Gender Pronouns at a Glance

Presented by the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Council for Drexel's College of Computing & Informatics

What are gender pronouns? As described by University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, a pronoun is a word that refers to either the people talking (I or you) or someone or something that is being talked about (like she, it, them, and this). Gender pronouns (he/she/they/ze etc.) specifically refer to people that you are talking about. When referring to people, respecting pronouns is equivalent to respecting someone's name.

Recognizing peer and student pronouns is important in any setting and helps foster a sense of belonging. While it can be tough to remember pronouns at first, the best solution is to practice! Correct pronoun use is an easy step toward showing respect for people of every gender. If you incorrectly use someone's pronouns, apologize, correct, and continue the conversation, keeping in mind that individuals may change their pronouns without changing their name, appearance, or gender identity. Remember, sharing pronouns has a positive impact for everyone.

Below are several suggestions to help you reflect about your use of pronouns and increase understanding of their importance.

(1) Some questions to aid in thinking about pronouns and opening a future conversation about gender:
- Where do you share your pronouns now? Are they on your syllabus or in your email signature? Do you introduce yourself with them?
- If you don't share your pronouns, why not? Do you assume people already know your pronouns? Why?
- How might putting your pronouns in different places affect or hurt you?
- How often do you use other people's pronouns?
- Is it more uncomfortable to ask for someone's pronouns or to assume and be wrong?
- You don't assume people's names, why would you assume their pronouns?

(2) CCI encourages you to use your pronouns:
- In your syllabus, on your website, in your email signature, etc.
- Any place that your name appears, like Zoom. Remember, pronouns are used more than names.
- In class/group introductions, including when hosting events with speakers and panelists. Be sure to give/ask for the speaker and panelists pronouns, too.

(3) Examples of asking for someone's in a respectful way include:
- "What is your name and what pronouns do you use?"
- "How would you like to be addressed?"
- "My name is Jane Doe and my pronouns are they and them. What about you?"

All in all, remember that assuming pronouns is not the answer—be sure to ask. For example, what pronouns do you think someone named Elliot uses? What pronouns do you think someone named Alice uses? Ellliot Reid from the television show "Scrubs" is a cisgender female who uses she/her. Actor Elliot Page is a transgender male who uses he/they. We encourage our CCI community to think about gender pronouns both inside and outside the classroom.

Additional Resources
Check out PronounsDay.org, MyPronouns.org, and Pronoun Island for a repository of resources!

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