



Center for the Advancement  
of Teaching

## R-E-S-P-E-C-T: Use the Pronouns Right For Thee!

A nod to the late, great Aretha Franklin for inspiring the subject line of this post. Notice I used the pronoun “she” to refer to Aretha. Without giving it much thought, we typically refer to people by the pronouns we think match their appearance. Historically, these chosen pronouns have been the singular “she/her/hers” for women and “he/him/his” for men, and the plural “they/them/theirs” for more than one. Tidy and grammatically correct, the singular pronouns have created what’s referred to as the “gender binary.” The problem is, one’s sex assigned at birth may not reflect one’s internal sense of self, better known as gender identity, and that misgenders those whose gender identity is outside of that binary or is fluid.

In its commitment to providing a welcoming, inclusive environment for all students, faculty and staff, Temple is introducing two new initiatives to allow our community to indicate their pronouns and gender identity.

### [Our Two Newest Inclusion Initiatives](#)

Faculty, students, and staff now have the option to indicate pronouns that reflect their gender identity, and choose from expanded categories to indicate one’s gender. Instructions for indicating your pronouns and gender identity are available on the TU Portal by clicking on *Manage My Account* and then *Update your Pronoun/Gender*. For pronouns, we’re now able to choose from *He/Him/His*; *She/Her/Hers*; *They/Them/Theirs*; *Ze/Zir/Zirs*; or *Refer to me by my name only*. For gender identity, in addition to indicating *male/female*, we’re now able to choose from *Nonbinary* and *Does Not Apply to Me or Prefer Not to Share*.

If you add your pronouns, they will now be visible to everyone in these university systems:

- Cherry and White Directory
- My Courses application in TUportal
- Canvas learning management software
- Residence hall resident lists

If you add your gender identity, it will only be visible to you as well as certain administrators in Self-Service Banner. It will **not** be visible in the Cherry and White Directory, My Courses, or in Canvas.

**Getting the hang of it.** If you’re a grammar stickler like me, using the plural pronouns “they/them/theirs,” if someone identifies that way, takes some getting used to. The practice has actually become common enough to warrant Merriam-Webster’s dictionary to give a thumbs up

to its use in referring to the singular. That's the wonderful (albeit challenging-to-keep-up-with) thing about language: it's ever-evolving.

**You can do this!** It just takes a little mindfulness and practice. Here are some ways you can use and reinforce the practice in your teaching:

- Add your pronouns to your email signature. You can also link your pronouns to a [resource](#) that explains why pronouns are important. Adding your pronouns may help others feel more comfortable in sharing theirs.
- Refer to your students by the pronouns you have for them in Canvas. If you misgender someone by using the wrong pronouns, don't fret. Apologize, let them know you care and are trying, and move on. You can also invite students to rename themselves with their pronouns in Zoom.
- Remember that you can always call students by name. Giving students table tents on which to write their name and if they choose, their pronouns--especially in large classes--is a great way to get to know and demonstrate respect for your students.

For more information about the what and why of pronoun use, check out [this resource](#) and [youtube video](#). If you'd like to learn more about LGBTQIA+ inclusion in the classroom, check out this [Guide to LGBTQIA+ Terminology](#) and this [video](#) on the CAT website, and watch for our upcoming fall workshop offering: Inclusion in the Classroom: Supporting our LGBTQIA+ students. Don't forget our Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity, Advocacy, and Leadership (IDEAL) offers a fantastic two-part workshop and certificate called the [Safe Zone Certification](#). After completing the workshops, you are considered an *Advocate* which indicates acceptance of LGBTQIA+ identities and a commitment to working against discrimination directed towards the community.

As always, feel free to make an appointment for a [1-1 consultation](#) with one of our faculty developers at the CAT for further assistance.

