a condition to promoting their companies to Edwards students. Rather than simply sharing a resource, there must be tangible efforts to ensure employers' commitments to inclusion are laid out (i.e. how do they commit to inclusion of gender-diverse students through their policies or outlining exact actions) and determining if they are a safe space for Two-Spirit, queer and trans employees (including the organizations' awareness of anti-discrimination policies and Employee/Human Rights)

Finally, there are no efforts made to promote gender inclusion at networking events (see Appendix B). To build a more welcoming environment for networking, Edwards (Career Services) can work on a few gaps.

- Add a pronouns section to the free Edwards business cards. Currently, if you try to put it in the name text input box, it malfunctions and does not compute.
- Provide Pronoun pins at networking events and encourage their use.
- Promote the use of pronouns during Co-op Workshops (starting from the very first one) and in all other Career Services workshops.
- Conduct educational sessions to increase awareness of diverse gender expressions and support for gender non-conformity in the workplace²⁴

b. Improving advising support

Edwards often exercises their ability to create better processes/supports independently in areas where the university lacks as an institution, such as career advising, degree/course planning and so on. I urge Edwards to explore the creation of better college-level supports in navigating existing procedures for trans students, which are ineffective and inefficient. This includes but is not limited to, outdated forms, right to leaves for transitioning, and managing legal names versus preferred names. By placing the onus on students to not only out themselves but also

²² [Employment | National Center for Transgender Equality](#)

²³ [Employment | National Center for Transgender Equality](#)

²⁴ [The Problematic Politics Of Style And Gender Identity In The Workplace | HuffPost Life](#)

claim their own transgender identity and the subsequent required accommodations, wider university policies continue to enforce cisgender privilege, for example, creating an “other” gender category while still maintaining the dominant gender binary.

Additionally, I also urge you to evaluate the knowledge levels of career/academic advisors as well as their managers on navigating trans issues, and providing adequate training where required. Besides this, many students do not feel safe/comfortable going to college staff for support due to the mistreatment they face within institutions. This calls for Edwards staff and faculty to continue taking the lead in connecting with queer students to build trust.

Further dedicated resources and initiatives can look like, but are not limited to:

- Creating an advising role specifically trained/well-versed in understanding and navigating challenges and needs that arise in our careers and higher ed, and being a safe space to discuss and provide tangible support through sensitive concerns²⁵.
- A mentorship program that connects trans students with faculty, staff, or alumni who can offer guidance and support as they navigate their academic and career paths.

More often than not, trans-affirmative changes in educational institutions are taken solely in response to the presence of trans students or by trans students advocating for themselves. This calls for a shift, as the education system is actively renouncing their fundamental responsibility towards gender-diverse students²⁶.

As you, Edwards leadership, are called to work to fulfill this responsibility and improve the experiences of current and future students, I hope this additional context is helpful. While these actions are significant and hold great value, they remain a starting-point for trans inclusion in our college. Needless to say, the recommendations would overall improve our EDI outcomes as a college and meet the priorities of many external stakeholders who value queer and trans inclusion in post-secondary institutions. I’m open to further discussion as needed, and engaging queer/trans students more in making these necessary changes happen.

Sincerely,

Harleen Arora (they/she/he)

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Co-founder, EQSS
Final-year HR Student, ESB

Supported by,

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**On Behalf of the Edwards Business Students’ Society,
Edwards Queer Students’ Society and USSU Pride Centre**

²⁵ If this responsibility is added onto an existing role/employee, ensure additional/adequate compensation is provided to match the value they are bringing with such a specialized skillset.

²⁶Appendix C Source

Appendices

Appendix A - Training considerations

- Training objectives as a starting point, from [Positive Space: Foundations - Equity & Inclusion Office, UBC](#).
 - differentiate between sex, gender, and sexuality as distinct and connected concept;
 - identify and critically examine how:
 - binary understanding of gender works as a tool of colonization,
 - assumptions and stereotypes of gender and sexuality construct everyday life through normative frameworks, and
 - patterns of normativity are expressed and located within the UBC context;
 - explore the growing number of terms and labels used by 2SLGBTQIA+ community members to reflect their identities and sense of community;
 - recognize and apply respectful and inclusive practices surrounding name, pronoun use, and inclusive language at UBC; and
 - identify strategies and apply practices that support repairing harmful mistakes and good apology practices that lead to behaviour changes.
- Although there are existing online modules readily available, working with a local facilitator would be better. Perhaps someone from OUTSaskatoon, the Women and Gender Studies/Political Studies Department, or part of the university community.
- OUTSaskatoon's pre-existing training sessions that are relevant: Terminology, gender inclusive language, pronouns, washrooms, change rooms, and gendered spaces, the concept of safe space, and how to provide inclusive customer service, Two-Spirit 101.
- Basic training can also be equivalent to taking modules of a foundational Women and Gender Studies course like WGST [112](#), [201](#) or [210](#). I would highly encourage you to have a cohort of faculty do one of these courses. This would not only provide training, but introduce them to new ways of thinking, doing, and learning/teaching and facilitate change-management.

Appendix B - Brief reading materials

[The Pronoun Primer - Social Innovation Lab - College of Law | University of Saskatchewan](#)

[Teaching Beyond the Gender Binary in the University Classroom, Vanderbilt University](#)

[Minimizing Misgendering: A Plea for Better Pronoun Practices](#)

[Trans Sask Community Report](#) - The province's first ever report released in 2022, that surveyed the experiences of Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary and gender nonconforming (2STNBGN) people across Saskatchewan. Includes relevant data and recommendations.

[Going beyond Trans Visibility](#) - A simple guide for adopting gender-neutral, universal washrooms, by Qmunity, BC's Queer, Trans and Two-Spirit Resource Centre

Appendix C - Consideration(s) for a shift in curriculum

(From a source referenced throughout)

As part of this recommendation 1c, there is a need for constructive steps toward gender democratization which entails a shift in the focus from the individual rights framing of discrimination to thinking more broadly about how gender categories are enforced on all people in ways that have particularly dangerous outcomes for trans people. While this does not mean that trans and non-binary students should not be at the center of trans affirmative policy articulation and enactment, it is crucial to develop a trans-informed curriculum which moves beyond merely accommodating trans students.

Omercajic K and Martino W (2020). Supporting Transgender Inclusion and Gender Diversity in Schools: A Critical Policy Analysis. *Front. Sociol.* 5:27. doi: 10.3389/fsoc.2020.00027. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fsoc.2020.00027/full>

Appendix D - [Inclusive Washroom Map | USSU](#)



HEALTH SCIENCE

1 E - WING
1036

2 A - WING
A402
A428
4A01.2

3 B - WING
2B19
3B23
4B28
5B20
6B24
GA01.4
2A01.4
3A01.4
4A01.4

4 LAW

Room 231

5 ARTS

Room 242

6 GORDON OAKES RED BEAR STUDENT CENTRE

Room 190.13
Room 129
Room 222
Room 223
Room 224
Room 225
Room 226
Room 227
Room 228
Room 229

7 EMMANUEL & ST CHAD CHAPEL
Room 102

8 EDUCATION

Room 1114.1
Room 3043

9 THORVALDSON

Room 109.3

10 MURRAY LIBRARY

Room G23
Room 610

11 PLACE RIEL

Room 110.1
Room 210.3

12 MEMORIAL UNION BUILDING

Room 102.1
Room 116
Room 117

13 COLLABORATIVE SCIENCES RESEARCH

Room 101
Room 201
Room 301

14 W.P THOMPSON (BIOLOGY)

Room 103

15 KIRK HALL

Room 141.1

16 PHYSICS

Room 37
Room 108

17 PETER MACKINNON

Room 209.1
Room 209.3

18 VETERINARY MEDICINE

Room 1243
Room 1244
Room 1308
Room 1320
Room 1401.2
Room 1501.1

19 ENGINEERING

Room 1C133
Room 1C131

20 KINESIOLOGY (PAC)

Room 141.8
Room 141.9
Room 186
Room 187
Room 188.1
Room 188.3
Room 188.4

21 PARKING SERVICES

Room 109

22 GRIFFITHS STADIUM (STANDS)

Room 177
Room 178

23 MERLIS BELSHER PLACE

Room 1A16
Room 2C10
Room 2C32

● GENDER NEUTRAL

■ WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE

▲ ACCESSIBILITY UNKNOWN

▨ SHOWER & CHANGE ROOM

▭ BABY CHANGE TABLE

Appendix E - Definition of Terms and Concepts

2SLGBTQ+ Community: Encompasses those who identify as Two Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, or any other non-heterosexual or non-cisgender identity. The "+" at the end of the initialism is used to represent all other non-heterosexual or non-cisgender identities that may not be explicitly included in the acronym. The 2SLGBTQ+ community is a diverse and intersectional group of individuals who share common experiences and struggles related to discrimination, marginalization, and oppression, as well as resilience, pride, and community support.

Allyship: The active and intentional process of supporting and advocating for marginalized individuals and communities, often in the context of social justice and equity work. Allies are typically individuals who do not belong to the marginalized group but use their privilege, power, and resources to amplify marginalized voices and work towards creating more equitable and inclusive environments.

EDI(D): An acronym referring to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization—four interconnected principles used to promote social justice and create more equitable and inclusive communities.

Gender Inclusivity: The practice of creating environments that are welcoming, respectful, and accommodating to individuals of all gender identities.

Gender Nonconforming: Individuals whose gender expression or identity does not conform to the expectations or norms associated with their assigned sex at birth. Gender nonconforming people may identify as male, female, non-binary, or another gender identity that is different from their assigned sex at birth.

Inclusion: The creation of environments where all individuals feel valued, respected, and supported, and can fully participate and contribute to their communities. Inclusion recognizes that individuals and groups may face barriers to full participation and seeks to remove these barriers by promoting equal access and opportunity.

Marginalized Individuals: those who are systematically excluded, disadvantaged, or oppressed in society due to various social, cultural, economic, and political factors, such as their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, or socioeconomic status. Marginalization occurs when individuals or groups are denied equal access to resources, opportunities, and power, and are treated as inferior or less valuable by dominant groups in society.

Misgendering: The act of referring to an individual using a gendered pronoun, title, or descriptor that does not correspond with their gender identity. This can occur intentionally or unintentionally, and can have negative effects on the individual being misgendered, such as causing distress, invalidation, and erasure of their identity.

Non-Binary: A term used to describe individuals who do not exclusively identify as male or female. Non-binary people may identify as both genders, neither gender, a combination of genders, or a gender that is completely different from male or female.

Out: The state of being open or public about one's sexual orientation or gender identity. When someone comes out, they are revealing to others that they are 2SLGBTQ+ and sharing information about their identity that may have been previously unknown or hidden.

Surveillance of Trans and Non-Binary Bodies: The systematic monitoring, policing, and regulation of the bodies and behaviors of individuals who identify as transgender or nonbinary. This can take many forms, including physical surveillance by law enforcement or medical professionals, social surveillance by family members, colleagues, or strangers, and digital surveillance through the use of social media or online tracking.

Trans: Shorthand for transgender, trans is an umbrella term used to describe individuals whose gender identity does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth. A person who is trans may identify as male, female, non-binary, or another gender identity that is different from their assigned sex at birth.