Yale College Council
Task Force on LGBTQ Resources Report

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**Introduction**

*Yale may be the ‘Gay Ivy’ in the sense that there is an abundance of out gay students - particularly males - on campus. But whether Yale is the ‘Gay Ivy’ on an institutional level is a different issue.*

- Yale Daily News, 2009

While Yale has been widely recognized as one of the most LGBTQ-friendly universities in the country since at least the 1980s, institutional support for the campus LGBTQ community has been historically mixed, as administrators have done everything from actively introducing LGBTQ-friendly policies to publically denouncing Yale’s reputation as “the gay ivy.” While the turn of the century brought some significant steps forward, recently, Yale has fallen behind peer institutions in implementing policies that LGBTQ students need in order to flourish on a college campus, failing to live up to its status as the “Gay Ivy” title.

This past semester, the Yale College Council convened a task force to investigate Yale’s LGBTQ campus climate. This report is the culmination of the task force’s extensive research and includes survey results, testimonials¹, and discussions with key LGBTQ groups and community members. The first section delineates Yale’s history with regards to LGBTQ policies and resources. The second section examines how Yale’s current policies compare to those of peer colleges and universities, and it offers areas for Yale to improve. The final section analyzes and interprets research findings to inform and validate a set of policy recommendations.

The policy recommendations focus on three areas: housing, identity competence, and resources. For housing, the proposals include the expansion of gender neutral housing (GNH) to include freshmen, allowing gender neutral rooms, and streamlining the implementation of necessary processes for GNH. Policy recommendations pertaining to identity competence include adding an option to identify as LGBTQ on admissions documents and instituting an efficient system for students to change their preferred name, gender, and personal pronouns in all university databases. Finally, the task force recommends that the university begin the process of establishing a dedicated LGBTQ center by convening an exploratory committee consisting of students, faculty, and administrators and providing LGBTQ sensitivity training for faculty and staff.

According to our survey results, over 20 percent of Yale’s undergraduate population identifies as non-heterosexual and just over 2 percent identifies as non-cisgender. Therefore, these

¹ 26 interviews, mostly with transgender students, were conducted for the purposes of this survey.
policy recommendations will impact the student body in quite significant two ways. First, they will have a direct impact on a substantial portion of the student body by improving access to resources and quality of student life. Second, with the implementation of these reforms, Yale’s internal and external reputation pertaining to diversity and inclusion will improve, generating a far-reaching indirect effect for all Yalies, contributing to a more inclusive, more dynamic Yale.
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This report uses language to characterize the LGBTQ experience that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Please consult the glossary at the end of this report to resolve confusion about terminology. All percentages are rounded to the nearest significant figure.
Overview of Yale LGBTQ Policies

Gender Neutral Housing

In February 2010, Yale College approved gender-neutral housing options for the senior class of 2011. The new policy allowed students of the opposite sex to live in the same suite, but not in the same room. This policy succeeded in its first two years, with no adverse incidents related to gender-neutral housing, and in February 2012, the administration agreed with YCC’s recommendation to expand the option to juniors, beginning with the Class of 2014. Two years later, since gender-neutral housing had been met with great excitement from students, Yale College followed recommendations outlined in a December 2013 YCC report and extended the same gender-neutral housing option to sophomores, beginning with the class of 2018.

While the student and community response to the gender-neutral housing policy has been positive overall, the policy suffers from implementation problems that prevent students from obtaining the housing they desire. Students currently do not have the option to select a roommate (as opposed to a suitemate) of the opposite sex, which can create logistical difficulties by effectively dictating gender ratios within a suite and limiting the types of rooms available to students seeking gender neutral housing. Several residential colleges make the process of obtaining gender neutral housing even more difficult by placing restrictions on the type of rooms available to gender neutral suites and setting precise ratios for mixing between genders. Additionally, freshmen cannot live in a gender-neutral setting. According to Maria Trumpler, director of the Office of LGBTQ resources, this deficiency causes Yale to lose many transgender and gender non-conforming (GNC) students to other institutions that offer more friendly housing policies.

Identity Competence

The Office of LGBTQ Resources provides various services to queer and transgender students on an ad hoc basis, including name and pronoun notifications\(^2\) to faculty. However, most of these services are not listed on the official website at [lgbtq.yale.edu](http://lgbtq.yale.edu). According to university websites and interviews, the university does not provide teaching faculty or staff with training

\(^2\)These notifications would work as follows: A student would provide the office of LGBTQ resources with their preferred name and pronouns, and a list of the classes in which they are enrolled. An office staff member would then send an email to the student’s instructors explaining the student’s name and pronoun preference and offering to serve as a resource should the instructor have any questions or concerns.
on pronouns, and existing training only touches tangentially on LGBTQ issues. There was no option on the 2014-15 Yale undergraduate admissions application to indicate LGBTQ status.

**LGBTQ Resources on Campus**

In Spring 2009, Yale University established the Office of LGBTQ resources with an annual budget of $20,000. The office was created without a physical office space. The office later acquired a space in Baker Hall (formerly known as Swing Space), a dormitory and office building far from central campus that is currently being converted into a Law School building. The Office shares its space with the Alcohol and Other Drugs Harm Reduction Initiative (AODHRI) and the Community and Consent Educators program. Unlike nearly all of its counterparts at peer institutions the office does not display any pictures of its facilities on its website. Before the office moved into its current office in Baker Hall, the sole space on campus was the Queer Resource Center (QRC), two small rooms in the School of Drama building located on 305 Crown St., which has existed since 1981. There are no other spaces for LGBTQ life on campus besides the Office and the QRC, which has been semi-permanently locked for 4 years and has fallen into disrepair. An annotated image of the QRC is presented below and the following page shows images of the office of LGBTQ Resources.

1 – Moth-eaten chair
2 – Stained carpet
3 – Dented table
4 – Torn couch
5 – Leaking radiator
6 – Abandoned belongings
The QRC, pictured on the previous page, has been locked for an unknown period of time. It took the task force well over a month to obtain the key. The interior was in a state of disrepair and disorder, though the space has the potential to serve as a meeting room for small clubs of 5-15 members.

The office of LGBTQ Resources is a small room at the end of the hallway in 124 Swing Space. It is located directly next to AODHRI and shares its space with offices that handle alcohol, drugs, and sexual misconduct (above, left and right). While the common room of 124 Swing Space (below) is brightly-lit and can comfortably accommodate events of up to 25 people, it is often occupied by other groups of staff and graduate students who work in the space.
Yale and Its Peers

Yale College prides itself on policies which aim to make the university responsive to the unique needs of LGBTQ students of diverse backgrounds. In recent years, policy changes have made gender neutral housing options available for sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Furthermore, Yale Health has made notable strides towards providing comprehensive healthcare to transgender students; counseling, hormone therapy, and gender-affirming surgical procedures have been covered on the specialty insurance plan since 2013. The Office of LGBTQ Resources has provided administrative support for LGBTQ students across Yale’s undergraduate and graduate departments since 2009. However, the results of both qualitative and quantitative research suggest significant gaps in the implementation of existing policies and areas in which updated policies are needed. Additionally, research on LGBTQ policy at peer institutions reveals striking disparities between Yale and other Ivy League institutions with regard to housing, healthcare, and university resources for LGBTQ students. This section outlines specific peer institution policies that may be used as models for reform at Yale.

Gender-Neutral Housing (GNH)

The majority of Yale’s peer institutions make gender neutral housing available to students of all ages who wish to opt into this system. Gender neutral housing is already available for students of all class years at Brown University, University of Pennsylvania, Dartmouth College, Wesleyan University, Cornell University, and in some houses at Harvard University. The implementation mechanisms of gender-neutral housing policies vary between institutions, but the YCC LGBTQ Task Force recommends Brown University’s housing policies as an exemplary model.

On their housing lottery form, first-year Brown students may opt into gender neutral housing as opposed to single-gender housing. These students are contacted by administrators in order to ensure that (a) this selection was intentional and (b) the student is assigned a compatible roommate who also opted into gender neutral housing. Around 30 students opt in each year, so this system does not introduce a significant burden on the administration. Rising sophomore, junior, and senior students can elect housing options during the spring semester housing lottery and may choose any rooms with any combination of roommates regardless of sex. Finally, all residential staff at Brown University receive education and training on gender identity and gender expression.

If similar housing policies were implemented at Yale, LGBTQ competency workshops (focused on gender identity, gender expression, and general LGBTQ issues) led by LGBTQ student
leaders or by the Office of LGBTQ resources could be offered for freshman counselors (FroCos) and residential college deans and masters. Such workshops would help FroCos, deans, and masters navigate potential conflicts regarding the gender identity or gender expression of students under their purview. Gender-affirming housing policies and LGBTQ competency among college administrators will give Yale administrators and student leaders the tools to understand LGBTQ-specific issues and will improve the general well-being of LGBTQ students at Yale.

The task force recommends the extension of GNH to first year students who choose to opt into this system, the standardization of gender neutral housing policy across residential colleges, and the institution of an option for all students to elect roommates of the opposite sex. Currently, Yale College policy allows sophomore, junior, and senior students to opt into gender-neutral housing, allowing mixed-sex suites, but prohibiting gender neutral rooms. However, there are significant problems that have arisen with the implementation of this policy. GNH remains under the purview of each residential college dean, and students have reported significant variation in the accessibility of gender-neutral housing. Additionally, gender-neutral housing is currently unavailable for freshmen, who are placed into suites with students of the same legal sex regardless of their gender identity or housing preference. Finally, an additional barrier to students’ securing GNH is the policy barring roommates of a different gender, which limits their options for housing. Brown’s housing policy is summarized in the chart below:
**LGBTQ Student Center**

Yale is one of only two Ivy League schools that does not have a designated physical space for LGBTQ Students. The chart below presents resources at other schools in comparison to those at Yale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Columbia</th>
<th>Dartmouth</th>
<th>Cornell</th>
<th>Harvard</th>
<th>UC Berkeley</th>
<th>Stanford</th>
<th>UC Santa Barbara</th>
<th>UC Davis</th>
<th>Princeton</th>
<th>Yale</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>List of “Out” Faculty</td>
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<td>List of GN Bathrooms</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart Footnotes:
1. With more resources than Yale’s LGBTQ center
2. Provided all four years
3. Without requiring a legal name change
4. Greater than Yale
5. Therapists trained specifically to address LGBTQ needs
6. GN = Gender Neutral
7. By basic insurance (in part or in whole)

**Transgender and Nonbinary Students**

Because transgender students represent a small portion of the Yale student population, and just over 30 responded to the survey, the task force conducted interviews with several trans students on campus to collect additional data. Major areas for change that trans students identified included the introduction of gender neutral housing, provision of trans healthcare for low-income students covered only by Yale Basic, ensuring that there are gender-neutral bathrooms in all campus buildings, devising a system for names and pronouns to be communicated to professors discreetly, allowing the LGBTQ peer liaisons (PLs) to serve all grades rather than just first year students, and generally making information about LGBTQ resources more accessible for trans people.
Gender neutral housing has already been addressed in this report, but it’s worth noting that the problem is particularly acute for trans students. Isaac Amend, a TD Junior and transgender activist on gender neutral housing: “Trans students need to have the option to be placed in housing with other students who will accept them for who they are.” Many of Yale’s peers, including Brown and Wesleyan, already have had gender neutral rooming and neither has received any reports of incidents due to the policy.

Related to this issue is that of gender-neutral bathrooms. All trans students interviewed and surveyed reported that they or a transgender friend had had negative experiences in a single-gender bathroom. While they lauded the fact that 60 percent of Yale bathrooms are already gender neutral, many trans students highlighted that there is no bathroom that they feel comfortable using in the buildings in which they work, study, and hang out, because many of these buildings on campus still lack gender-neutral restrooms. While Yale is ahead of many of its peer institutions when it comes to these numbers, it could still do a lot better.

Allowing PLs to serve all grades, not just freshmen, is another simple recommendation. One trans student, who preferred to remain anonymous, noted that people of all grades struggle with issues of LGBTQ identity, and PLs are at the front lines of connecting students to resources. Trans students expressed feelings that it was unfair that 75 percent of the students who could benefit from a PL are unable to get one. The student counselors at Brown and Princeton serve students at all grade levels, and the LGBTQ Princeton students who were interviewed did not express dissatisfaction about a lack of peer resources and advising because of this critical difference.

Finally, many students expressed that the Office of LGBTQ Resources should receive the support necessary to establish a formalized system for communicating transition-related information to students’ professors and residential college masters and deans. For example, the LGBTQ Resources Center at Brown University communicates directly with professors to notify them of transgender students’ name and pronoun changes. At Brown, the responsibility of explaining transgender issues and vocabulary to an unfamiliar professor falls on the professional staff of the LGBT Center instead of the student, which allows students to concentrate on class rather than consternating over how to explain themselves. This is important to many trans students because they may be nervous about confronting someone who has authority over their grades about their transgender identity. This notification service, if implemented at Yale, would significantly reduce the emotional burden of explaining one’s transgender identity to professors and administrators and ensure that students’ identities are better understood and respected.
YCC Survey Data and other Evidentiary Findings

Introduction

The following section explains the results of the YCC 2015 Fall Survey of the Yale College Student Body, with added evidence from student interviews conducted by Task Force members throughout the semester. In total, 1,457 undergraduate students (27 percent of all students at Yale College) responded. A copy of the full data report for this section is available at http://tiny.cc/yqdata.

Gender Neutral Housing for Freshmen

Much of the impetus for changing the gender-neutral housing policy comes from the unique needs of LGBTQ students and is in line with Yale’s philosophy that students are mature enough to specify certain basic criteria related to roommate compatibility. Since the YCC survey indicated that Yale’s LGBTQ population is over 20 percent, these needs are acutely felt within this community. Unfortunately, however, they are not being met; on average, gay and lesbian freshmen are 16.1 percent more likely than straight peers to be uncomfortable in their living spaces due solely to their orientation. This figure jumps to 19.3 percent for trans students, and 23.4 percent for students who identify as both queer and trans. This is shown in the chart below:

How to Read Straight students are 16.10% more comfortable than gay students in single-gender housing.
While 36 percent of all Yale students surveyed indicated that they would have considered electing gender-neutral housing their freshman year, and 15 percent said that they would have elected it if given the option, the need for a gender-neutral option was even more pronounced among queer students. On average, queer students, on the basis of their identity alone, were 23.1 percent more likely than straight students to respond that they would have chosen to live in gender neutral housing had they been given the option to do so during their freshman year. This figure rises to 34 percent for gay and lesbian students compared to straight students, 31.6 percent for trans students compared to their cisgender counterparts, and 40.9 percent for students who identify as both queer and trans as compared to cisgender straight students. These results are summarized in the figures below.

The lack of a gender neutral housing option for freshmen not only disadvantages the student body as a whole (since even some cis and straight students prefer this option), but also works to the specific detriment of LGBTQ students (since these students suffer significantly more than average due to the current policies). In interviews, LGBTQ students reported various reasons for feeling more at home in a gender neutral suite. A central theme emerged: inherent in the current single-gender rooming policy is the assumption that sexual and romantic interactions do not exist between same-gender roommates—an assumption that implicitly denies the
existence of non-heterosexual people. Several gay, lesbian, and bisexual interviewees remarked that same-gender rooming can often lead to “awkward” interactions when some of the people living in the suite identify as LGBT. Specifically, one lesbian student recalled how a friend created an awkward housing situation by becoming sexually involved with her roommate, and would have been more comfortable had she been able to choose to live in a mixed gender environment that would have felt “less sexually charged.” A gay man’s suitemates repeatedly asked invasive questions about his sexual preferences and audibly questioned to what degree he made other men feel “effeminate.” The student attributed these questions to the hyper-masculine environment that was created on a floor of “over twenty guys.” All of the gender nonconforming students interviewed reported that single-gender rooming environments can create a climate of binary gender (male/female) normativity that was unwelcome to gender identities that did not fit neatly into the binary.

Preference for Freshman Year Neutral Housing

![Pie chart showing preference for freshman year neutral housing]

Implementation of Existing Gender-Neutral Housing Policies and Gender Neutral Housing

Considering that these statistics show that a significant portion of freshmen would prefer to be housed in gender-neutral suites, it seems odd that utilization of existing gender-neutral options
for sophomores, juniors and seniors is so low; often, there are only one to three gender neutral suites per class in each residential college. The data indicate the inefficiency and inequity with which these policies are administered. Looking at the student body as a whole, only 43 percent of students believe that the existing systems for gender neutral housing are efficient and fair. This percentage varies widely by residential college (as do the housing policies and logistics) from 25 to 59 percent, as shown on the following page.

The residential colleges with the lowest satisfaction ratings, such as Berkeley (25 percent) and Morse (32 percent), have policies that make gender rooming difficult for various classes. For example, last year Berkeley offered almost exclusively six-person suites composed of 3 doubles to sophomores. Because Yale’s policy does not allow for different-gender roommates, the only possible gender neutral suites were groups of 4 men and 2 women, and vice versa. As a result, logistics were a significant challenge for potential gender neutral suites. The housing discrepancies among the colleges have led to student dissatisfaction. One current freshman interviewed stated that because this year’s housing draw in Berkeley was likely to offer the same restrictive options for gender-neutral housing as the last, he was planning to transfer to another college. “I’d like to stay in Berkeley,” he said, “but since the suite I want to live with is five girls, and I’m not sure if I’ll be able to find another guy in the college who is willing to room with us, I’m planning on transferring to Saybrook.” Saybrook, in contrast, offers a greater variety of suites to sophomores, and has a gender-neutral housing efficiency approval rating of 46 percent—21 percent higher than Berkeley’s.
While the differences among residential colleges create inequities in the student experience, the low overall approval rating for gender-neutral housing (43 percent) is a cause for concern. Because most Yale students, especially underclassmen, live in doubles, Yale’s policy of not permitting gender-neutral rooms makes gender-neutral housing arrangements difficult to implement effectively. Gender-neutral housing will be impossible to apply fairly across all residential colleges unless the university follows the lead of institutions like Columbia, Wesleyan, and Brown that allow students to room together regardless of gender identity or legal sex. To do otherwise, as the current policy does, characterizes adult students as too irresponsible to live with someone to whom they might potentially be attracted, and also denies the experiences of LGBTQ students by ignoring the possibility that romantic or sexual attraction could develop between roommates of the same gender.

**LGBTQ Resources and Spaces on Campus**

The current Office of LGBTQ resources is located in Baker Hall, an annex dorm behind Payne Whitney Gym. It is located within a small, shared office space, and its door is usually locked. After entering the workspace, a visitor to the office passes a small meeting room as they make their way to a door-line hallway. The first door is the Office of Alcohol and Drugs Harm Reduction Initiative (OADHRI). The second is the office of Melanie Boyd, an administrator whose work focuses on issues of sexual misconduct. Behind the third door is a room about the size of a small double. This is the Office of LGBTQ resources—the only operational LGBTQ center on campus serving all students, faculty and staff.
Because undergraduates must compete for space with graduate and professional school groups and the people who call the Office of LGBTQ their workspace, access to the small space is limited. Two students interviewed likened the atmosphere of the small space, replete with several vinyl couches and “sterile” walls, to that of a “dentist’s office.” When asked about the status of the office’s space, one gay junior, noting the other offices that share the workspace, remarked that he felt as though the Office had been relegated a corner of campus dedicated to the offices that handle “vices”: “drugs, alcohol, and fornication.” The association between these subject areas carries the underlying implication that these are all undesirable and problematic issues, to be kept far from the center of campus.

Our data also indicates that LGBTQ students’ perceptions of the office are not positive: only 32 percent of LGBTQ student have ever visited the office, and of those, only 44 percent approve of the office’s current location, a total of 14 percent. The vast majority of students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, never visit the office. This is shown in the following charts.
Beyond overseeing the LGBTQ peer liaison program and providing individualized support, the Office is only able to offer intermittent funding and limited material support to LGBTQ groups. The Office’s three part-time staff members work hard to run the Office’s programs, but they cannot make up for their budget’s shortcomings. The Office’s budget is a fraction of that of the cultural houses despite the fact that it serves more students than any of them, save the Asian American Cultural Center. The Office is simply too under-resourced and understaffed to provide a level of support, programming, and funding that is at all comparable to our peer institutions. Further, 74 percent of all students and 85 percent of LGBTQ students believe that the office should be funded at a level comparable to the cultural centers on a per-student basis. This is shown in the chart on the following page.
While the office provides some services, many students are unaware that they exist due to limited publicity. When several trans students interviewed asked if they were aware that Maria Trumpler, the head of the Office, provides name change and pronoun notification services to professors, approximately two thirds responded that they had never heard of the service, and wished that the college would do more to make it easily available to all students. One gay student who was experiencing housing issues related to his sexual orientation reported that his dean had failed to notify him that the Office of LGBTQ resources could assist him; he had no idea that the Office’s staff were trained to handle this type of situation. Even more pressing is the problem of students who abruptly lose financial support from their parents or guardians when their LGBTQ status is revealed. Currently, these students must go through a complex, non-systematized, time-consuming, and nerve-wracking process with the Office of Financial Aid to get their allotment adjusted. This creates an indirect effect when students are afraid to participate in LGBTQ campus life because news might trickle back home and leave them without financial help. Yale should follow the lead of peer institutions like Dartmouth and maintain a specific fund for students who are cut off because of their LGBTQ status.

While the Office staff is highly competent and hard working, their resources are simply stretched too thin. The Office has not even been able to fund the LGBTQ Cooperative, the
central organizing group for LGBTQ students on campus. Instead, the Cooperative has relied on the Undergraduate Organizations Committee in order to put on programming.

Ideally, the Office should foster LGBTQ community on campus, serve a nexus of that community and LGBTQ advocacy, and provide helpful and valuable information to students about LGBTQ issues. At the present, the office is not fulfilling these functions. The office is unable to adequately fund student organizations, it does not provide a suitable space for LGBTQ students to gather, and it does not serve as a center for LGBTQ student activism. In most cases, the office does not address student issues adequately because information is not disseminated effectively. The primary reason why undergraduates visit the office is to address a specific problem, such as homophobic roommates or being misgendered by a professor.

LGBTQ spaces in other schools allow students to make friends, to laugh, and to find empathy in a peer community in a way that an office setting does not. Our own cultural houses are a great example of how to support marginalized communities on campus. They provide space for socializing and learning, and they benefit the entire Yale community. An LGBTQ center could serve a similar purpose, providing space for all students to learn about LGBTQ issues and to explore their own identities.

**Trans Concerns**

Trans-identified students comprise less than 2 percent of Yale’s student body and comprise one of the most marginalized groups in today’s society; it is critical that the university does not overlook them. Because only 34 trans-identified people responded to the YCC survey, the usefulness of the data collected was limited. As mentioned earlier, the task force interviewed additional trans students in order to supplement our data.

Many trans students expressed frustration that faculty, staff, and administrators didn’t understand the unique issues they faced. According to survey data, just 35 percent of LGBTQ students believe that their master and dean have a basic knowledge of the LGBTQ issues that students face. This low approval rating, coupled with significant variation across residential colleges, suggests that additional competency training is needed to bring deans and masters to a basic level of understanding. Further, only 39, 30, and 10 percent of all heterosexual students, queer students, and trans students, respectively, believe that most faculty have a basic knowledge of LGBTQ issues.
In addition, while Yale has been nationally recognized for its transgender-inclusive health policies, there are policy changes that will better ensure that these services are accessible to members of the transgender community. Yale Health currently covers much of the cost of transition-related health services, including counseling, hormone therapy, and gender-affirming surgical procedures for students on the specialty insurance plan. However, several transgender students who were interviewed reported that the co-pays for this process add up to $2,000-3,000, a sum which is often prohibitively expensive for low-income students who are already required to pay the student income contribution. Electrolysis hair removal is not currently covered by the specialty plan, although this expensive procedure is essential for dramatically reducing dysphoria among transgender women. Additionally, several transgender students reported grappling with a lack of financial and emotional support from their families, which limits their ability to access the specialty health plan and their ability to pay for transition-related health care.

For many transgender students, physically transitioning is vital to realizing their gender identity. It is important that transition health care be made accessible for all transgender students, regardless of familial support or financial status. Transgender students cited the lack of provision for electrolysis hair removal for transgender women under the specialty Yale Health insurance plan. Many hoped that the school would establish a fund to defray the costs of transitioning for low-income students and for students whose families have withdrawn support. Additionally, transgender students expressed that greater transparency is needed regarding existing healthcare resources and their associated costs. TransWise, a new service which helps transgender students navigate the transition process, was cited as a possible new resource to be offered for informing transgender students, since many of them reported that the realities of the transitioning process through Yale Health were difficult to manage.

Third, many trans students expressed concerns about names and the computer systems as they relate to gender identity. As trans people explore their gender identities, they often choose new names that may differ from the names in the records of Yale or the government. The current process requires a legal name change, which is a significant financial and logistical barrier. Confusion about names can lead to embarrassing situations between trans people and those who interact with them, since it can be a very painful experience for trans people to be referred to by a name other than their chosen one. Every trans person that we interviewed expressed support for an option that would allow students to change their names on the Yale computer systems to a preferred name the same way as students can update their address or

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3 For more information on the medical necessity of transition-related care, see http://www.lambdalegal.org/know-your-rights/transgender/transition-related-care-faq#q4
contact information. (Of course, to prevent frivolous or fraudulent name changes, an administrator could review these changes before publishing.) All trans students interviewed also supported a change in the computer system to allow pronoun preference to be added as an option in the Yale computer systems. That way, trans students, faculty, and staff do not have to worry about being misgendered, and faculty and staff will not have to wonder how to address transgender students. These simple computer changes would have a positive impact on the experience of transgender students at Yale.

In addition to computer-based changes, the Office of LGBTQ Resources should establish a formalized system for communicating transition-related information to professors, masters, and deans. Brown University has a letter system in which name and pronoun changes are communicated directly to professors by the LGBTQ Resource Center. This service, if implemented at Yale, will significantly reduce the emotional burden of repeatedly explaining one’s transgender identity to professors and administrators.
Consolidated Recommendations

In light of the evidence presented above, the task force presents the following recommendations to the Yale administration. Core recommendations denote large policy changes to be adopted by the Yale College administration. Supplementary recommendations, while equally important, denote smaller changes that may be easily realized by a branch of the university apparatus, working independently from the higher level administration.

Core Recommendations

1. Establish an LGBTQ Center

As the evidence presented in this report makes clear, the Office of LGBTQ Resources in its current state is unable to serve the needs of Yale’s undergraduate LGBTQ community. The Office and its budget must be expanded to a level comparable to that of the cultural centers, and the University should begin the process of evaluating the options for a new LGBTQ student center. While determining the characteristics of the center must be an ongoing task, our findings indicate that the new center should have the following characteristics:

- Include meeting rooms.
- Include a space large enough to host events of at least 75 people.
- Provide a common space that is accessible to students 24 hours a day (much like a residential college library or common room).
- Be staffed during business hours

As models, we put forward Yale’s Cultural Houses and The University of Pennsylvania’s LGBT Center.

2. Provide gender-neutral housing for freshmen, following Brown’s model

While the opinions and experiences of the general and queer student bodies show a strong desire and need for gender-neutral housing options for all grade levels, the examples set by our peer institutions suggest the feasibility of universities of establishing a gender-neutral housing option for freshmen. Given the absence of any evidence that suggests that such arrangements lead to adverse housing outcomes, the university should ensure that all members of the class of 2020 have a gender-neutral housing option upon their matriculation in fall 2016.

3. Eliminate gender-based restrictions on rooming arrangements

Currently, gender-neutral housing arrangements are made unnecessarily difficult by the fact that rooms are single-gender only. This policy exists despite the fact that there is no evidence from other schools that have gender neutral rooming to suggest that the policy leads to harmful outcomes or a decrease in the quality of student life. Removing gender-
based restrictions on all housing will allow students more flexibility and simplify the housing assignment process.

4. **Provide LGBTQ competency training for all faculty and staff**

LGBTQ competency, as perceived by students, is very low among university faculty. Information on LGBTQ issues could realistically be included in the new trainings announced by the Office of the President in November 2015.

**Supplementary Recommendations**

5. **Explicitly include LGBTQ issues on any university bias committees**

While as a general rule, the Yale community is friendly to and accepting of LGBTQ people, bias incidents occur on a frequent basis. LGBTQ issues should be explicitly included under the mandate of any university apparatus convened to review bias incidents on campus.

6. **Combine all LGBTQ-related resources information in a centralized location**

Students are often unaware of the policies and resources in place to benefit them. The university should create a website that lists all policies and services and clarifies how LGBTQ students can take advantage of them to ensure that students can access resources they need that are provided by the university. However, this solution would not address areas where resources for LGBT students are still lacking.

7. **Make preferred name and pronoun changes one-click options**

Adding these easy accommodations in university computer systems for trans and gender-nonconforming students would vastly simplify their interactions with Yale faculty, staff, and students without imposing any significant long-term costs or technical hurdles on ITS or the university as a whole.

8. **Adjust Yale Health policies to better cover transition-related expenses**

While Yale health’s coverage for transition-related expenses is substantial, key deficiencies include the lack of coverage for electrolysis hair removal and high copays for other expenses. Options are also very limited for students on the Yale Basic plan. Yale Health should reevaluate transgender health coverage at Yale and ensure that trans students’ needs are met.

9. **Improve access to LGBTQ resources, including the PL program**

LGBTQ resources are poorly publicized. The LGBTQ peer liaison program serves only first-year students, and the lack of access to this front-line resource prevents others from accessing the resources they need. Because of the fact that LGBTQ students may discover that identity at any time during their Yale career, the LGBTQ community has a unique need for a Peer Liaison program for students of all class years. The program should be expanded to cover all grades, and the office should be given additional funds to advertise the services it provides.
10. **Systematize emergency funding for LGBTQ students**
Currently, LGBTQ students who abruptly lose financial support from parents or guardians upon revealing their LGBTQ status must jump through hoops in order to get their financial aid adjusted. Yale should match peer institutions and set aside funds to cover students who are cut off because of their LGBTQ identities.

11. **Allow prospective students to indicate LGBTQ status on applications**
The prevalence of LGBTQ students is increasingly recognized as a barometer of both cultural and intellectual diversity on campus. It is in the best interest of the university to allow prospective students to indicate their LGBTQ status on the application. This would allow the university to affirm LGBTQ visibility and existence while also giving Yale the opportunity to collect a statistic that will be useful in promoting the university as an accepting and welcoming environment for LGBTQ people.
Glossary of LGBTQ Terms

There are a wide variety of terms that LGBTQ individuals use to describe their sexual and gender identities. In this glossary, several basic terms are defined to aid comprehension of the YCC LGBTQ Task Force report. For more information on LGBTQ terminology, we encourage you to visit [https://lgbt.ucsf.edu/glossary-terms](https://lgbt.ucsf.edu/glossary-terms)

Words about Sex and Sexuality

**Lesbian:** A term used to describe women who are sexually and romantically attracted to women

**Gay:**

1) A term used to describe men who are predominantly sexually and romantically attracted to men (the definition used in this report)
2) A general term for same-gender attracted individuals

**Bisexual and Pansexual:** Terms used to describe a person who is attracted to more than one gender.

**Asexual:** A person who does not experience sexual attraction to others.

**Queer:** An umbrella term to describe anyone who identifies as a part of the LGBTQ community. Some people find this term offensive, while others reclaim it as an inclusive label that encompasses diverse gender identities and sexual orientations

**LGBTQ:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and/or Queer

**Sex:** A categorization of “male,” “female,” or “intersex” assigned based on the appearance of genitalia at birth, as well as secondary sex characteristics (such as breast size and composition, body hair).

**Intersex:** People who are born with primary or secondary sex characteristics that do not align with societal understandings of “male” and “female.” “Hermaphrodite” is an outdated and offensive term that has historically been used to refer to intersex individuals.

Words about Gender

**Gender:** A categorization of “man,” “woman,” “genderqueer,” or other gender identities based on cultural, social, and individual factors. Gender and sex are different, and for some people they do not align.
**Binary Gender:** The dominant social idea that the only two genders that exist are “male” and “female.”

**Gender identity:** The internal sense of gender that each person experiences.

**Gender policing:** Comments or social conventions that enforce conformity to the traits assigned to the gender (male/female) binary. One example would be telling a weeping boy that “boys don’t cry,” or telling a girl that she should take up sewing instead of baseball.

**Cisgender:** A person whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth. An individual who is not transgender or genderqueer is cisgender.

**Gender nonconforming:** A term used to describe people who do not conform to expected stereotypes for gendered behavior. Gender nonconforming individuals are not necessarily transgender.

**Transgender:** A term used to describe individuals whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Gender binary:** A social construct which defines gender as two distinct, opposite categorizations of man and woman, masculine or feminine. The gender binary is culturally-specific and some other cultures recognize three or more genders.

**Genderqueer / Non-binary:** A person whose gender identity falls outside of the categories of man or woman.

**Gender-affirming surgery:** A term which can refer to a wide array of surgical procedures which alter the appearance and function of transgender individuals’ physical and sexual characteristics to better align with their gender identity. Not all transgender people choose to undergo surgery, but many find it necessary to alleviate gender dysphoria.

**Gender dysphoria:** A condition marked by extreme psychological distress due to a mismatch between gender identity and primary or secondary sex characteristics.

**Misgender:** To misgender someone is to treat someone, through speech or other expression, as a member of a gender different from the one with which they identify. For example, referring to Caitlyn Jenner (formerly known as Bruce Jenner) as “he” instead of “she.”
Max,

Thank you for our conversation last week. I’m happy to help.

I am the Director of Residential Experience at Brown University. In this capacity, I work with the development of communities within our residential facilities, support student learning initiatives and supervise full-time professional staff within the Office of Residential Life.

We have supported gender-neutral housing option in our suites/apartments for over 10 years. We have supported gender-neutral housing in our double and triple occupancy rooms in our sophomore, junior and senior buildings since Fall 2008. We have supported gender-neutral housing in double occupancy rooms in our first year buildings since Fall 2013. We have supported these options because we know that our students thrive as learners and leaders when they are living in safe, comfortable and welcoming housing options. Our default housing options meet the needs of some of our students, but exclude others. These options allow us to meet the needs of all students.

Rising sophomore, junior and senior students can elect housing options during the spring semester housing lottery and may choose any rooms with any combination of roommates regardless of sex. Our first year students complete a new student housing questionnaire in which they have the option of selecting “gender-neutral” housing. There is a description of the program and a description of our default housing option (assigned a roommate based on legal sex). If a student opts into the program, I give them a phone call during the summer to talk with them about the program, its intent and their understanding of the program. Once I’ve spoken with each student who has indicated an interest in the gender-neutral option, I forward the full list to our housing staff. This group of students is then assigned a roommate who is also on this list, not using legal sex as the first step in making their roommate match, and then placed in double rooms within our first year housing inventory. They receive their roommate assignment and housing information along with all other first year students in early August.

First Year Gender Neutral (GN) Housing Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Students Expressed Interest</th>
<th>Placed in GN Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2014</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2015</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We have had no increase in roommate conflicts, requests for room changes or concerns related to safety within our gender neutral housing option when compared to our default housing options. There have been no incidents of sexual harassment, sexual misconduct or any other Title IX concerns related to gender neutral housing assignments that have been reported to this office. We have found the gender neutral housing option to be a positive option for students and, other than a few hours of my time in the summer to talk with incoming students, there has been no additional work added by supporting this initiative.

If anyone at your institution has specific questions or concerns, I welcome the opportunity to talk with them. This has been a very positive step that our University has made to support the needs of our students.

Natalie

Natalie Basil
Director of Residential Experience
Brown University