

# Supporting Gender Fluid Identities:

## Faculty/Staff FAQ



Critical to understanding gender diversity, and especially gender fluid identities, are distinctions between the following terminology:

**Sex** is assigned at birth, and is biologically informed by hormones, chromosomes, internal and external reproductive organs. While often understood as binary, variations in sex characteristics can lead to a variety of intersex conditions.

**Gender** or gender identity speaks to how you consciously identify, and often, how you navigate the world. While everyone is familiar with man and woman, there is a spectrum of gender that can inform the name someone uses, their pronouns, and potentially how they express or perform their gender.

**Sexual orientation** describes different types of attraction, both romantic and sexual, often determining who someone wants to connect and/or partner with. Sexual orientation also encompasses identities that don't experience romantic and/or sexual attraction, like asexual identities.

**Gender expression** encompasses many of the ways in which we perform our gender, understood most commonly within the social confines of masculinity and femininity, and can include: behaviors, interests, dress, speech, etc. An individual's gender identity could inform their gender expression, but it is important to understand that these concepts are separate, and we shouldn't assume gender identity based on aspects of gender expression.

While transgender and gender diverse identities encompass those where gender identity does not match the sex assigned at birth, gender fluid identities specifically describe someone unconfined to a single gender or gender identity. This means that their gender expression and/or gender identity manifests differently over time, and the gender they most identify with can change.

### What might this look like?

- An individual presenting differently at different times, meaning they might show up as feminine in spaces one day, and more masculine on other days.
- An individual whose pronouns may change often depending on the gender they are identifying with on a certain day, e.g. using "she" on some days and "he" on others.

### How can you support a student or colleague with a fluid identity?

- Make space for the individual to be their authentic self with you by checking in about name and pronouns in use. If they say "I'm using 'they' right now, but that could change," ask what would feel best for them going forward. Would they prefer you to check in every day or wait until they tell you they are using another pronoun?
- In group environments such as classrooms or meetings, use "name tents" or wear name tags in which individuals can write their name and pronouns every time. Set the expectation with others in that space by saying that respecting diverse gender identities is important and a value of the group.
- Avoid seeking information from students and colleagues solely to satisfy your curiosity. If you're looking to expand your knowledge or understanding about gender identity and expression, the Office of Intercultural Engagement offers both training and consultation to faculty and staff.

**For more information and resources on gender diversity, please visit our toolkit at [go.uncg.edu/genderdiversitytoolkit](https://go.uncg.edu/genderdiversitytoolkit).**

This document was created by LEARN's Gender Diversity Working Group, which is a collective of faculty, staff, & students from across departments at UNCG concerned with the experiences of and meeting the needs of gender diverse students.