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Addressing the Complexities of Creating an Inclusive Campus for Transgender People (Presentation)

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Addressing the Complexities of Creating an Inclusive Campus for Transgender People

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Abstract

- ▶ Making transgender people feel accepted into the campus community goes beyond educational programs to encourage inclusion. The process should also include many institutional facets from IT to housing. This presentation examines the changes made or in the process of being addressed at a regional public university in Arkansas.

Introduction

- ▶ University of Arkansas – Fort Smith
 - ▶ Public Regional University
 - ▶ Bachelor's and Master's granting
 - ▶ Faculty: **225** FTE, **123** PTE
 - ▶ Student Population: **6,265**
 - ▶ 64% White
 - ▶ 14% Hispanic/Latino
 - ▶ 9% Two or more races
 - ▶ 6% Asian
 - ▶ 4% Black or African American
 - ▶ 2% American Indian
- ▶ *From IPEDS 2019 data



Literature Review

- ▶ Feel accepted for who they are and safe
- ▶ Student retention dependent on student feeling connected to the institution, a sense of caring from faculty and staff, and good support services
- ▶ Lack of feeling safe, welcomed, and part of a community can lead to mental health issues



Literature Review

- ▶ Living with a roommate increased the sense of peer belonging
- ▶ Transgender students had high anxiety when it came to roommate assignment, unsure about acceptance
 - ▶ Special arrangements to use the bathroom facilities
- ▶ Acceptance and part of community = success in college studies and overall mental health



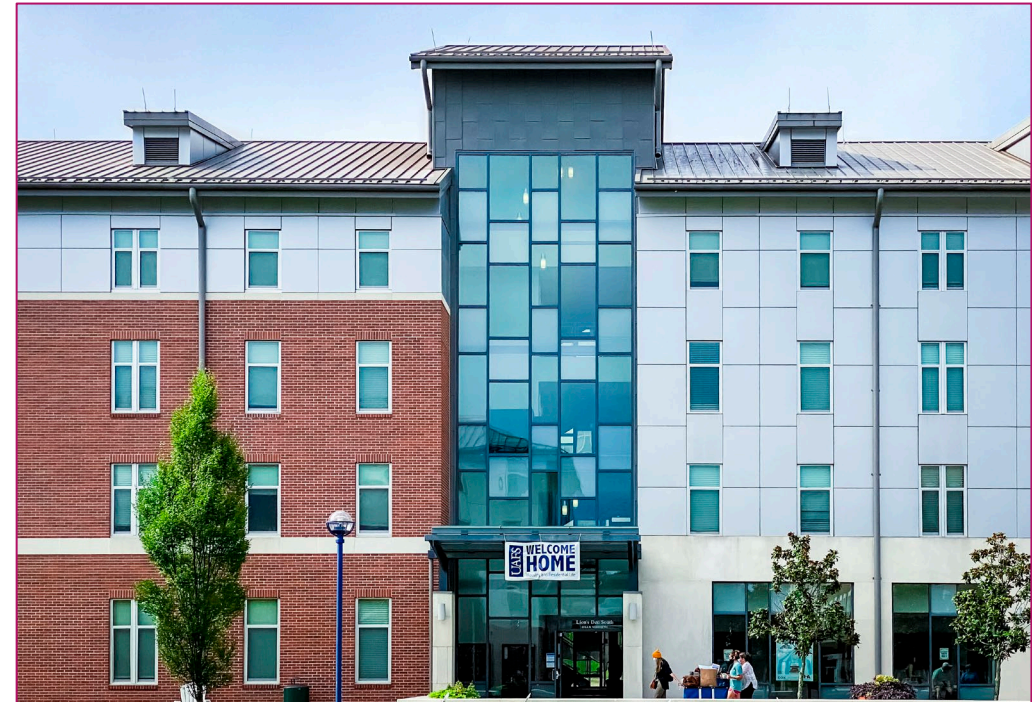
Catalyst for Change

- ▶ Prior to 2011 no transgender accommodations or policies
- ▶ Jennifer Braly
 - ▶ Non-traditional transgender student
 - ▶ Enrolled in 2010
 - ▶ Began to transition in 2011
- ▶ Directed to use gender-neutral / family restrooms
 - ▶ Not widely available on campus
 - ▶ Began using women's restrooms during transition



Catalyst for Change

- ▶ UAFS Admins respond to complaint
 - ▶ Directed Ms. Braly to use gender-neutral restrooms again
 - ▶ Assigned her to single dorm for following school year
- ▶ Complaint with the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division
 - ▶ Change in policy: use restrooms based on gender identity



Changing Paradigm for Transgender Inclusion

- ▶ Change spearheaded by units or individuals
 - ▶ Student Affairs Division and Student Activities Office
 - ▶ Dean of Students
 - ▶ Faculty and Faculty Advisor for LGBT student organization
- ▶ Result in modest campus and climate changes for policies and accommodations
 - ▶ Absence of university-wide coordination
 - ▶ No formal documentation of policies



Changing Paradigm for Transgender Inclusion

- ▶ Safe Zone Training and Stickers
- ▶ Pride Month and activities
- ▶ Update student records to reflect name-change
- ▶ LGBTQ student organization
 - ▶ Drag Queen Story Hour
- ▶ Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee
 - ▶ Hiring of Executive Director for DEI



Forward Momentum

- ▶ University-wide review of policies and procedures
- ▶ Formalize and document informal policies and procedures
- ▶ New buildings to include gender-neutral restrooms
- ▶ Transgender Resource Guide
 - ▶ Aware and distributed through multiple channels
- ▶ LGBTQ+ Living Learning Community



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