# gender and transgender Definitions

Transgender individuals should be treated with the same respect as any other applicant or student, provided equal opportunity, and ensured a safe and productive environment. It is important that we communicate appropriately about gender and transgender, use the transgender person’s preferred name and the associated pronoun, and ask the transgender person when questions arise about the best way to communicate with them.

## Definitions

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| * **Transgender**—refers to people whose gender identity, expression, or behavior is different from that typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. Transgender is a broad term and an acceptable descriptive term for non-transgender people to use. “Trans” is shorthand for “transgender.” (Note: “Transgender” is correctly used as an adjective, not a noun; thus “transgender people” is appropriate, but “transgenders” is often viewed as disrespectful.) * **Gender identity—**refers to an individual’s internal sense of being male, female, or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one’s gender identity is not necessarily visible to others. * **Gender expression**—refers to how a person represents or expresses one’s gender identity to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice, and/or body characteristics. * **Gender non-conforming**—refers to individuals whose gender expression is different from societal expectations related to gender. | * **Transition**—refers to the time when a person begins living as the gender with which they identify rather than the gender they were assigned at birth, which often includes changing one’s first name and dressing and grooming differently. Transitioning may or may not also include medical and legal aspects, such as taking hormones, having surgery, or changing identity documents (e.g., driver’s license, Social Security record) to reflect one’s gender identity. Medical and legal steps are often difficult for people to afford. * **Transgender woman**—refers to a person whose assigned sex at birth was male but whose gender identity is female and who lives as a woman. * **Transgender man**—refers to a person whose assigned sex at birth was female but whose gender identity is male and who lives as a man. * **Sex reassignment surgery**—refers to surgical procedures that change one’s body to better reflect a person’s gender identity. Contrary to popular belief, there is not one surgery; in fact there are many different surgeries. These surgeries are medically necessary for some people; however, not all people want, need, or can have surgery as part of their transition. “Sex change surgery” is considered a derogatory term by many. |