

Birth Sex and Gender Identity

The New Testament refers to the followers of Jesus as being “in Christ” (e.g. 2 Cor. 5:17). As a Christian institution, Wheaton College thus seeks to understand all aspects of human existence and experience in connection to Jesus Christ. This includes human gender—here defined as the behavioral, cultural, and psychological traits associated with a person’s biological sex—and any claims made about gender identity.

Wheaton College recognizes that while many people experience gender identity in ways that are congruent with their birth sex, some experience gender identity and gender expression in ways that are at variance with their biological birth sex (gender incongruence) and still others have physical characteristics that are partially male and female (intersex).

We acknowledge that matters of birth sex and gender identity can be complex. Here we outline some of the guidelines and principles that will inform the College’s decision-making when a student or employee engages in actions or behavior that demonstrate variance between their birth sex and gender identity:

The College desires to be a loving, supportive community that cares for and respects each person, including those among us who experience incongruity between birth sex and gender identity. We oppose unloving responses toward these individuals, lament the hurt caused by any member of the Christian community, and recognize our calling to cultivate a loving Christian environment.

The College assigns access for students and employees to sensitive spaces such as housing, locker rooms, and bathrooms on the basis of sex at birth. As an expression of Christian hospitality, the College provides gender-neutral bathroom options where possible.

The College considers the decision to undergo a medical transition or to engage in other persistent actions or behaviors at variance with one’s birth sex to violate the biblical and theological commitments for students and employees in the *Community Covenant* and *Statement of Faith*. We will address such matters within the appropriate pastoral and/or conduct processes of the College. The College will consider enrolling or employing an individual who has undergone a medical transition from his or her birth sex where there is reasonable evidence that the circumstances that led to the medical transition do not violate the College’s biblical and/or theological convictions (e.g., medical transitions taking place before becoming a Christ follower or to address certain unique medical situations).

The College recognizes the pronouns she/her/hers and he/him/his as expressing the created reality of a biological binary. The College neither endorses nor requests the statement of preferred personal pronouns by members of the College community. The College does not permit the statement of preferred personal pronouns by employees when conducting College business, when on a platform where they are publicly identified as College employees, and/or when using the College brand in print or digital media, except when employees are required to submit such pronouns when registering for a conference or for membership in a professional organization. With the exception of research conducted under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (“IRB”), College-created forms, surveys, and questionnaires should only include male and female sex options without additional gender options (although “prefer not to say” is also permissible).

The College reserves the latitude to make reasonable judgments about matters not explicitly addressed in this Policy based on the *Statement of Faith, Community Covenant*, and the biblical principles that underlie these documents. The Wheaton College Board of Trustees reserves final authority for the interpretation of these documents and the biblical principles that guide them.

To provide further, more specific context, the College's policies and practices on birth sex and gender identity for the members of our community are informed by the following biblical and theological convictions:

God's original intent and action was to create humanity to bear his divine image as two distinct sexes, male and female (Gen. 1:27), which are further designated as "man" and "woman" (Gen. 2:21-23). Jesus Christ affirmed this teaching, stating that "at the beginning the Creator made them male and female" (Matt. 19:4). According to God's creation intention, each person is divinely intended to experience congruence between the physical and experiential dimensions of his or her sex as male/man or female/woman.

As a result of the choices of our first human parents, Adam and Eve, sin and death permeate the human condition (Rom. 1:18-32). Human beings are both the victims and the perpetrators of transgression. The totality of our experience is fallen in many ways, affecting the sexual, biological, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of living. One example of the effects of the fall on creation is that our personal experience of gender may be inconsistent with God's original design for our biological sex.

The biblical narrative expresses both the distinction of human beings as male and female and the equal dignity of men and women as made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). When unbiblical expectations or extrabiblical standards for gender distinctiveness are promoted, both men and women are denied their equal dignity, with damaging consequences. Similarly, we see harmful consequences arising out of distorted messages about birth sex, gender identity, and gender expression, such as the view that gender distinctions are harmful, irrelevant, or matters of personal preference rather than intended for our flourishing as divine image-bearers in a fallen world.

As Christians who experience the pain and difficulty of living in a fallen world, we are called to empathize with anyone who seeks to reduce the distress that may accompany gender incongruence. Yet we do not believe that the best path to resolving a conflict between birth sex and gender identity is the adoption of a psychological identity, public persona, or physiology different from one's divinely given birth sex.

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