



Women & Gender Center

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **DENVER**

Identifying your pronouns, gender identity, and sexual orientation: What you need to know right now (and some FAQs)

Recently, the CU system updated its student portal to enable students to identify the pronouns they use, their gender identity(ies), and their sexual orientation(s). This fact sheet provides an explanation for this change, instructions for students who are interested in updating their profiles, and answers to some frequently asked questions.

Rationale: Increasingly, colleges and universities have been exploring strategies for supporting students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (LGBTQ). Research tells us that many LGBTQ students have experienced bullying, harassment, and discrimination in school (https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/TeasingtoTorment%202015%20FINAL%20PDF%5B1%5D_0.pdf). This may lead LGBTQ students who are transitioning to college to bring with them suspicion, anger, anxiety, and fear.

In order to build a learning environment that feels safe and inclusive for LGBTQ students, then, colleges and universities need to not only integrate evidence-based best and promising practices, but also actively and visibly signal their commitment to LGBTQ inclusion. The University of Colorado's decision to enable students to identify their gender identity, sexual orientation, and pronouns is one effort to make visible its commitments to LGBTQ diversity and inclusion. These new features also provide members of the CU community with additional information that helps us to honor and affirm students' identities. The pronouns feature is especially relevant to students' everyday experiences, as this information is available to staff and faculty who interact with students and can enable community members to affirm and honor students' identities in classrooms, in student-serving offices, and across their campuses.



Women & Gender Center

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **DENVER**

Quick facts: How to update your profile / how to view students' profile information

For students: Updating your profile

***Please note that these new features are currently available only to students (although several committees and working groups are exploring extending these features to staff and faculty).*

Log in to your student portal and click on your profile / edit profile. You'll see three new profile categories; the menu options for each category are shown below. All categories are blank by default, and you can remove your choices and revert back to the blank default at any time.

Pronouns (choose one)	Gender identity (choose as many as are relevant)	Sexual orientation (choose as many as are relevant)

For staff and faculty: Viewing student profile information

Please note that the three new identity options are protected under different levels of security, in line with FERPA's guidelines for protecting student records. Access to each feature is based on whether an individual has a legitimate educational interest. Pronouns are visible to all staff and faculty based on a presumed legitimate educational interest; sexual orientation and gender identity are protected under a much higher level of security and are not automatically visible to the vast majority of CU community members.

University staff can access students' pronouns through CU-SIS, by accessing "Personal Information>>Biographical>>CU Pronoun":



Women & Gender Center

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **DENVER**

[Favorites](#) > [Main Menu](#) > [Campus Community](#) > [Personal Information](#) > [Biographical](#) > [CU Pronoun](#)

University of Colorado
 Boulder | Colorado Springs | Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus

All Search

CU Pronoun

Pronoun

Z9Chris Z9Records

100565695

Add/change pronoun Find | View All First 1 of 1 Last

Effective Date: 09/01/2018 **Status:** Active

Pronoun: They, Them, Theirs

Last Update Date/Time: 09/01/18 2:57:06PM **by:** Z9VSRDEN01

Faculty can access pronouns through their Faculty Portal. Class rosters include a new “pronouns” column; all students who have opted in will have their pronouns listed in that column.

***Please note that pronouns are not currently visible in Canvas.*

The screenshot shows the Faculty Portal interface. On the left, there are navigation options like 'Faculty Center', 'My Schedule', and 'My Teaching Schedule'. The 'My Teaching Schedule' section shows a table for 'Spring 2018 > CU Denver' with columns for Class, Class Title, Enrolled, Days & Times, Room, and Class Dates. A class entry for 'SOCY 3490-ED1 (14832) Criminology (Lecture)' is visible. On the right, the 'Enrolled Students' section shows a table with columns for Notify, Photo, FERPA, ID, Pronoun, Name, and Primary Program Plan. The 'Pronoun' column is highlighted in yellow.



Women & Gender Center

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **DENVER**

FAQs

Who can view students' pronouns, sexual orientation, and gender identity?

Because all three of these features are part of students' records, the answer to this question requires some background information about the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, or FERPA.

As described by the CU Denver Registrar's website:

FERPA deals specifically with the education records of students, affording them certain rights with respect to those records. For purposes of definition, education records are those records which are:

1. Directly related to a student and
2. Maintained by an institution or a party acting for the institution.

In order to access information contained in a student record, university officials must demonstrate *a legitimate educational interest*. Information that's necessary for successfully performing instructional, advisory, or administrative duties falls under the legitimate educational interest guideline.

The pronouns a student uses are assumed to fall within the legitimate educational interest of all university officials, because we need to know a student's pronouns in order to effectively interact with, represent, and advocate for the student. This means that all faculty and staff can access students' pronouns.

Please note that pronouns are *not* considered directory information. Directory information is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. Because a student's pronouns might reveal information about their gender identity and could in some instances be considered an invasion of privacy, pronouns are not treated as directory information.

Access to information about a student's gender identity and/or sexual orientation is not assumed to be necessary in everyday interactions, and it therefore is not automatically visible to the vast majority of CU employees. Again this information is provided under the legitimate educational need guideline, and university officials who demonstrate a legitimate educational need may be provided with access to this information.

If I indicate my pronouns, gender identity, and sexual orientation, what are the benefits to me?

Of the three new features, the pronouns option provides the most immediate and visible benefit: It enables you to share the pronouns you use with people you'll be interacting with on campus. We hope that this will lead to more affirming and respectful interactions with members of the CU community!

The other two features—gender identity and sexual orientation—are less directly linked to students' everyday experiences. We hope to collect information about students' gender identities and sexual orientations in order to better understand and support our LGBTQ community. Providing this information will help us in this effort in the longer term, although it's not likely to



Women & Gender Center

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **DENVER**

change your everyday interactions with community members since most community members don't have access to this information.

I use a set of pronouns that aren't included in the drop-down menu. Why are the options so limited?

Because university IT systems were not originally programmed to embrace the range of gender identities that exist in the world; they were only programmed to understand gender as a binary: male/female. We want the pronouns students choose to show up everywhere the M/F feature is programmed to appear, and in the short-term that meant we needed to limit the options to a drop-down menu. We chose the five most commonly used pronouns, based on an assessment of regional pronoun usage.

We agree that the pronoun options aren't sufficient to encompass all of the identities that we know students carry with them to campus. Our hope is to continue to expand the options—and at some point in the future, perhaps to enable an open text option for students to simply list the pronouns they use.

I'm not transgender, and people typically use the right pronouns to refer to me. Is there any reason I should indicate my pronouns in CU-SIS?

Yes! By indicating your pronouns, you're helping to normalize the practice and helping community members get used to looking for and/or asking for pronouns instead of making assumptions about the pronouns people use.

This is great news! How come I haven't heard much about it / what's your plan for publicizing it?

We're glad you think it's great! We're excited about it too.

First, you should have received an email about these changes—it was sent to all faculty, staff, and current students. If you missed the email, you can read the media release from CU Communications at <https://www.cudenvertoday.org/gender-identity-sexual-orientation-and-pronouns/>.

We're also being very careful about how, when, and where we publicize these new options, for the following reasons:

- We want to make sure students understand that filling out any of these options is completely voluntary. We talked about publicizing the new features via a pop-up in the student portal, but we want to avoid anything that might lead students to think they *have* to complete the new fields. In the end, we chose to publicize the features via emails to all current students, faculty, and staff—so you should have received this email at some point in the last few months.
- We want to ramp up this project slowly, to ensure we can effectively address any concerns and resolve any snags. With that said...
- We think word of mouth is a pretty effective means of publicizing the new features, and we hope that you'll tell students about these features as it feels relevant or useful.



Women & Gender Center

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **DENVER**

What else can I do to manage my identity in CU's online system?

If you use a first name that's different from your legal name, you can update your information in our online directory and request an email alias that reflects your chosen name. Here's how to do it:

1. Add a "preferred" name, by following the instructions below.

If you're a student:

- Log in to [UCDAccess](#) Student Portal.
- Click on Student Center
- Click on All Student Functions
- Choose the Profile icon
- Scroll down and click on Names
- If you don't see Preferred Name, click on Add Name

If you're staff or faculty:

- Call the OIT HelpDesk (303-724-4357) and request an update to your preferred name.

2. Call the OIT HelpDesk and say "I'm calling to request an email alias that reflects my preferred name."