Gender Inclusive Housing Proposal

Presented:
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Reviewed and approved by:
The CCSU LGBT Advisory Board

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Through an electronic voting process, the LGBT Advisory Board approved the proposed language within the Gender-Inclusive Housing Proposal with a vote of 14 out of 15 active members voting in favor of the proposal. The remaining member did not vote on the proposal.
Introduction: Revising CCSU’s Gender-Inclusive Housing Program

According to Campus Pride’s *State of Higher Education for LGBT People* (2010), 31-39% of transgender (trans) and gender non-conforming respondents experienced harassment on campus, and 17-22% of these respondents who had experienced harassment feared for their physical safety on campus. More alarmingly, one-third of transgender respondents seriously considered leaving their institution because of the negative climate. Clearly, there is a need to make universities safer, more affirming and inclusive institutions for all students regardless of their gender identity and gender expression.

According to Leslie Friday of *BU Today* (2013), over ninety institutions of higher education nationwide, including New York University, George Washington University, and the University of Connecticut, have endorsed and adopted gender-inclusive housing policies and procedures in which two or more students are allowed to share a living space in selected buildings across campus regardless of gender. Friday (2013) has listed the many benefits of a gender-inclusive policies and procedures, specifically “greater student comfort, satisfaction, and school pride, a more progressive posture toward housing, and possibly more students living on campus” (para. 14). Gender-inclusive housing is also more dynamic in approach than traditional sex-segregated housing since it maximizes student safety, privacy, placement availability, and administrative flexibility to meet the changing needs, interests, and demands of students each year the program is in place.

While Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) currently has a gender-inclusive housing program, there is a need to transform the program into one that is more accessible and accountable for its students in terms of safety and privacy. There is also a legitimate demand to make this program more culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs of transgender and gender non-conforming students on campus, especially those who are in the process of transitioning or may not be “out” to their peers and instructors. CCSU values respect and appreciation of diversity in all its forms and must be an accountable ally to trans and gender non-conforming students by revising its gender-inclusive program to be more inclusive, dynamic, and accessible to students. As D. Chase J. Catalano (2015) stated in “Beyond Virtual Equality: Liberatory Consciousness as a Path to Achieve Trans* Inclusion in Higher Education,” “An accountable ally does not stop at providing a minimal level of support and expect to be rewarded with appreciation. The absence of high expectations of allies and institutional inclusion may be a strong indicator of an absence of accountability” (p. 433). To be an accountable ally that honors and respects diversity, CCSU should become a model for gender-inclusive housing procedures that embrace and ensure the safety of transgender and gender non-conforming students.
Gender-Inclusive Housing Practices in Higher Education: An Overview

While the Gender-Inclusive Housing sub-committee primarily focused on the gender-inclusive housing programs at Gettysburg College and Salem State University to form this proposal, the sub-committee also analyzed the gender-inclusive housing procedures and policies of several other schools nationwide, specifically Kent State University, Boston University, The New School, Whitman College, and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

The gender-inclusive housing process for Kent State University is confidential and very private, an element we incorporate into our current proposal. The gender-inclusive housing procedure at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst is a model in transparency for students, describing specifically where students are able to room regardless of gender. We also aim to be transparent when presenting the various gender-inclusive housing options to students so they can make the most informed choices. Boston University does not permit gender-inclusive housing in large residence halls with group bathrooms, which is a factor we will have to consider when rooming first year students and other students who are often placed in these types of residence halls upon enrolling at CCSU. Group or communal restrooms pose considerable challenges for some transgender and gender non-conforming students. Since our priority is to ensure the safety and well-being of all our residents, we may have to place gender-inclusive housing options in spaces with gender-neutral restrooms or non-communal spaces (i.e. bathroom shared only by suitemates).

Nevertheless, several of these schools reaffirmed what we would not incorporate into our proposal. For example, Whitman College’s emphasis on gatekeepers when applying for gender-inclusive housing can be very intimidating for students who fear being “outed” or made uncomfortable in the process. In addition, The New School’s implication that gender-inclusive housing is only available to trans and gender non-conforming students is one that would be absent from our proposal since CCSU’s revised program is not exclusionary.
Gender-Inclusive Housing Practices at CCSU: Needs, Challenges, and Benefits

Currently, CCSU students who are interested in gender-inclusive housing would contact Residence Life Associate Director and Gender-Inclusive Housing Liaison Ryan Baumann, who would give them the housing options that are available. Residence Life is usually able to pair up students who want to room together. First-year and upper class students are able to room together if desired. Multiple price housing options are offered for four main residence halls that can accommodate gender-inclusive housing: (1) Mid-Campus Hall, (2) Robert Sheridan Hall, (3) Thomas Gallaudet Hall, and (4) Don James Hall. However, the gender-inclusive program has had limited advertising due to its small capacity and limited beds.

While CCSU’s current gender-inclusive housing program is flexible and individualized and offers several price options to make it more affordable, there are several areas that need improvement. First, the current program retains the role of a gatekeeper in the process of enrolling for gender-inclusive housing, which is uncomfortable or intimidating for some students. Trans and gender non-conforming students may fear being “outed” or “made to feel different” throughout the process and doubt that their information will be kept private or confidential.

Second, the current application for gender-inclusive housing could be more streamlined in language and format and easily submitted online or through a simple phone call. As stated by Catalano (2015), “forms that require students to report their gender and only offer male/female or man/woman as gender choices are problematic for trans* students. Forms that allow students to name their own gender demonstrate an institutional awareness of trans* students’ experience on campus” (p. 431). The revised form would still have a point-person from Residence Life, Ryan Baumann, to answer questions and address concerns.

Third, gender-inclusive housing options should be offered to first-year students, not only upper-class students. Sometimes, first-year students will want to room with upper-class students and vice-versa. In addition, our proposal emphasizes that gender-inclusive housing is not meant for romantic relationships. Moreover, our proposal clarifies that this type of housing is not solely for gender non-conforming and transgender students and is open to all students who request this type of housing.

Fourth, restrooms are often a challenge for gender-inclusive housing programs, but the priority is to maintain the privacy and safety of students. Therefore, we need to promote a university-wide procedure in which students can use the bathroom that affirms their gender identity and ensures they will feel safe. Promoting the creation of more gender-inclusive restrooms on campus is a separate project that the LGBT Center is currently working on with the guidance and support of the LGBT Advisory Board.

Lastly, training and education is needed for all resident students on what it means to live in an environment and campus that is safe, inclusive, and affirming for all students (i.e. being respectful and appreciative of difference and diversity). This can be incorporated into Resident Advisor/Director trainings and floor meetings with residents. As Eri Svenson (2016) stated in “When Title IX Falls Short,” “we should affirm trans youths’ humanity and offer training on gender and sexual identity as part of comprehensive, LGBTQ-inclusive sexuality education. Schools need to increase education on these issues to change the transphobic culture on campuses” (para. 12).

This proposal incorporates several of the suggested best practices for supporting trans and gender non-conforming students as developed by the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals’ Trans* Policy Working Group (2014). These best practices include the following:
1. “Have an easily accessible web page as part of the housing site that explains the school’s housing policies related to gender identity and that provides the contact information for a housing official who can be the point person for these policies” (p. 5)

2. “Enable all students to self-identify their gender on their housing application” (p. 5).

3. “Develop and publicize a trans*-supportive housing [procedure that] will always recognize and respect the stated gender identity of the student [and make] every attempt [to] give trans* students safe and comfortable housing assignments” (p. 5).

4. “Establish a gender-inclusive housing (GIH) option that is available for both new and returning students; open to all students, not just to trans* students; is offered in different parts of campus and, if possible, in different types of housing (doubles, suites, apartments); [and] includes gender-inclusive bathrooms/showers” (p. 6).

5. “Have all Residential Life staff, including student staff members, attend a trans* focused ally training” (p. 5).

Timeframe for Implementation

We anticipate that we will be able to launch the revised online Gender-Inclusive Housing form and procedures with the FAQ and pre-housing survey on December 1, 2016.
Department of Residence Life – Inclusion and Safety

We have identified several key aspects that would raise awareness on CCSU’s housing and its commitment to inclusion and safety. The following two recommendations have been identified:

1. CCSU’s Department of Residence Life would develop and publicly post an inclusion statement.
2. As part of the housing application, students would be able to respond to several questions that would indicate one’s ability to live with someone whose gender identity or gender expression does not align with their biological sex.

Department of Residence Life – Inclusion Statement

Central Connecticut State University prides itself on being a university where all students are valued members of our community. Students regardless of race, sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, religion, age, ability and other protected identities are not only welcomed to be part of our community; they are also entitled to a safe and affirming place to live on campus. When living on campus at CCSU, students will have the opportunity to live with others who share different values, opinions and identities as them. CCSU strives for housing to be safe for all of our students to live regardless of their background and identities, and to be a space where diversity is embraced.

Residence Life Application Survey Question

This element created much discussion amongst the drafters and the larger LGBT Advisory Board. While these may serve as viable options to include on the survey, prior to implementation we would suggest that further dialogue would be beneficial. The primary intention of these questions is to identify folks on our campus who would be self-identified as understanding, respectful and inclusive to members of our community who are transgender.

There were several areas of concern regarding these questions. First, we do not ask students, outside of a willingness to live with international students, about their preferences or comfort living with other identities e.g., race, color, religion. Additional, the questions framed around comfortability imply that students should have a reason to be uncomfortable rooming with a member of the LGBTQ community. Suggestions were made regarding preference-based questions; however, members felt these were more directed for members of the LGBTQ community rather than the non-LGBTQ community.

Samples include, but are not limited to:

1. I am an Ally to members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) community. As an Ally, I am someone who is comfortable around and supportive to members of the LGBTQ community.
2. I would be comfortable rooming with someone who identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual or another sexual orientation.
3. I would be comfortable rooming with someone who identifies as transgender, gender non-conforming or gender fluid.
4. I would be interested in rooming with someone who is transgender, gender non-conforming or gender fluid.
5. I would be interested in rooming with someone who is trans-friendly (friendly to those who identify as transgender, gender non-conforming or gender fluid).
6. I would prefer to live with LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and/or Queer) friendly roommates.
Proposed language for GIH program at CCSU

Central CT State University Gender Inclusive Housing Procedures:

In keeping with our views and values, CCSU’s residence life department is committed to building a community that values diversity, safety and inclusion. As part of this effort, CCSU has developed and expanded its Gender Inclusive Housing (GIH) procedures.

GIH is a residential opportunity for all students (including incoming first-year students) to room with roommates of their choice regardless of their sex, gender expression or gender identity. Since the majority of campus housing options are sex-based and sex-segregated, this option creates flexibility for students who seek to room with another student whose gender and/or sex is not the same as theirs. In particular, this housing option supports transgender students, students who wish to be assigned housing based on their gender identity or expression rather than their biological sex, students who do not want their sex to determine their choice of roommate(s) or students who would be more comfortable rooming with someone of opposite sex.

GIH is available in various housing options, buildings and all housing cost options. Students who select this GIH will find there is specific space available in multiple residence halls. The spaces include a selection of amenities that will appeal to a variety of interests and needs. Students who select this option should fill out the GIH housing request form (INSERT LINK TO NEW FORM) or can contact the associate director of residence life who serves as the GIH liaison to discuss any questions or interests you may have before you select a residence hall.

GIH includes two options for students. For full consideration, all housing applications, including GIH requests must be submitted by their respective deadlines (LINK HOUSING TIMEFRAMES)

Gender Inclusive Housing Options

1. Students can opt into designated gender inclusive housing options:
   a. Submit GIH Request Form (INSERT FORM LINK). Please know that that GIH liaison may reach out to you to discuss options related to your request.
   b. Students will not be required to reveal their reasons for opting to live in gender-inclusive housing.
   c. Students may choose to request a roommate or roommates of any sex, gender identity or gender expression.
   d. Students must apply with their prospective roommate(s) following the same processes and deadlines of all students entering the housing selection process. Housing is assigned on a first-come first serve basis. Students who do not select a roommate will be assigned one after room selection has concluded.
   e. Students will not be assigned to gender inclusive housing unless they have elected to do so.
   f. This housing option is intended for students who wish to share a room or suite with friends regardless of sex, gender identity or gender expression.
   g. While CCSU residence life has identified specific spaces across campus to fulfill these housing requests, on an as needed basis and as space allows, additional spaces or options can be considered upon request. The diversity of spaces avoids segregation and offers students gender-inclusive housing within all housing styles and at the various housing price points. Once a room or suite is deemed gender inclusive that space will continue to be gender inclusive as long as the residents can maintain the occupancy of the living space.
h. We encourage students to maintain an open dialogue with their families.

2. Students whose gender identity does not match their legal designated sex (as indicated on campus records) can choose to be placed in the housing pool based on their gender identity and not their legally identified sex. Students seeking this option can fill out the appropriate field on the GIH form. With this option, the GIH liaison will likely reach out to discuss the housing options available and the roommate selection process. When considering this option, please consider all factors relevant to housing including roommate selection, bathrooms, showers and location.

Vacancies

When there is a vacancy in a gender inclusive room or suite, the students remaining in that space may elect to identify any new roommate. If the resident(s) want to maintain a gender inclusive space but cannot identify a new roommate, the Office of Residential Life will try to identify a student interested in gender inclusive housing. All parties must agree to live together.

In the event there is a housing shortage, and a new roommate is not identified, residence life reserves the right to default the housing space back to single-sex status; however, Residence Life will make every effort to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students utilizing GIH. If the Residential Life Department needs to maximize use of all available spaces on campus and the above is not possible, then the Residential Life staff will work closely with the student residents to determine next steps.

Housing Locations Available under GIH

GIH is available in the following locations and styles:

- James Hall: six- or eight-person suites (three to four double rooms per suite).
- Mid-Campus Residence Hall: four-person suites comprised of either two double rooms, or one double room and two single rooms. A double room with a private bathroom but no common area is also available in Mid-Campus Residence Hall.
- Sheridan & Gallaudet Halls: four-person suites comprised of two double rooms.

These housing locations are subject to change from year to year and will be updated accordingly. More information about the amenities of each residence hall can be found on the residence life website at: http://www.ccsu.edu/reslife/resHalls.html

Ryan Baumann, Associate Director of Residence Life, serves as the liaison for GIH requests.

Modified from policies and procedures of Salem State University and Gettysburg College.
CCSU Proposed Gender-Inclusive Housing Form

Central Connecticut State University
Department of Residence Life

Request for Gender-Inclusive Housing Form & Agreement

For the academic year, Central Connecticut State University will be offering a limited amount of gender-inclusive housing options for interested students. In order to be considered for gender inclusive housing, please complete the following form and then sign below indicating you have read and understand this importation information.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Student ID#:</th>
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<tr>
<td>CCSU Email:</td>
<td>Cell Phone:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identified Gender:</td>
<td>I wish to live with students who identify as:</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Any Gender</td>
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Please select one of the following gender inclusive housing options:

☐ Gender-Inclusive Housing (Option 1)
Selecting this option means a student and their roommate(s) will be housed in one of the designated gender-inclusive housing options on campus. Students in gender-inclusive housing are paired regardless of sex, gender, gender identity, or gender expression.

Area Preference: ☐ Down the hill ☐ Up the hill ☐ James Hall ☐ Mid-Campus Residence Hall (Check all that apply) Information about the areas of campus and residence halls can be found here: http://www.ccsu.edu/reslife/resHalls.html

*Please note that we may not be able to meet requested preferences

Desired Roommate(s): Students may request up to five (5) roommates

☐ I do not currently have a roommate or roommates selected but would like to participate in Option 1

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Important Information about Gender-Inclusive Housing

- Gender-inclusive housing is offered on a space-available basis.
- Traditionally, Residence Life assigns housing based on biological sex. However, gender-inclusive housing allows for students of all sexes and genders to be paired together and share bathrooms, bedrooms, and other common space.
- Residence Life will make an effort to ensure residents have an optimal living experience.
- This form is an addendum to the Residence Life Housing Contract that must also be read and properly filled out before students can be assigned a room.
- In order to be eligible to apply for gender-inclusive housing a student must have already completed the online housing application and submitted the $250.00 non-refundable housing deposit.
- Residence Life will contact all parties to confirm interest in this option.

I hereby acknowledge that I have read and understand this document and agree to adhere to common standards of civility and respect regarding diverse gender identities, expressions, sexual orientations or other differences. If already assigned to a space in on-campus housing, I agree to be re-assigned / relocated to a gender-inclusive housing option.

Signature: ______________________ Date: __________

Completed forms may be returned to the Department of Residence Life by mail, faxed to (860) 832-1659 or e-mailed to reslife@ccsu.edu
CCSU Gender-Inclusive Housing Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Why is CCSU offering gender-inclusive housing?**

Traditional, same-sex room assignments are not ideal or appropriate for some students. We believe it is important that housing procedures evolve to meet the needs of students to create an inclusive, welcoming environment. Gender-inclusive housing provides options for a variety of students: Those who feel uncomfortable rooming with members of the same sex; transgender and gender non-conforming students; students who feel they would be more compatible with a roommate of a different sex or gender; and students who do not want sex or gender to be a primary factor in choosing a roommate. This procedure helps create a climate that acknowledges, appreciates, and respects the diverse nature of the CCSU student body, while giving students more options in finding a roommate who is truly compatible.

2. **Who will be able to apply for gender-inclusive housing?**

This option will be available to all full-time, degree-seeking, undergraduate, and graduate students through the housing selection process. Students who select the gender-inclusive housing option may e-mail the GIH Liaison, Associate Director of Residence Life Ryan Baumann, at baumannryf@ccsu.edu or (860) 832-1660 to set up an appointment to discuss any questions or interests they may have before selecting a residence hall. Students are eligible to apply for housing once they have paid the confirmation fee to the University. To be considered for any housing options students must submit an application and the $250 non-refundable housing deposit by the established deadline, and agree to a one-year housing contract. Information about payment options and fees can be found on the Bursars site [here](http://www.ccsu.edu/reslife/resHalls.html).

3. **Is the application process confidential? Can it be completed online?**

The application for Gender-Inclusive Housing (GIH) is available online [insert link] and is completely confidential. Please note that the GIH liaison may reach out to the student to discuss options related to the request. The student can also contact the GIH liaison by phone at (860) 832-1660 to discuss any questions or interests before selecting a residence hall.

4. **How many gender-inclusive rooms are available and where will they be?**

The specific number, or limit, of gender-inclusive rooms on campus varies based on availability at the time of request. Multiple price housing options are currently offered for the following main residence halls: (1) Mid-Campus Hall, (2) Robert Sheridan Hall, (3) Thomas Gallaudet Hall, and (4) Don James Hall.

5. **What are the features or amenities of each type of residence hall?**

Please visit [http://www.ccsu.edu/reslife/resHalls.html](http://www.ccsu.edu/reslife/resHalls.html) to view the features or amenities of each of the four gender-inclusive residence halls.

6. **Will I have a roommate?**

Each student can select their own roommate through our selection process, but that will depend on the type of option you have requested for this type of housing option, and the availability at the time of your request. Students who do not select a roommate will be assigned one after room selection has concluded.
7. Can I stay on campus during break periods?

On-campus housing during break periods is offered to students who have an academic reason to remain on campus (e.g., taking classes, assisting a professor or campus office). Students who meet the criteria may apply for break housing. Please be aware that there is a separate charge for break housing. Additionally, other situations may arise that having housing during break periods would be optimal. In these situations, please contact Ryan Baumann, Associate Director of Residence Life, at baumannryf@ccsu.edu to discuss these situations.

8. Can students be randomly assigned to a roommate of the opposite sex?

This is not encouraged since students that request gender-inclusive housing usually can identify who they would like to room with before applying for housing. Students who wish to take advantage of this program may enter into any roommate arrangement as willing partners as long as there is space available at the time of the request.

9. What if there is a vacancy in a gender-inclusive room or suite?

When there is a vacancy, the students remaining in that space may elect to identify any new roommate. If the resident(s) want to maintain a gender-inclusive space but cannot identify a new roommate, the Office of Residence Life will try to identify a student interested in GIH. All parties must agree to live together. If Residence Life has a shortage of space available for students who elect GIH, Residence Life staff will work closely with student residents to determine the next step.

10. Can couples live together in gender-inclusive housing?

The Department of Residence Life strongly discourages couples of any gender identity and sexual orientation from living with each other. We respect and honor the privacy of our students, so we do not require students to disclose the reason for their roommate request.

11. What if a student chooses to live with someone in a gender-inclusive arrangement and becomes uncomfortable with the situation?

The university’s established room change process allows for reassignment in any living situation where there is a problem that cannot be resolved. The Office of Residence Life will make every effort to ensure the safety and well-being of all students utilizing GIH.

12. Are all bathrooms single-use in gender-inclusive housing?

All of the bathrooms available in the four GIH options are single person bathrooms (one toilet and one shower) and are gender-neutral (men or women can use the bathroom). Information about the types of bathrooms offered in each building are included on the Residence Life website so that students can use this information to help them in selecting an appropriate place to live.

13. What if parents don’t want their child to live in a gender-inclusive housing space? Will parents be notified if their child opts for gender-inclusive housing?

We encourage students to maintain an open dialogue with their families so that they can be supportive of a student’s housing decision. Students eighteen years of age and over are able to sign the appropriate housing forms without parental consent. Students under eighteen years of age will be able to select housing without parental consent; however, parents may receive notification of the housing selection through billing and other methods. If privacy and confidentiality is of concern to students regardless of age, they should notify the GIH Liaison to discuss their options.
14. What general housing policies should I be aware of?

All students are expected to abide by, and be familiar with both, the University Student Code of Conduct and the Residence Hall policies. A copy of the student handbook can be found here. Key Policies include the following:

- **Alcohol**: Use, possession, purchase, sale or distribution of alcoholic beverages, except as expressly permitted by law and University regulations. Alcoholic beverages may not, under any circumstances, be used by, possessed by, or distributed to any person under twenty-one (21) years of age.

- **Drugs**: Use, possession, purchase, sale, distribution or manufacturing of narcotics, controlled substances and/or drugs, including, but not limited to, marijuana and heroin, or drug paraphernalia, except as expressly permitted by law.

- **Fire Safety**: Students are expected to exercise all precautions to prevent fires in the residence halls. No cooking is permitted in student rooms. The University has authorized a company to market microwave/refrigerator units in designated Residence Halls. These will be the only microwaves permitted in student rooms. Rooms should be cleaned and free of clutter in order to minimize fire hazards. Drapes must be made of fire-retardant material. No ceiling decorations including decorative lights can be hanged on ceilings tiles. A list of fire restricted/prohibited items is available for viewing here.

- **Roommate Bill of Rights**: It is expected that roommates will treat each other with courtesy and respect. Students found purposefully creating hostile environment in their room, in an attempt to cause their roommate to move out, may be referred through the student conduct process, along with being moved to another housing assignment.

- **Visitation**: Upon consent of the roommate(s), a resident may have a guest spend three nights per week. Guests must remain with, and are the responsibility of, their hosts. All guests both overnight and those visiting for a few hours are required to be signed in during posted sign in hours.

15. Will I need to have my health records on file before moving in?

Yes. All students living on campus must submit their health records to Student Wellness Services (SWS) Health Services. In addition, all students must have received the Meningitis vaccination, and provide SWS Health Services with proof of vaccination prior to moving in. Students will not be mandated to submit any information about their gender transition process to SWS.

*Adapted from Gettysburg College’s Office of Residence Life Gender-Neutral Housing Proposal (2011) by Vincent Casmirri and Victor Arcelus and Central Connecticut State University’s Gender Inclusive Housing Webpage.*
Bibliography


