

President's DEIJ Coordinating Council Spring 2022 Update

Members:

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In response to the June 2021 report presented to the CSB/SJU Presidents by the DEIJ Coordinating Council, Presidents Hamen and Mullen requested that the Council provide more clarity and concrete practices for enhancing gender inclusion at CSB/SJU. The June 2021 report identified the following as Additional Areas for Future Work:

Address issues of gender:

CSB/SJU is deeply rooted in the gender binary which requires attention if we are to be inclusive of all genders. Non-binary and gender non-conforming people are excluded from current admission policy.

The gendered nature of CSB/SJU requires dedicated staff time to identify and transform exclusive policies, practices, and structures and to address issues of gender inequality and sexism.

Implementation of revised Human Rights Policy:

Review and implementation of the revised policy has stalled. CSB/SJU Student Senates put this in their Call to Action.

Human Resources is currently under resourced to adequately address Human Rights violations that do arise.

The Council chose to focus on these areas during the 2021-2022 academic year to ensure continued progress. Recommendations specific to these areas are included in this report. These recommendations are made within the context of the past two years in which our schools are undergoing significant reform to the leadership and governance models that guide our institutions. The new single-president leadership and board structure will transform our schools for years to come. We recognize that it will take time to adjust to a new system given the many entities impacted by these changes.

Within these changing times, however, the missions and identities which include the language of a “college for men” and a “college for women” signal the erasure of students and external constituents who do not fall within the gender binary. We recognize that the uniqueness of these missions as a “college for men” and a “college for women” are what have long characterized our institutions and may still attract many students to these

undergraduate experiences. Though, as Catholic, Benedictine institutions, we are called to a process of transforming our understandings of these missions to include and actively welcome gender diverse students.

We consider how the Benedictine values are lived out in these cases for justice, the common good, respect for persons, and our institutional learning goals, particularly Embracing Difference. The *Rule of Benedict* indicates that all guests are to be received as Christ. Hospitality is not merely about receiving a person, but how we receive them. What might it look like to truly receive guests with “honor, humility, and the courtesy of love” in this spirit of being Catholic, Benedictine? (RB 53) Gender inclusivity therefore is critical for creating a more hospitable environment for students, faculty and staff who do not fall within the gender binary.

The suggested changes that follow in this report reflect new ways of being deeply hospitable and becoming more welcoming to all students and prospective students, including faculty, and staff.

Consider the recent work of Franciscan, Fr. Daniel P. Horan, director of the Center for Spirituality and professor of philosophy, religious studies, and theology at Saint Mary's College in Indiana who in an October 2021 article wrote:

The Catholic tradition, which values the importance and power of names and naming, is also one that is firmly committed — at least in principle — to the inherent dignity and value of all human persons. It is a continued disgrace that so many of those who self-identify as Catholic use our faith tradition to reject and erase the self-identities of our sisters, brothers, and other siblings in Christ.

Because we value inclusion, our policies, identity, and language must include all members of our communities.

To highlight the urgency of these recommendations, the council notes that new cohorts of students are learning about gender diversity and critiques of binary constructions of gender in their first year Cultural and Social Difference Identity courses, consistent with current theory and research. The discrepancy between what they are learning in these required classes and the entrenched nature of the gender binary in our policies, practices, language, and behavior will likely cause increasing levels of cognitive dissonance and psychological harm for students in the years ahead, potentially reducing retention and harming recruitment (for example, see Peterson 2022 article in *The Record*). Gender inclusivity will therefore improve the long-term health and sustainability of these institutions, as well as enhance the well-being of our students.

Finally, our responsiveness to these issues will be indicative of how we value human persons and human dignity on our campus. These too are pillars of our Catholic, Benedictine identity. Our students and community require timely and dignified responses to any bias experienced on campus. Gender exclusiveness is one over-arching example of how bias and oppression are experienced, but the Council notes that gender bias is very much intersectional. Gender discrepancies are related to the harm expressed on the [BIPOC at CSB/SJU](#) Instagram page, the lack of transparency and communication regarding the human rights policy, and so on. Without urgent action and recognition of these issues, our students' rights and responsibilities as human persons are at stake.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Prioritize updating the human rights policy and creating a bias reporting system immediately. This recommendation is critical to DEIJ efforts and advances intersectional justice for all members of our community.

1. This council made a recommendation to revise the human rights policy in our June 2021 report. A small working group shared a draft of a Human Rights Policy Revision during fall 2021 with a recommendation that the General Counsel and Senior Diversity Officer for Inclusive Excellence finalize the Human Rights policy within their first three to six months as part of their new positions. Our DEIJ Coordinating Council strongly recommends accelerating this timeline. This important policy requires more urgency to adequately serve our current students.
2. A bias reporting system (independent of current systems) is necessary for collecting information to better inform institutional DEIJ efforts. Therefore, we recommend that CSB|SJU create a bias reporting system (see Appendix for examples) that must be ready to roll out by Fall 2022. We recommend that the system has an anonymous option for reporters and that the reports go to the Senior Diversity Officer and Director of Multicultural Student Services, as joint employees. This system should be supported with sufficient resources that the Senior Diversity Officer and Director of Multicultural Student Services can respond to incidents and make regular reports to the community about actions taken and concerns requiring community awareness. Most peer and aspirant institutions have this policy. We are falling behind our peer institutions who have long had robust reporting systems in place. Upon making changes, it is crucial to inform the community and build in regular training and information sharing for faculty, staff, and students.

We need transparency about how bias and abuse are handled on campus, who is responsible for responding, and a regular record and public reporting of instances.

Students on our committee note that students are often dissuaded from pursuing any of these processes because of how unclear the existing process is and how long it takes.

The BIPOC at CSBSJU Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/bipocatcsbsju/>) adds renewed urgency to addressing this. This is a public page that prospective students and families can find when they search for CSBSJU online; it is linked to our library website. Admissions ought to be concerned about this. Everyone ought to be concerned about this.

Enhance education for all community members around gender inclusion

To ensure widespread knowledge of these practices, we recommend a series of workshops on gender inclusion with specific tips for students, faculty, and staff. These could be carried out as a collaborative campaign of the IWL and MDI, or perhaps by gender studies students as a course project. They could be held in student venues, and for faculty and staff in department meetings. We envision facilitators reaching out to departments and

asking for 15 minutes of time during a department meeting. We have created a [workshop template](#) that workshop facilitators could use and build upon.

Similarly, inform the community about how Title IX violations are handled on campus, and implement ongoing mandatory Title IX Training for faculty and staff.

Make policies more inclusive

Change the trans policy to be inclusive of gender non-conforming, nonbinary, agender, and intersex prospective and current students.

Proposed Revisions to the CSB and SJU Trans Policies

The College of Saint Benedict is a Catholic and Benedictine, residential, liberal arts college committed to the education, growth, and development of undergraduate women. Founded and sponsored by the Sisters of Saint Benedict, the College of Saint Benedict is unwavering in its commitment to respecting the dignity of all persons and to welcoming students, faculty, staff, and guests who find inspiration and value in these commitments.

In furtherance of our mission, tradition, and values ~~as a college for women~~, and in recognition of our changing world and evolving understanding of gender identity, the College of Saint Benedict will consider for undergraduate admission those applicants who consistently live and identify as women, ~~intersex, nonbinary, or agender~~, regardless of the gender assigned to them at birth. ~~The College of Saint Benedict will continue to use gendered language that reflects its mission as an undergraduate college for women.~~

This admission policy does not affect students who ~~change transition their gender identities~~ while enrolled at the College of Saint Benedict. Once admitted, every student will receive the individualized support that is an essential part of the ~~St. Ben's Bennie~~ experience. If an enrolled student decides that the College of Saint Benedict no longer offers an appropriate educational environment, guidance and resources will be available to assist in making choices that are best for that student. ~~Transferring to Saint John's University is one possible option.~~

Saint John's is a Catholic and Benedictine university with a residential, liberal arts, College of Arts and Sciences that is committed to the education, growth, and development of undergraduate men. Founded and sponsored by the monks of the Order of Saint Benedict, Saint John's University is unwavering in its commitment to respecting the dignity of all persons and to welcoming students, faculty, staff, and guests who find inspiration and value in these commitments.

In furtherance of our mission, tradition, and values ~~as an undergraduate college for men~~, and in recognition of our changing world and evolving understanding of gender identity, Saint John's University will consider for undergraduate admission ~~those~~ applicants who consistently live and identify

as men, **intersex, nonbinary, or agender**, regardless of the gender assigned to them at birth. ~~Saint John's University will continue to use gendered language that reflects its mission as an undergraduate college for men.~~

This admission policy does not affect students who **change transition their gender identities** while enrolled at Saint John's University. Once admitted, every student will receive the individualized support that is an essential part of the Saint John's experience. If an enrolled student decides that Saint John's University no longer offers an appropriate educational environment, guidance and resources will be available to assist in making choices that are best for that student. **Transferring to the College of Saint Benedict is one possible option.**

Change institutional language

I. Action by the Boards

The institutional missions of Saint Ben's and Saint John's, and the marketing messages that are based on those missions, are not inclusive of people of all genders. We recommend that the Boards of Trustees revise the missions to be welcoming of people of all genders.

Gender diverse students are currently enrolled at both CSB and SJU, and it is vital that our description of our identity reflects this reality. The central phrases "a college for women" and "a college for men" suggest that gender diverse persons are unwelcome on campus. In addition, they do not reflect the lived reality that the graduate programs welcome persons of many genders. Saint John's University admits women as part of the School of Theology. The College of Saint Benedict admits men as part of the nursing graduate program. The following is our recommendation for changes to the mission statement:

- Grounded in Catholic and Benedictine values and tradition, The College of Saint Benedict (CSB), a gender inclusive liberal arts college traditionally for women, prioritizes the provision of a distinctive residential liberal arts education. CSB accepts applications from all trans and nonbinary identified individuals, whether assigned female, male, or intersex at birth.
- Grounded in Catholic and Benedictine values and tradition, Saint John's University (SJU), a gender inclusive liberal arts university traditionally for men, prioritizes the provision of a distinctive residential liberal arts education. SJU accepts applications from all trans and nonbinary identified individuals, whether assigned female, male, or intersex at birth.

Additional options for language that is more inclusive than our existing language, include:

- Remove the gendered language: "The College of Saint Benedict (CSB), a liberal arts college, and Saint John's University (SJU), a liberal arts university."
- Add gender diverse: "The College of Saint Benedict (CSB), a liberal arts college for women and gender diverse students, and Saint John's University (SJU), a liberal arts university for men and gender diverse students."
- Focus on historical roots and add gender diverse: "The College of Saint Benedict (CSB), a gender diverse liberal arts college founded for women by the Sisters of the Order of Saint Benedict, and Saint

John’s University (SJU), a gender diverse liberal arts university founded for men by the Brothers of the Order of Saint Benedict.”

We understand that changing the missions is complex and involves the consideration and approval of numerous entities, including the monastic communities whose origins and present identities are rooted in this distinctiveness. However, we ask that the Boards consider these changes as soon as possible in order to further demonstrate hospitality at the institutions and ensure that all persons are welcome as they are.

II. Action by CSBSJU Leadership and Community

While we encourage the Boards to proceed with the suggested changes as soon as possible, the shift in our institutional language around gender cannot wait. We recommend that CSBSJU leadership, faculty, staff, and students immediately begin including “gender diverse” when referring to the gendered natures of the institutions. For example:

- “The College of Saint Benedict, a liberal arts college for women and gender diverse students...”
- “Saint John's University, a liberal arts university for men and gender diverse students...”

This framing more accurately reflects the current composition of CSB/SJU’s student bodies and creates a sense of belonging and inclusion for all members of our communities.

Update everyday language

Introduce yourself in all spaces with pronouns: “Hello, my name is President X and I use the pronouns she/her/hers, he/his/his, they/them/theirs, ze “zee”/hir “here”/hir, he/she/they ...”

Ask others to introduce their pronouns: “Please introduce yourself and your pronouns.”

Ensure that you use the right pronouns and ask when you are unsure: “Welcome! What are your pronouns?”

Be consistent with how you refer to all people. If you address one person by their name, last name, or professional title, address other people of all genders in the same way. For example, “Professor Smith and Professor Johnson,” rather than referring to one (often a woman), by their first name.

Avoid unnecessarily gendered language across settings.

Instead of saying this:	Say this:
Ladies, gentlemen, guys, women, men	You all, Y’all, students, colleagues, folks
Bennies and Johnnies*	CSB enrolled students, SJU enrolled students
Mr., Ms., Mrs.	First and Last Name or professional title
Wives, husbands	Partners
Mankind	Humankind, humanity

In writing: “he” or “he or she”	They, the student, the staff member, the professor
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*Note that if both institutions are defined as gender inclusive, the labels of “Bennie” and “Johnnie” would be inclusive, but with existing gender binary definitions for the institutions, these labels are not inclusive.

The United Nations’ has created guidelines for gender-inclusive language in English (<https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/guidelines.shtml>) that detail best practices and strategies that can be used to be more gender-inclusive.

At these events, ensure that language is gender inclusive, using the tips above:

- Convocation
- Commencement

In these contexts, ensure that language is gender inclusive, using the tips above:

- Names of funds, scholarships, and awards
- Websites
- Brochures and promotional materials
- Admissions materials
- Job advertisements

We strongly recommend that Leadership participate in gender inclusive trainings and model gender inclusive language and practices in all settings and interactions:

- Presidents
- Administrations
- VPs
- Associate VPs
- Deans

Enactment of these inclusive practices by institutional leaders will serve as powerful modeling to the community. This may aid in more broad-based buy-in and adoption. For instance, many CSB/SJU Well-being Center staff already model gender inclusive practice by their use of inclusive language (i.e. “SJU enrolled students, CSB enrolled students”) in their everyday interactions, outreach, and public engagement, including consistent adoption by the Executive Director. This is a simple, elegant shift in language that could easily be more broadly adopted. Given the joint co-educational nature of the faculty and curriculum, we also encourage Academic Affairs leaders, faculty, and staff to be leaders in this way.

Ensure that an intersectional analysis informs all solutions

These recommendations must be understood and implemented in the context of intersectionality. While these suggestions focus primarily on gender; gender cannot be understood or addressed as separate from other

important aspects of identity and systems of power and oppression. For instance, our BIPOC intersex students are especially vulnerable to harm caused by our lack of gender inclusive language/policy as well as by our currently inadequate Human Rights Policy. The bias incidents on campus in fall 2021 (e.g., Pat Hall, Aja Black) put the intersections of racism and sexism in particularly stark relief and add to our urgency.

While these recommendations may be a start, we need to do more to develop solutions that support the needs of members of the community who are affected by intersectional oppression and to center the voices and needs of gender diverse campus community members in these recommendations. The DEIJ Council is working to do this.

References and Resources

- Horan, Dan. 2021. "Why Catholics Should Use Preferred Gender Pronouns and Names," *National Catholic Reporter*, October <https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/why-catholics-should-use-preferred-gender-pronouns-and-names>
- Peterson, Landon. 2022. "Evolve or Die: CSB/SJU's Identity Crisis." *The Record*, February 6 <https://csbsjurecord.com/2022/02/evolve-or-die-csb-sjus-identity-crisis/>.
- Shlasko, Davey. 2018. *Trans Allyship Workbook: Building Skills to Support Trans People in Our Lives*. Madison: Think Again Training.
- United Nations. "Guidelines for Gender-inclusive Language in English." <https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/guidelines.shtml>
- University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Plus (LGBTQ+) Resource Center. "Gender Pronouns." <https://uwm.edu/lgbtrc/support/gender-pronouns/>

Appendix

Examples of Bias Reporting Systems at Other Institutions

https://gustavus.edu/deanofstudents/incident_report.php

<https://campus-climate.umn.edu/resources/bias-response-and-referral-network>

<https://www.stthomas.edu/deanofstudents/bias-reporting/>