

All Gender Restrooms at Vanderbilt University

A recommendation of the University Staff Advisory Council

In conjunction with the Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, & Intersex Life

Overview of this proposal:

This proposal seeks to address the needs of individuals of all gender identities and expressions at Vanderbilt University in regards to restroom access. After a preliminary review of current All Gender restrooms at Vanderbilt University, we are making the recommendation to the Vanderbilt Administration and Human Resources that all men's and women's designated single-use restrooms at Vanderbilt University be converted to All Gender restrooms by replacing the men and women's designated sign with an All Gender restroom sign. This recommendation mirrors the student resolution passed in the spring of 2014 (Please see appendix A)

Definitions:

Single-use restroom, for the purposes of this recommendation, means any restroom with a locking door intended to serve only one occupant at a time

All Gender restroom, for the purposes of this recommendation, means any restroom that is intended to serve members of all gender identities and gender expressions in the Vanderbilt University community.

What:

Vanderbilt's Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Policy states, "the University does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression." However, many transgender and gender nonconforming students, staff and faculty do not have access to close and safe all gender restroom spaces. This recommendation seeks to identify all men's and women's designated single-use restrooms on campus and convert those restrooms to all gender restroom spaces.

Impact:

This recommendation affects the entire campus community. Individuals, whether staff, faculty, students, alumni or visitors to Vanderbilt University, have the right to use a restroom that is consistent with and appropriate to their gender identity and/or gender expression. Every year hundreds of transgender and gender nonconforming individuals are victims of violence simply by living their lives. Author Ivette Feliciano for PBS.org reported in an article titled "When enforcing gender norms turns violent" that from January 2014 to April 2014 there were more than 100 acts of violence reported against transgender people. "Jody L. Herman, Williams Institute Manager of Transgender Research, recently released 'Gendered Restrooms and Minority Stress: The Public Regulation of Gender and Its Impact on Transgender People's Lives.' This scientific study found that 70 percent of transgender and gender-nonconforming respondents experienced problems in gender-specific restrooms in Washington, D.C., with people of color and people who have not medically transitioned often faring worse than others (Davis, 2013)."

This recommendation will have the impact of identifying and changing men's and women's designated single-use restrooms to all gender restrooms. By identifying more single-use restrooms across Vanderbilt's campus and converting these restrooms to all gender spaces, we are not only fulfilling our equal opportunity and affirmative action policy, but also making Vanderbilt a safer campus for all students, staff and faculty.

Why are we addressing this issue?

We are addressing this issue because there are currently not enough All Gender restroom spaces on campus. Although LGBTQI Life has begun to map out and create all gender restrooms, there are too few resources for just one department to fully find and map all possible restroom locations. By the University Staff Advisory Council putting forth a formal recommendation we hope to gain institutional support to do a thorough survey

of restrooms across campus and gain a better understanding of where All Gender restroom spaces could be made available.

Timing is important in this matter because everyday students, staff and faculty are putting their physical safety and health at risk by not being able to find accessible and safe restrooms on campus. This issue is also timely because of the current Vanderbilt Student Government Association recent passage of a similar resolution calling for more inclusive restrooms (Please see appendix A). “The number of gender-neutral bathrooms has grown in just the past few years, in city-run facilities, workplaces and, most commonly, college campuses. There are more than 150 schools across the U.S. that have gender-neutral bathrooms, according to the University of Massachusetts Amherst's LGBTQ organization The Stonewall Center (Bellware, 2014).” Institutions of higher education often lead the way in inclusive atmospheres for all identities. We have a responsibility to the Vanderbilt University Community to address this issue in a timely and efficient manner.

Insufficiency/problems with current state?

No current map for All Gender restrooms/Not currently enough accessible All Gender restrooms

Currently there is no map or resource guide that shows where All Gender restrooms are located on Vanderbilt University's campus. Vanderbilt University Community members must either personally seek out where All Gender restrooms might be located or be forced to use a restroom that is not safe. By following this recommendation we would not only be creating more All Gender restroom spaces but also be able to fully map the current All Gender restroom locations for public access. This will allow for individuals to locate safer accommodations to use the restroom.

Who has been involved?

The Vanderbilt Lambda Association, The Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, & Intersex Life along with the Dean of Students Office and the Vanderbilt Student Government have been involved in the current process of identifying and converting men's and women's designated single-use lockable restrooms to All Gender restrooms.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations are made to the Vanderbilt University Administration and Human Resources department:

- 1.) Identify all current All Gender restrooms on Vanderbilt's campus.
- 2.) Change current men's and women's designated single-use locking restrooms to All Gender restrooms.
- 3.) Create a map of All Gender restrooms to be owned and maintained by the Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and Disability Services Department. We suggest that links be placed on the Vanderbilt University Home page, Dean of Students home page, and/or the LGBTQI Life Trans @ VU web-resource.
- 4.) Order All Gender Restroom signs to replace men's and women's designated signage of single stall lockable restrooms (please see appendix B). These signs have already been implemented across some university departments and buildings. These signs are produced at Vanderbilt's sign shop and no outside vendor would have to be utilized.
- 5.) The University Staff Advisory Council would also recommend that Plant Operations develop a building standard for the inclusion of All Gender restrooms in all new construction.

Ideal Positive Outcomes/Result:

The first result of this recommendation would be to better fulfill Vanderbilt's Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Policy by accommodating all gender identities and gender expressions with safer restroom spaces. The recommendation will also provide the entire Vanderbilt Community with an updated and accurate list of All Gender restrooms housed in the Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and Disability

Services Department and displayed on the Vanderbilt University homepage, Dean of Students homepage, and LGBTQI Life Trans @ VU web resource. Another positive outcome of this recommendation allows for better access for all Vanderbilt Families. Family members who have young children would be able to go into All Gender restrooms with their children if needed without worrying about entering a restroom with a child of a different gender than their own. Lastly, but most importantly this recommendation helps us to better serve the entire campus population by creating a more inclusive and safer campus environment.

Citations:

Bellware, K. (2014). Gender-Neutral Bathrooms Are Quietly Becoming The New Thing At Colleges. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/07/18/gender-neutral-bathrooms-colleges_n_5597362.html

David, M. (2013). Transgender People Need Safe Restrooms. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/masendavis/transgender-people-need-safe-restrooms_b_3492067.html

Feliciano, I. (2014). When enforcing gender norms turns violent. <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/enforcing-gender-destroys-individual-identity-todays-youth/>

Appendix A

VANDERBILT STUDENT GOVERNMENT

RESOLUTION TO ADDRESS THE LACK OF GENDER INCLUSIVE RESTROOMS

RESOLUTION S #-#-#

PROPOSED BY: BLAIR COUNCIL PRESIDENT ROO GEORGE-WARREN

DEFINITIONS:

Single-use restroom, for the purposes of this resolution, means any restroom with a locking door intended to serve only one occupant at a time

Gender-inclusive restroom, for the purposes of this resolution, means any restroom that intended to serve all members of the Vanderbilt community regardless of their gender identity or gender expression.

We, the elected representatives of the Vanderbilt Student Body, hereby enact the following:

WHEREAS, Vanderbilt’s Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Policy states “the University does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.”

WHEREAS, Vanderbilt Student Government’s stated mission is to “enrich and improve the undergraduate experience through **proactive advocacy on behalf of students**, collaborative partnerships with administrators and faculty, and relevant, innovative services.” [emphasis added]

WHEREAS, a cursory survey of campus restrooms reveals several buildings with 0 gender-inclusive restrooms and at least 16 restrooms on campus eligible for conversion

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Vanderbilt Student Government, in cooperation with Plant Operations and LGBTQI Life, conduct a complete survey of restrooms on campus to determine the prevalence of gender-inclusive restrooms on campus and identify all convertible restrooms.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT Vanderbilt Student Government announces its endorsement of more gender-inclusive restrooms on campus, recommends that all eligible restrooms on campus be converted to gender-inclusive restrooms, and offers its support in moving these conversions forward

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT Vanderbilt Student Government strongly supports and recommends that all future construction projects include provisions for gender-inclusive restrooms

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT Vanderbilt Student Government strongly recommends that LGBTQI Life be involved in planning the conversion of restrooms, the planning for future gender-inclusive restrooms, and any other issues or projects pertaining to gender-inclusive restrooms.

Signed by the Speaker of the Senate,

Josh Landis

Signed by the Student Body President,

Isaac Escamilla

Appendix B

