Transitioning to Single Use Gender Neutral Restrooms: Elevating Our Facilities

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Transitioning to Single Use Gender Neutral Restrooms: Elevating Our Facilities

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The Clog

- Library is 41,000 square feet
- Existing facilities in the library include a total of 6 restrooms split out over 3 floors
- The library averages 500 visitors a day
- Increasing class size @ UMMS
- 60% of the current SoM class are female
- Number of female students is trending up; the number of facilities has not changed
- UMMS has no gender-neutral restrooms on campus; in addition, changing areas and existing facilities are spaces split by gender
- Library pursuing improving services, being more accessible/open/welcoming
- Library works to support the goals of the School of Medicine, which include student recruitment, retention, satisfaction, and success

Taking the Plunge

- Linked the idea of gender-neutral restrooms to institutional and library goals and mission
- Gain administrative support AND gather supporting research and guidelines:
  - AMA Policy H-65.964: Access to Basic Human Services for Transgender Individuals (specifically mentions equitable access of facilities)
  - UMMS Appropriate Treatment of Learners Policy (https://www.umassmed.edu/studentaffairs/policies/appropriate-treatment-of-learners/)
  - UMMS Student ADA/Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (supports accessibility accommodations for differently abled individuals)
  - Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. A
  - Sexual and gender minority identity disclosure during undergraduate medical education: "in the closet" in medical school (2015) concluded that 29.5% of the respondents that identified as sexual or gender minorities concealed their sexual or gender identity in medical school
- The outcome was that the bathroom renovations could not go forward

The Wrench in the Plans

- State building codes meant that renovation would trigger a code update that would put the library massively out of compliance; even just changing a sign
- The outcome was that the bathroom renovations could not go forward

Final Say

- Beginning this project put us in touch with groups of people who have similar goals and will be valuable allies for future projects
- The barriers that ultimately stopped us were not things we knew to expect (not social, not ideological)
- Conversations about locks, signage, and what plumbing the restroom needed seemed like the big issues at first, but in the end they were just details
- We are hopeful that other spaces on campus may be more successful in implementing GN restrooms and are partnering with them to help in any way we can
- The library is due for a renovation at some point within the next 2 years; we will resume our pursuit of GN restrooms at that point

Knock Before Entering

- Staff members participate in campus groups to keep fingers on pulse of campus; Diversity & Inclusion Office has an LGBTQ+ group for staff and faculty
- During one meeting a story of a student being called out for using the “wrong” restroom came up and sparked a discussion of the feasibility of converting restrooms on campus, and what barriers existed
- The library is a centralized location for students and leadership is committed to enacting changes for student success and wellness
- Changing restrooms to be gender neutral increases convenience for all users
- Gender neutral restrooms are one way to indicate to prospective and current students and staff that a university is welcoming and inclusive

Downs

- In the end, this project had to be put on hold, but will be pursued when the library is renovated
- For next time:
  - Be prepared for slow moving actions and communications with building managers and administration; a lot of people have to communicate to get things going
  - Push for more student buy-in, reach out to student interest groups