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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



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

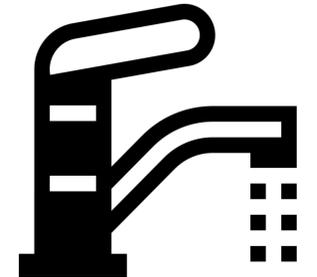
Taking the Plunge

- 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/>) (disallows humiliation of learners, requiring learners to perform tasks that belittle them, disregard for learner safety)
 - UMMS Student ADA/Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (supports accessibility accommodations for differently abled individuals)
 - Title IX and Sex Discrimination: No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance
 - 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



Ups

- Administrative buy-in
- The budget was approved
- The research to support this as a positive change (in terms of student recruitment and retention) were there
- Leaders were excited and interested in the idea, and were the ones who went to bat in front of the higher-ups for this
- Employee resource group excited about idea; looking to collaborate to make this happen elsewhere in the building/organization



Created by Arthur Shlain
from Noun Project

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

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



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