Suggested Best Practices for Asking Sexual Orientation and Gender on College Applications

**Suggested Wording**

- This information is used for _____________________________.
- Only (name of offices) will have access to this information
- Your responses will be kept private and secure.
- The information will not be used for a discriminatory purpose.
- You can change this information in the future by _________________.

**Sexual Orientation (optional; choose all that apply):**

__ asexual  
__ bisexual  
__ gay  
__ straight (heterosexual)  
__ lesbian  
__ pansexual  
__ queer  
__ questioning or unsure  
__ same-gender loving  
__ an identity not listed: please specify ____________________________  
__ prefer not to disclose

**Gender identity (optional; choose all that apply):**

__ agender  
__ androgyne  
__ demigender  
__ genderqueer or gender fluid  
__ man  
__ questioning or unsure  
__ trans man  
__ trans woman  
__ woman  
__ additional gender category/identity: please specify ____________________________  
__ prefer not to disclose
Guiding Principles

- Colleges should ask questions related to gender identity and sexual orientation on their admissions application to be able to gather these data for students who apply, who are admitted, and who attend the institution.

- If a college uses the Common Application (which asks “sex: male or female”), questions related to gender identity and sexual orientation should be included among a college’s supplemental questions.

- If asking questions related to gender identity and sexual orientation on an admissions application is not possible, then these questions should be asked on a form filled out by all admitted or enrolled students.

- These questions should be optional.

- These data should never be listed in the visible directory, as they are covered under FERPA/HIPAA.

- An explanation of why these questions are being asked and how the data will be used (including an assurance that the information will not be used to discriminate against them) should accompany the questions [see suggested language above].

- Because sexual orientation and gender identity are separate aspects of identity, colleges should never combine them into one question (not asking, for example, “Do you identify as a part of the LGBTQ community?”).

- Because sexuality and gender are fluid and some LGBTQ+ students are not out when they apply to college, students should have the ability to change these identities on campus records during their academic careers. Ideally, this information would be part of students’ records that they can access and change online, but which would not be visible to the public.

- Because a growing number of students are identifying outside of gender and sexual binaries, the questions on gender identity and sexual orientation should include non-binary identity choices. Specifically, a gender identity question should include “genderqueer” and “agender” among the choices, and a sexual orientation question should include “asexual,” “queer,” and “pansexual” among the choices [see suggested language above].