

Inclusive Student Support in the Era of X-Gender Marker Passports

From the Perspectives of Administrators, Advisors, and Students



Introductions

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Outline

- Current State
- Student Challenges
- Tenants of Support
- Support Strategies

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Accessibility Statement

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the United States Department of State strives to embed diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) in all aspects of its work. Public diplomacy is most effective when people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives participate in people-to-people exchanges and programs to promote mutual understanding. The Bureau incorporates DEIA best practices throughout its exchanges and programs, grants, community partnerships, and in its workforce and workplace.

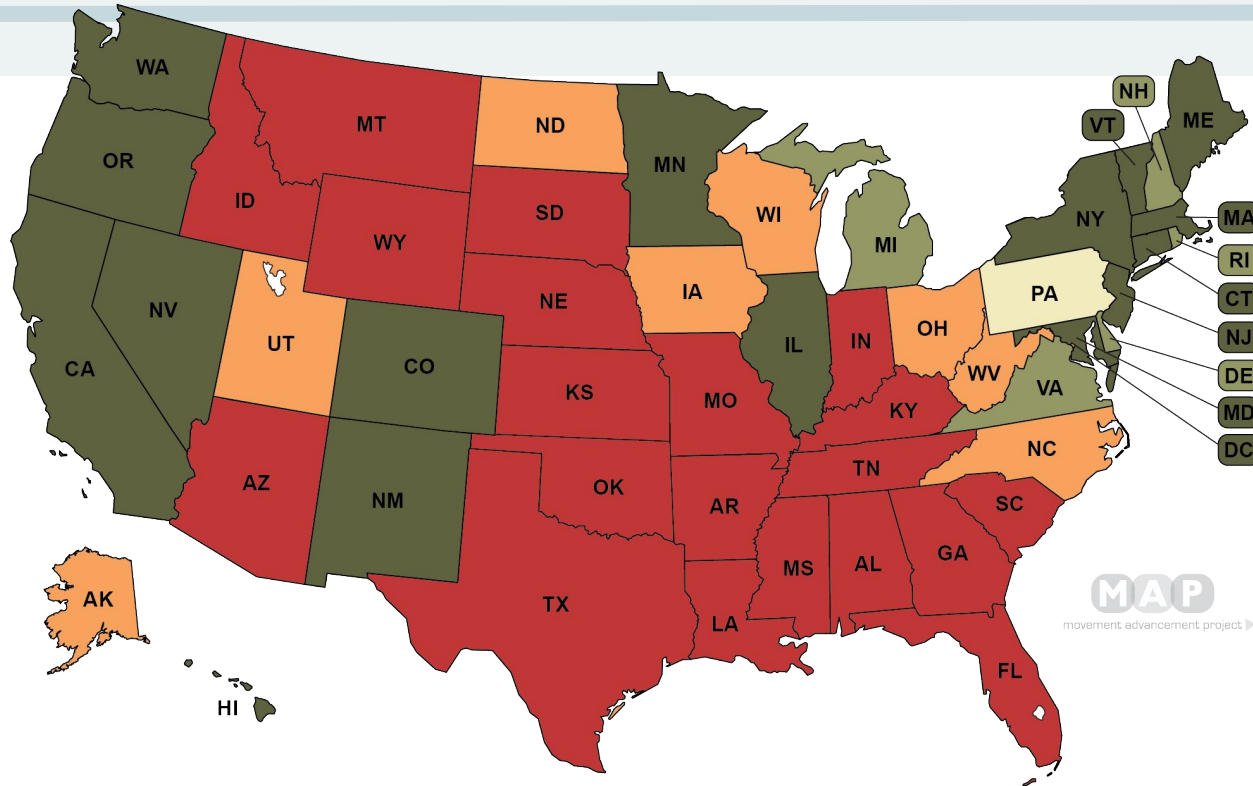
ECA DEIA Statement ctd.

ECA is committed to addressing barriers based on race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, geographic location, education, income, socio-economic status, and other diversity dimensions, that may hinder inclusion in the organization. The Bureau's commitment to DEIA strengthens U.S. foreign policy and is vital to building trust and partnerships here at home and around the world.

X-Marker Passports

- April 11, 2022: X Gender marker added as an option on U.S. passport applications
- Signifying unspecified or another gender identity
- Additional documentation is not required for a citizen to change the gender marker on their passport

Domestic Laws



- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| High Gender Identity Policy Tally | (16 states + D.C.) |
| Medium Gender Identity Policy Tally | (5 states) |
| Fair Gender Identity Policy Tally | (1 state, 1 territory) |
| Low Gender Identity Policy Tally | (8 states, 1 territory) |
| Negative Gender Identity Policy Tally | (20 states, 3 territories) |



MAP
movement advancement project

U.S. Territories

American Samoa

Commonwealth of the
Northern Mariana Islands

Guam

Puerto Rico

U.S. Virgin Islands



Movement Advancement Project (2023)

Common Student Challenges

- Administrative
- In the Classroom
- In the Cohort
- In the Community

Administrative Challenges

- Visas and Enrollment
- International Travel
- Housing Placement
- Information Sharing

Visas and International Recognition

“While the United States Government issues passports with the X gender marker, it cannot guarantee your entry or transit through other countries. You may face entry restrictions in countries that do not recognize the X gender marker. Before you travel, check with the foreign embassy or consulate in the United States for more information.”

(Department of State)



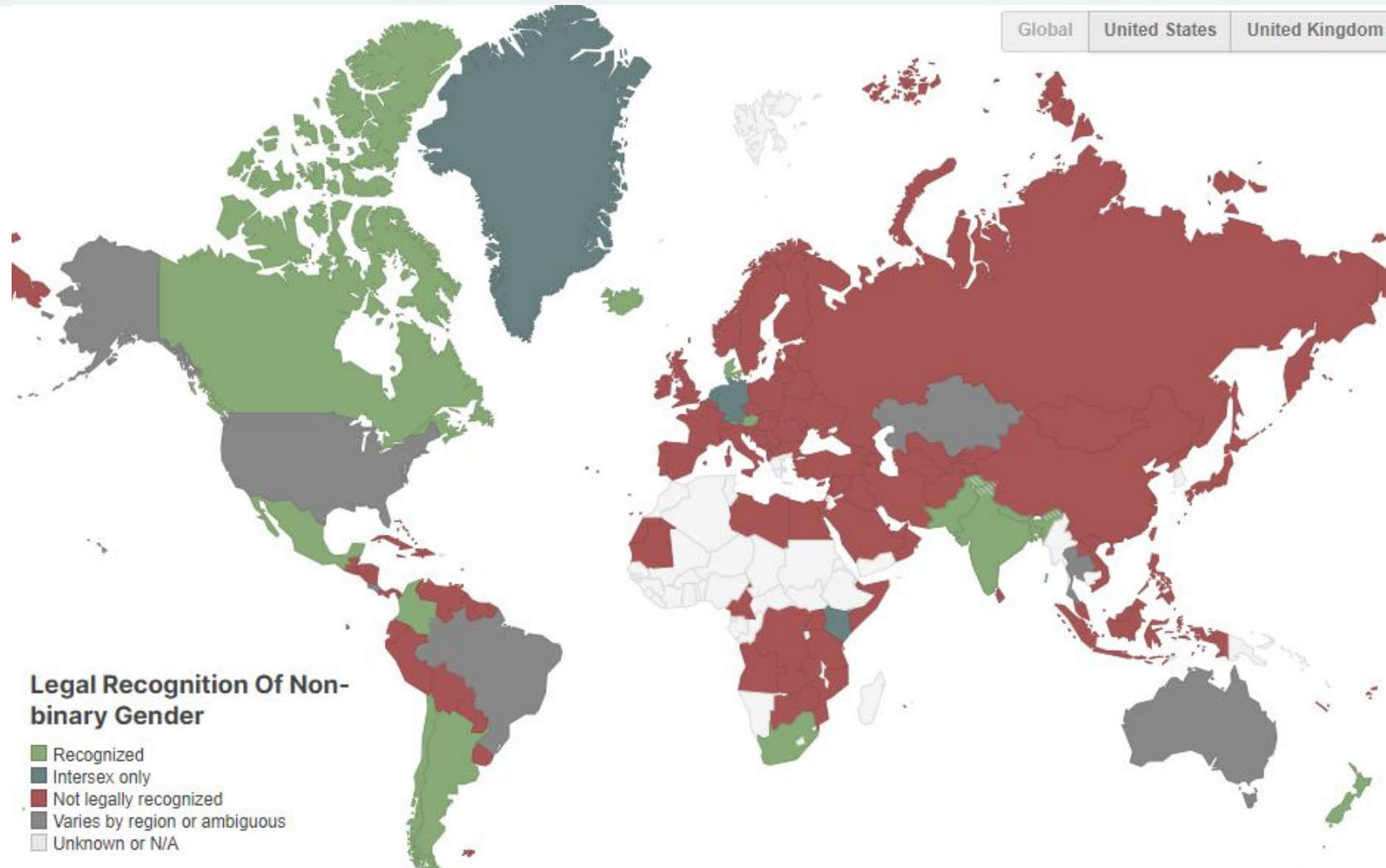
Non-Binary Passport Options

- Argentina
- Austria*
- Australia
- Canada
- Denmark
- Iceland



International Recognition

Equaldex (2023)



#InclusionIsGlobal

International Traveling

“I’ve had a number of really horrible experiences trying to travel with my passport... The most common experience I’ve had is that they don’t tell you and just make you wait while they ask other people because they don’t know what they’re doing”

– Aeryn Rowe (CLS Tbilisi, 2022)

Housing Placement

“The staff had very intentional conversations to find a host family who really didn’t care. They were curious. When they were comfortable enough, they asked questions”

– Isaac Dwyer (CLS Dushanbe, 2023)

Housing Questions

- Are all-gender bathrooms available?
 - Private showers?
- Does the host institution have gender-inclusive housing options?
- Will the host institution recognize a student's gender, or only a legal sex?
- Do housing/placement forms require students to select a gender from a limited list?

Information Sharing

- Who needs access to students' legal sex and legal name?
 - Visa processing?
 - Campus enrollment?
 - Host families? Instructors? Language partners? Other students? – No
- The student should determine how their information is shared and with whom to the extent possible.

Challenges in the Classroom

"In class, my teachers weren't aware of my gender identity, a choice I made for various reasons. I also wasn't out to my language partner or other local people. I don't think being closeted at school affected me negatively though. Of course, everyone is different so what might have been fine for me to deal with could be horrible for someone else."

- Anonymous (CLS Bishkek, 2022)

- Preferred Names and Documentation
- Information Sharing
- Gendered language materials
- Instructor training

Preferred Names

“During the program, they were reading down the list of names and called my deadname. That happened multiple times after I specifically said you cannot do this. This is not public information”

– Aeryn Rowe (CLS Tbilisi, 2022)

Instructor Training

“In the classes, the instructors made it clear that we were there to learn. Not that I couldn’t talk about it, but that the problem of the day was to learn Farsi”

- Isaac Dwyer (CLS Dushanbe, 2023)

Challenges in the Cohort

- Transphobia
- Isolation

“Within weeks of arriving in Barcelona, I was forced to hide my identity to protect myself. But, it wasn’t the local Spaniards who I experienced trouble with. My roommates and classmates were all students from the U.S., mostly from the Midwest. One of my roommates specifically told me that, because of my gender identity, I’m a “freak,” “weird” and that if she had to introduce me to any of her friends from her college in Indiana, none of them would understand me because they’ve never met “one of you.” Entering common areas of my suite gave me incredible anxiety and I eventually only spent time in my personal room because that was the only place where I felt safe.”

– Riley Goodfellow (The GW Hatchet)

Transphobia

“With my group now, there is one person who has actively said transphobic things about me behind my back. It is just a little isolating not having anyone to talk to about it”

– Aeryn Rowe (CLS Tbilisi, 2022)

Connecting within a Cohort

“I think it's important for [students] to connect with other queer people in their cohort as that will be their main support system. And, as pessimistic as it sounds, they should prepare to be either misgendered or closeted while abroad.”

– Anonymous (CLS Bishkek, 2022)

Challenges in the Community

"I met local Georgians who were queer and very accepting of all LGBTQ+ individuals. I was able to get insight into what living in Georgia is like for queer people and I got to visit many cafes that were known to be safe spaces for all/popular with the queer community."

– Vivianne Ruiz (CLS Tbilisi, 2023)

- Harassment
- Language and Cultural Barriers
- Access to a queer community
- Access to healthcare

Closeting and Sharing

“Conceptions of gender identity differ widely by culture, so they have to decide whether its worth their time and energy to even go about explaining their gender identity to the people they meet. It certainly wasn't worth it for me, and I still had a great time.”

– Anonymous (CLS Bishkek, 2022)

Language and Cultural Barriers

“My language partner was young and nice... despite that, she had no understanding. Or she couldn't understand, and I couldn't explain well enough in Russian, what it means to be non-binary... It was always this sort of question mark that no one was able to explain.”

– Aeryn Rowe (CLS Tbilisi, 2022)

Healthcare

“Healthcare is a lot harder. You can’t get gender affirming care here, so people leave. For that reason, I am not able to have a trans community here. There are no other trans Americans here on my program. I went to Pride last year, they put a lot of measures in to make it safe. It was amazing... This year, they did not have it; it was not safe. I met a few people. They’re young, they’re not out to anyone... So I don’t really have a community here. There are queer people, but it’s not the same. ”

– Aeryn Rowe (CLS Tbilisi, 2022)

Subjectivity of Experiences

"The experience is so subjective and individual...There is a massive difference between the treatment of transfemme and transmasculine people here... I have decided to wear a beard all the time, and no one can fathom that a trans person can wear a beard, so they just assume I'm cis, so it's a lot easier, whereas for transfemmes, it's a lot harder to pass here. There's already massive expectation about what women should look like, how women should dress... **It's not helpful to have any blanket statements about LGBTQ individuals.**"

– Aeryn Rowe (CLS Tbilisi, 2022)

Tenants of Support

1. Health & Safety
2. Individual Autonomy
3. Belonging & Inclusion
4. Academic and Personal Success

Support Strategies

- Individual attention and control of information
- Gender-inclusive materials and language
- Pre-program expectation setting
- Alumni connections
- Networks in-country and at home
- Country- or Region-specific information

“Before the program began, I received an email and a call from Jay to discuss how my gender identity may affect my upcoming trip to Georgia. It was a pleasant surprise to have this conversation as I had not expected CLS to reach out to me about it. During the call Jay reassured me that CLS would support me should anything arise during my trip, I also voiced any concerns I had, as well as being reminded that my comfort and safety were of high importance and CLS would do their best to provide support. It was a great call and definitely made me feel more comfortable knowing I had spoken to someone in the program”

– Vivianne Ruiz (CLS Tbilisi, 2023)

Gender-Inclusive Language

Instead of:

- “Men and woman will have different experiences”
- “Ladies and gentlemen”
- “Host mother and father; host brother/sister; host son and daughter”

Try:

- “Experiences may be affected by an individual’s gender”
- “Colleagues,” “students,” “folx,” etc.
- “Host parents; host siblings; host children/students”

Expectation Setting

“Part of the necessary thing with social interactions is to be very honest with students from the beginning. Like, by the way, we are not in a progressive country. We are not in a country where it is safe to be queer.”

– Aeryn Rowe (CLS Tbilisi, 2022)

Expectation Setting

“The most important thing to note though is that transphobia or homophobia was not the defining factor of my experience. I'm glad things seem to be changing little by little; I definitely don't expect change to come overnight.”

– Anonymous (CLS Bishkek, 2022)

Country- and Region-Specific Information

- Department of State Travel Pages
- ILGA World
- Human Rights Watch
- IGLTA Foundation
- EqualDex

Sources and Resources

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- "Suggested Best Practices for Supporting Trans Students" *Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals*, [LGBTCampus.org](https://www.lgbtcampus.org)
- "Transgender/ Non Binary / Gender Nonconforming Passengers" *Transportation Security Administration*, <https://www.tsa.gov/transgender-passengers>
- "X Gender Marker Available on U.S. Passports Starting April 11 – United States Department of State." *U.S. Department of State*, U.S. Department of State, 31 Mar. 2022, www.state.gov/x-gender-marker-available-on-u-s-passports-starting-april-11/.





