**15S-01**2015 Spring

**The Wesleyan Council
on Student Affairs**

**OWU Spectrum Resource Center Resolution Fall 2014**

**A Resolution Endorsing the Spectrum Resource Center on Their Work on Gender Inclusive Housing**

*(Executive Committee)*

*Presented – 2 February 2015
Agreed to*

Signed,

Jerry Lherisson
Resolution Sponsor

**A Resolution Endorsing the Spectrum Resource Center on Their Work on Gender Inclusive Housing**

**I move that –**

1 The Wesleyan Council On Student Affairs endorses the Spectrum Resource Center in the work they have done regarding their vision for a Gender Inclusive Ohio Wesleyan in the hopes of having their recommendations become University Policy.

Certified and Signed,

Jerry Lherisson

*President, Wesleyan Council on Student Affairs*

Spectrum Resource Center Proposal

Rationale

We, the interns at the Spectrum Resource Center, propose that Ohio Wesleyan University offers gender inclusive housing, which is defined as a housing option in which two or more students mutually agree to share a multiple-occupancy bedroom or suite regardless of students’ biological sex or gender identity. Gender inclusive housing provides students increased choice in selecting roommates, regardless of gender identity, in order to respect and support the various needs of our students. In addition, gender inclusive housing provides more options for students who do not wish to live in more traditional room arrangements. This further demonstrates support for the University’s non-discrimination policy with respect to biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Gender inclusive housing provides students maximal choice in determining and taking responsibility for their own living arrangements. This opportunity is consistent with Ohio Wesleyan University’s approach to education, where the University supports students’ development as self-directed young adults who are able to take personal responsibility over all dimensions of their lives. This learning occurs through students’ active decision-making and engagement in the learning environment both in and out of the classroom.

Gender inclusive housing intends to help create a campus climate that is welcoming, inclusive, and supportive of all students. It provides options for a variety of students in the process of discovering their gender identity, students who feel they would be more compatible with a roommate of a different biological sex or gender identity, and students who do not want biological sex or gender identity to be a primary factor in choosing a roommate. This policy helps create an environment that acknowledges, appreciates, and respects the diverse nature of the Ohio Wesleyan University student body, while giving students more options in finding a roommate who is truly compatible.

Policy Description

Gender inclusive housing will be available in the Small Living Units and Theme Houses, Williams Drive Houses (except for fraternities), Austin Manor, Smith Hall, Stuyvesant Hall, and Welch Hall for sophomores, juniors, and seniors through the spring housing selection process. The option is available to first-year and transfer students through special requests coordinated with the Office of Residential Life. The following guiding principles apply:

* Students may choose to request a roommate of any biological sex or gender identity.

As with all roommate requests, the Office of Residential Life will only honor those

requests made by all parties living within the same living space (i.e. room,

suite).

* Upperclass students must apply with their prospective roommate(s) following the same

processes and deadlines of all students entering the housing selection process.

Upperclass students will not be required to reveal their reasons for opting to live in

gender inclusive housing. First-year and transfer students will have a conversation with a Residential Life professional so that the University can provide housing that best meets the needs of the student.

* Students will not be assigned to gender inclusive housing unless they have elected to do so.
* This program is intended for students who wish to share a room, suite, or apartment with  friends of a different biological sex or gender identity.
* We encourage students to maintain an open dialogue with their families. Students over

18 are legally able to make decisions about their housing placements.

* Living space designation for a given academic year:

o Any space on campus with an internal bathroom (not Fraternity Houses, Bashford or Thompson Hall)  excluding Small Living Units and Themed Houses, can be gender inclusive. This avoids segregation and offers students gender inclusive housing within all housing styles and at the various housing price points. Although Hayes Hall offers internal bathrooms, this residential hall will not have gender inclusive housing options for the sake for maintaining a women’s only space.

o The default designation for a room or suite will be single-sex unless

the students selecting into the space opt to create a gender inclusive pair or group.

o Once a room, apartment, suite is gender inclusive, that space will continue to be

gender inclusive as long as the residents can maintain the occupancy of the living space.

First Year and Transfer Students

Being able to live with someone who you are comfortable with is just as important for First-year and Transfers students. We propose that when students apply for housing in their first year they are given the option on the online housing application that indicates that they are open to living with someone with a different biological sex or gender identity. Transgender students can request through Residential Life professionals that they prefer to live with a student of  the same or preferred gender identity. Reslife professionals would contact a student who selected that they were open to living with someone with a different biological sex or gender identity and confirm their willingness to live with a transgender student.

Because Bashford Hall and Thompson Hall have communal bathrooms, this policy could only be possible for students living in residential halls (Hayes, Smith, Stuyvesant, Welch) in their first year.

**Gender Inclusive Housing Policies at Other Universities**

Albion College

Albion College has gender-neutral housing policy where students seek out administration on a case-by-case basis to opt into a gender inclusive housing situation. The only housing option available to these students is a rooming where students do not share a bedroom, but will housed together under the same unit. This option is only available for up to seven students.

Alleghany College

Alleghany College has one Residential Hall that is designated as gender-neutral. They also have a special interest houses that have gender inclusive housing options, as well as various gender-neutral bathrooms, including a single floor for first-year students. There are sixteen single rooms for upper-class students and eight doubles for the first-year students that operate under a gender inclusive housing situation. These rooms are at capacity almost all the time, however they typically don’t have a wait-list given the amount of off-campus and apartment style living that is available to students.

Denison University

Denison University currently does not have a gender-inclusive housing policy.

Depaul University

Depaul University does not have a gender inclusive housing policy, but first year student housing applications have the option for students to indicate that they are transgender, in which they are immediately contacted for their needs. Depaul does not typically put put first-year transgender students in singles because they believe it negates the community aspect of attending a small university. Typically, first-year transgender students are contacted by the director of Residential Life, asked about their needs, and are then housed as appropriately as possible.

**Gender Inclusive Housing Tabling Responses October 2014**

* “I support gender inclusive housing because people should not be excluded and questioned about who they are by those who do not know anything about them besides their well deserved right to non-conform. There has been a negative history with inclusion in the United States so making small changes in a community that is important to me is is a small change that could have an overall positive outcome on the future.”
* “I think that inclusion is a basic human right. OWU is such a supportive loving place. It only makes sense.”
* “Yes because adults in the real world can.”
* “I believe having the option present is a good idea, so whether people agree with it or not it would still be an option.”
* “Gender inclusive housing is super important because without it, we are medicalizing identity that are already marginalized and that is unacceptable. This schools preaches a policy of ‘Theory to Practice’ but in order to live up to that, we need to apply our policy so equality to all areas.”
* “Yes because everyone deserves to be safe and happy in their own rooms.”
* “I fully support this policy. It’s very relevant to modern life.”
* “Yes it’s more applicable to today’s views, it just makes sense.”
* “I like this policy, it is more applicable to real life. Also I feel safer living with guys.”
* “Yes because feeling uncomfortable in your room can make or break your academic performance and people deserve to make this choice themselves.”
* “I think college students are responsible enough to make this decision for ourselves.”
* “I don’t see why it would be an issue! I’m all for it!”
* “Yes. It is important to include all genders and allow it to be easy to find neutral housing. Everyone should be safe and happy.”
* “Gender inclusive housing sounds good to me.”
* “I think we shouldn’t have gender specific housing. I think guys are sometimes easier to live with.”
* “We should keep up with other colleges and stay in the game. If other colleges have this program in place we need to keep up or possibly lose more prospective students.”
* “Definitely a good idea! The school should switch!”
* “I agree that gender neutral housing should be available.”
* “I support! I’ve wondered how students have ever had to compromise how they identify, if they don’t feel comfortable identifying basically I hope people haven’t felt they should have conformed to what others expect from them!”
* “I support gender neutral housing because students deserve to feel safe living with the people the live with for the amount of time we are required to live with them. Feeling safe should be a given but with the current housing options it’s not always.”
* “I like the idea of gender inclusive housing. I would want a clear definition of what it means. I hear the term a lot but the exact explanation is a tad foggy. I am all for it.”
* “I completely support gender equal housing. As adults we shouldn’t be told who or who not we can live with. Gender segregated housing is completely antiquated.”
* “Sounds good to me!”
* “I believe that housing should not be based on sex/gender.”
* “I think it is a great idea and OWU should do it.”
* “I totally support this policy and encourage people to continue to voice their opinions of inclusive projects such as this.”
* “I would support gender inclusive housing to make more students comfortable on campus. We are capable people able to make our own decisions, and those who do not wish to live in gender-neutral housing are not forced to.”
* “Gender neutral housing would be pretty rad!”
* “I strongly support gender inclusive housing for the safety and inclusion of trans people.”
* “I think gender inclusive housing is a great idea it gives people an opportunity to feel more comfortable in their living environment and your home should be where you feel safest coming from someone who doesn’t feel comfortable in their living environment this would be a great option.”
* “I actively support this mission. Gender inclusive housing is essential to a healthy community and progressive campus.”
* “Do it! It takes almost no resources and makes our campus much more inclusive. Support trans identities!”
* “It just makes sense! Gender inclusive housing would foster tolerance and acceptance, making the OWU community stronger and a better place!”
* “It’s so easy to do. Just offer it. No infrastructure change. No new dorms. Just change it.”
* “I support this yet fear how parents would view this.”
* “I support gender inclusive housing because segregating people based on their gender (or genders) only serves to make people more afraid/uncomfortable of people’s differences, and excludes or invalidates many people’s sense of self identity.”
* “I think it is very important to treat every student/person as they wish to be treated. It’s unfair in my opinion to treat anyone differently because of how they were born or on their sexual identity. This is something that is a huge changing point in our social environment of our generation. I support it!”
* “Gender inclusive housing is necessary for our campus! We need to offer all students safe housing. Please implement this ASAP! My trans friends need this option.”
* “I support gender inclusive housing. Gender is very ambiguous and people’s gender should not matter. OWU should bring gender housing for all, it should be up to the student who they want to live with not the school.”
* “I support gender inclusive housing.”
* “Why isn’t it important. Be a real liberal arts school”
* “Gender inclusive housing is important because people are people and should be treated as such regardless of anything else”
* “I think it would be a good addition to the housing community”
* “There are more than just 2 genders, and inclusivity allows all students to have the right to choose who they live with besides the choices boys/girls”
* “I support gender inclusive housing!”
* “I support gender neutral housing on campus. As an RA I feel this would greatly improve the quality of students on campus and an overall environment that is positive for growth in being an inclusive campus and university” (this handwriting is borderline illegible, so this is my best guess)”
* “I support gender inclusive housing because I believe it should not matter what gender a person is but the connections one have [has] with each other, and the level of respect one has for each other”
* “Gender-inclusive housing is something that OWU is lacking, and due to this, many schools are far ahead. I support this choice of housing, and doing so will strongly support our non-binary students and overall reduce discrimination. This needs to be in all living units at OWU!”
* “A great thing!! I think that this is a step in the right direction! People should have the option to not only live with their friends, but also to live comfortably--that means with the gender that they’d feel safest around. Also support people whos identities conflict with their given sex (assigned at birth)”
* “If Res life is trying to prepare students for life after OWU. Students will be in life situations outside of conservative gender norms. Why should there be discrepancies across all (constituencies??)”
* “Don’t discriminate, nip this whole discussion in the bud by being socially inclusive. Otherwise you’ll be at the wrong end of a lot of awkward questions, anger, and accusations of bigotry -- bad publicity.”
* “I am all for gender-neutral housing!!!!”
* “Gender inclusive housing would be an effort to make everyone feel accepted and included under the school’s policy. Forward thinking is necessary for a liberal arts campus. Thank you.”
* “I support gender inclusive housing because not everyone fits into a ‘gender’ or don't identify with his or her biological gender. It’s offensive to have to live with a woman as a “woman” if that’s not who you really are/ how you identify.”
* “I would support gender neutral housing with all my heart. It would make students more comfortable and create a better environment that isn’t based on misconceptions about gender like our current one.”
* “For a campus that prides itself on being progressive and diverse, it’s embarrassing that OWU cant get past the idea that boys and girls are so vastly different that they cant occupy the same living space”
* “Yes, yes, yes & yes!!! Gender neutral housing would make it a lot easier for transgender students to find roommates and more importantly to feel comfortable in their living space. SLUs are very inclusive but exclude freshmen who are likely to need the support most!”
* “ I support gender inclusive housing. We are legally adults. Who we live with should be our choice! LGBTIQA and students often already live with their significant others. People who are gender non-conforming or trans should be able to live where they are comfortable.”
* “It should definitely be here!”
* “We should have the option to live with whomever we want”
* “Yes. Everyone has a right to feel comfortable in their own residence. Let people do whatever the hell they want! I support this”
* “I support GENDER INCLUSIVE HOUSING”
* “Awesome! Gender inclusive housing would really increase diversity and make more students feel welcome at OWU.”
* “I think gender neutral housing would be a great addition of equality and trust on our campus.”
* “Yes! This is super important! Go equality!”
* “YES”
* “YES!”
* “I think gender neutral housing would allow OWU to become more diverse and inclusive”
* “Yes! This is a super great idea and a movement in the right direction. Totally for it.”
* ”I think gender neutral housing would be a great idea!”
* “YES PLEASE! The idea that people cannot live together based on their gender is archaic! Trans peole have to feel scared of how they will be housed! People must feel safe in their own homes! PLEASE SAY YES!!!”