

**Identity Questions Policy**  
**Hobart and William Smith Colleges**  
Gender Inclusiveness Task Force for Data Management

Members of the HWS community are often stewards of application forms, registration forms, and surveys. At times, including questions about personal identity can be helpful, if not essential. Questions about identity on forms can ensure that we are being respectful and inclusive when interacting with applicants, participants, or candidates. In addition, when designing and analyzing surveys, we may want to disaggregate data in ways that help us better understand the unique experiences of certain groups of people. The purpose of this policy is to standardize the practices of those designing and deploying forms and surveys at HWS that include questions about identity.

**Standardizing Data Collection**

There are several reasons to standardize the manner in which we collect data about identity. First, we can ensure that we are serving the needs and interests of everyone in our community. Including identity questions on an application, registration, or other forms is an important way to be inclusive. Asking a person about their identity in a manner that is based on best practices, can help people feel seen and respected. Second, if we are collecting data about identity, then we want to do so in a manner that is consistent and reliable. Using the same categories and responses will lead to comparable results. Ultimately, we will have more opportunities to potentially integrate and learn from each other's work. Third, the standardization of the process will increase our ability to respect anonymity and privacy. Finally, as a community, we are committed to the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. As stated in the Strategic Diversity Plan, we must collect, analyze, visualize and share institutional data in ways that can then be disaggregated by identity categories (race/ethnicity, gender identity, disability, among others) to address inequities and in ways that foster data informed decision making at the Colleges.

**Policy**

The following policy applies to any online or paper application/registration form or survey that includes one or more of the following identity categories:

- Gender Identity
- Sex Assigned at Birth
- Pronouns
- Disability Status
- Sexual Orientation
- Ethnicity
- Race

When including these categories, members of the HWS community shall use the chosen category responses below as written.

<p><b>Gender Identity</b> (checkboxes) Agender Female Genderqueer Male Non-Binary Transgender Female Transgender Male Prefer Not to Answer Not listed above</p> <p><b>Comments or Clarification</b> (textbox)</p>	<p><b>Pronouns</b> (checkboxes) Ask me He/Him/His Hir She/Her/Hers They/Them/Theirs Use Name Only Ze/Zim/Zers Prefer not to answer Not listed above</p> <p><b>Comments or Clarification</b> (textbox)</p>	<p><b>Race</b> (radio buttons) American Indian or Alaska Native Asian Black or African American Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander White Two or more races (clarify below) Prefer not to answer Not listed above</p> <p><b>Comments or Clarification</b> (textbox)</p>
<p><b>Sex Assigned at Birth</b> (radio buttons) Female Intersex Male Prefer not to answer</p> <p><b>Comments or Clarification</b> (textbox)</p>	<p><b>Disability Status</b> (checkboxes) Autism Spectrum Disorder Blind/Low Vision Chronic Illness (cancer, diabetes, autoimmune, etc.) Cognitive D/deaf/Hard of Hearing Learning Disability/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder</p>	<p><b>Ethnicity</b> (radio buttons) Hispanic Non-Hispanic Prefer not to answer Not listed above</p>
<p><b>Sexual Orientation</b> (checkboxes) Asexual Bisexual Gay Heterosexual/Straight Lesbian Pansexual Queer Prefer not to answer Not Listed Above</p> <p><b>Comments or Clarification</b> (textbox)</p>	<p>Mental Health Physical Sensory Substance Addiction and Recovery Traumatic Brain Injury Prefer not to answer Not listed above</p> <p><b>Comments or Clarification</b> (textbox)</p>	

The following disclaimer must appear above these questions on all surveys that use one or more of the identity categories.

*We understand that people have multiple and intersecting identities. Consequently, we realize that the descriptions below may not completely embody or accurately represent who you are. We collect these data to better understand the population of people who complete this form/survey and disaggregate the results as necessary. Confidentiality and anonymity in reference to identity categories will be maintained. We are not collecting data on citizenship status.*

### **Considerations**

- Please note that most of the questions are intended to be checkboxes (respondents can choose one or more), but several should be radio buttons (respondents can only choose one option).
- The “Comments and Clarification” textbox for a specific question should always be included.
- You may choose to include one or more of the questions/categories; however, it is recommended to use both “Ethnicity” and “Race” in combination.
- There is no need to add to the question prompts (e.g., Gender Identity, Pronouns, Race, etc.). Each item should simply list the category.
- When creating an online form or survey, unless one or more of these identities is the focus, identity questions should be set as “not required.”
- Please ensure that no statistics beyond frequencies are reported for student identity groups that are smaller than five students. Saying anything more specific about a very small number of students runs the risk of having a participant identified.
- Note that identity data can be reaggregated in order to maintain anonymity while being able to develop draw conclusions about specific groups of people. For example, a survey might include all of the categories listed for “gender identity” above. A report of those data might collapse all of the categories other than “male” and “female” into the category of “gender diverse.” Doing so is both appropriate and encouraged, when helpful.

A template of these questions will be available via the Community section in Baseline. Users may copy the template and delete questions, as needed.

<https://baseline.campuslabs.com/hawsc/identityquestionstemplate>

Thank you for reviewing and using this policy. Any questions can be directed to the Office of Institutional Research ([gassert@hws.edu](mailto:gassert@hws.edu)).