



Regis College

Center for Inclusive Excellence



Why Words Matter?

"Words have energy and power with the ability to help, to heal, to hinder, to hurt, to harm, to humiliate, and to humble."

-Yehuda Berg

At Regis, on our journey to become more fluent in language related to inclusive excellence, we have put together a guide that reflects our commitment to inclusive language.

Let's start from the beginning...

Accountability: An intentional arrangement that determines whether and how individuals or groups are responsible and answerable for their actions to other individuals and groups.

Affinity Group/Employee Resource: A small voluntary group of faculty student, and staff linked by a common purpose, ideology, or interest. Affinity Groups play a vital role in ensuring an inclusive environment where all are valued, included, and empowered to be visible and succeed, and which serve to support recruitment, retention, education, advocacy, and community building. E.g. [It's Your Yale - Affinity Groups](#)

Agency: The ability to make independent decisions and act in one's own best interests.

Antiracism/ist: In contrast to nonracism is the opposite of racism and describes the intentional actions of dismantling racism and bringing the system to an end. Antiracism describes the work and antiracist describes the person or people committed to the tasks.

Belonging: Regis is committed to ensuring that each individual is known and accepted for who they are. It is a part of the founding values of who we are as an institution.

Bias: Any conduct motivated by prejudice (verbal, written, nonverbal) that is threatening, harassing, intimidating, discriminatory, hostile, unwelcoming, exclusionary, demeaning, degrading or derogatory based on a person's real or perceived identity or group affiliation in a protected class recognized by law including, but not limited to, race/ethnicity, age, disability status, gender, gender identity/expression, national origin, sexual orientation, veteran status or religion.

Unconscious or Implicit Bias: Biases that we carry without awareness and which impact our day-to-day interactions. To learn more about implicit bias and to take an implicit association

test online, visit Project Implicit at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>

Classism: A system of power and privilege tied to ascribed or achieved economic wealth and social networks. It is a mechanism by which groups of people in similar social networks are considered a unit according to their economic, occupational, or social status.

Climate: The multidimensional constructs subject to and shaped by policies, practices and behaviors of those within and external to the institution, representing the attitudes, perception and behaviors and expectations regarding issues of diversity, inclusion and equity, and which include history and legacy of inclusion or exclusion, compositional or structural diversity, psychological dimensions, behavioral dimensions, and diversity leadership. (Hurtado et al., 1998)

Campus Climate: The current attitudes, behaviors and standards of faculty, staff, administrators and students concerning the level of respect for individual needs, abilities and potential."

Diversity: refers to the range of human experiences such as age, class, ethnicity, race, gender, nationality, disability, religion, sexual orientation, personality, communication style, beliefs/values work style, and veteran status. Other dimensions of diversity include cross functions and divisions of organizations, hierarchical levels of organizations, variety of operating environments organizations works /competes, advances in products, and shifting customer demographics and community expectations. ¹

Equity: The creation of opportunities for historically underrepresented populations to have equal access to and participate in educational, occupational and personal development programs that are compatible of closing the achievements gaps in student success and completion and employee success.

Equity Literacy: A complex understanding of bias and inequity that enables one to make sense of diversity-related dynamics in sophisticated ways. This understanding helps them to effectively respond and do good instead of harm that can come from only enthusiasm and good intentions.

Inclusive Excellence: The pursuit and realization of a set of balanced diversity-related objectives that reposition diversity and inclusion as fundamental to institutional excellence.

- **Includes:** Intentional institutional practices that focus on the holistic development of students (intellectual, social, and spiritual) by purposefully developing and utilizing all the organizations resources to enhance student learning, addressing the cultural differences students bring and how these clash with organizational status quos, and creating a welcoming community that engages all types of diversity in the service of students and organizational growth.

Social Institution: A complex group of interdependent systems/networks that functions together to perform a social role and which through norms and values shapes the behavior of the groups or people within it and reproduces itself over time e.g. legal, education, financial/economic, religious...

Social systems: The various groups of interdependent systems and networks of actors that make up social institutions e.g. police, courts, banks, legislators/law makers, colleges/universities, K-12 schools

Gender and Sexuality

Advocate:

1. *Noun* - a person who actively works to end intolerance, educate others, and support social equity for a marginalized group.

2. *Verb* - to actively support/plea in favor of a particular cause, the action of working to end intolerance, educate others, etc.

Agender: *adjective* - a person with no (or very little) connection to the traditional system of gender, no personal alignment with the concepts of either man or woman, and/or someone who sees themselves as existing without gender. Sometimes called gender neutrois, gender neutral, or genderless.

Ally: /"al-lie"/ - *noun* - a (typically straight and/or cisgender) person who supports and respects members of the LGBTQ community. We consider people to be active allies who take action on in support and respect.

"Coming out" as an ally is when you reveal (or take an action that reveals) your support of the LGBTQ community. Being an active supporter can, at times, be stigmatizing, though it is not usually recognized, many allies go through a "coming out process" of their own.

Androgyny/ous: /"an-jrah-jun-ee"; "an-jrah-jun-uss"/ - *adjective*

1. a gender expression that has elements of both masculinity and femininity.
2. occasionally used in place of "intersex" to describe a person with both female and male anatomy.

Androsexual/Androphilic: *adjective* - being primarily sexually, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to some men, males, and/or masculinity.

Aromantic: *adjective* - experiencing little or no romantic attraction to others and/or has a lack of interest in romantic relationships/behavior. Aromanticism exists on a continuum from people who experience no romantic attraction or have any desire for romantic activities, to those who experience low levels, or romantic attraction only under specific conditions, and many of these different places on the

continuum have their own identity labels (see demiromantic). Sometimes abbreviated to “aro” (pronounced like “arrow”).

Asexual: a person who is not sexually attracted to any gender. This does not mean that they don't have sexual feelings, but those feelings are not connected to another person. Someone identifying as asexual will still engage in sexual acts, but those acts will not include anyone else.

Bigender: *adjective* - a person who fluctuates between traditionally “woman” and “man” gender-based behavior and identities, identifying with both genders (and sometimes a third gender).

Bicurious: *adjective* - a curiosity about having attraction to people of the same gender/sex (similar to questioning).

Biological Sex: *noun* - a medical term used to refer to the chromosomal, hormonal and anatomical characteristics that are used to classify an individual as female or male or intersex. Often referred to as simply “sex,” “physical sex,” “anatomical sex,” or specifically as “sex assigned at birth.”

Often seen as a binary but as there are many combinations of chromosomes, hormones, and primary/secondary sex characteristics, it's more accurate to view this as a spectrum (which is more inclusive of intersex people as well as trans*-identified people).* - Is commonly conflated with gender.

Biphobia: *noun* - a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, invisibility, resentment, erasure, or discomfort) that one may have or express towards bisexual individuals. Biphobia can come from and be seen within the LGBTQ community as well as straight society. Biphobic - *adjective* - a word used to describe an individual who harbors some elements of this range of negative attitudes towards bisexual people.

Bisexual: a person who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to males/men and females/women. Remember, sexual orientation is not about your current sexual activities. So, that means a woman can be in a relationship with a man and still identify as a bisexual because she feels an attraction for both men and women.

Butch: *noun and adjective* a person who identifies themselves as masculine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally. ‘Butch’ is sometimes used as a derogatory term for lesbians, but is also be claimed as an affirmative identity label.

Cisgender: /“siss-jendur”/ - *adjective* - a person whose gender identity and biological sex assigned at birth align (e.g., man and assigned male at birth). A simple way to think about it is if a person is not transgender, they are cisgender. The word cisgender can also be shortened to “cis.” “Cis” is a Latin prefix that means “on the same side [as]” or “on this side [of].”

Cissexism: *noun* - behavior that grants preferential treatment to cisgender people, reinforces the idea that being cisgender is somehow better or more “right” than being transgender, and/or makes other genders invisible.

Cisnormativity: *noun* - the assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is cisgender, and that cisgender identities are superior to trans* identities or people. Leads to invisibility of non-cisgender identities.

Closeted: *adjective* - an individual who is not open to themselves or others about their (queer) sexuality or gender identity. This may be by choice and/or for other reasons such as fear for one's safety, peer or family rejection or disapproval and/or loss of housing, job, etc. Also known as being “in the closet.” When someone chooses to break this silence, they “come out” of the closet. (See coming out)

Coming Out:

1. the process by which one accepts and/or comes to identify one's own sexuality or gender identity (to "come out" to oneself).
2. The process by which one shares one's sexuality or gender identity with others (to "come out" to friends, etc.).

This is a continual, life-long process. Every day, all the time, one has to evaluate and re-evaluate who they are comfortable coming out to, if it is safe, and what the consequences might be.

Constellation: *noun* - a way to describe the arrangement or structure of a polyamorous relationship.

Cross-Dresser: *noun* - someone who wears clothes of another gender/sex.

Demiromantic: *adjective* - little or no capacity to experience romantic attraction until a strong sexual or emotional connection is formed with another individual, often within a sexual relationship.

Demisexual: *adjective* - little or no capacity to experience sexual attraction until a strong romantic or emotional connection is formed with another individual, often within a romantic relationship.

FtM/F2M; MtF/M2F: *abbreviation* - female-to-male transgender or transsexual person; male-to-female transgender or transsexual person.

Gay: usually ascribed to men who have sexual desire or attraction to men. As we all know, there are several definitions to the word gay, and not all of them are about sexual orientation. However, some women who are attracted to women refer to themselves as gay.

Gender Binary: *noun* - the idea that there are only two genders and that every person is one of those two.

Gender-Queer: a gender identity label often used by people who do not identify with the binary of man/woman; or as an umbrella term for many gender non-conforming or non-binary

identities (e.g., agender, bigender, genderfluid).

Gender Non-Conforming: *adjective*

1. a gender expression descriptor that indicates a non-traditional gender presentation (masculine woman or feminine man).
2. a gender identity label that indicates a person who identifies outside of the gender binary. Often abbreviated as "GNC."

Homophobia: The hatred and discrimination directed at homosexuals based on societal images and unwarranted, exaggerated fears based on systemic stereotypes about homosexuality.

Intersex: Individuals that possess chromosomal, anatomical, and hormonal exceptions that lie outside of the dimorphic idea of male (XY chromosome, testes, penis, facial hair) and female (XX chromosome, ovaries, vagina, breasts)

Intersexuality: a set of medical conditions that feature congenital anomaly of the reproductive and sexual system. That is, intersex people are born with "sex chromosomes," external genitalia, or internal reproductive systems that are not considered "standard" for either male or female.

Lesbian: when women have sexual desire or attraction to women.

LGBTQIA+: The sexual orientation acronym for persons that hold these identities: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual. The + serves to recognize that it is not a continuum but an identification of some of the many possibilities that exist.

Non-Binary Gender: The idea that there are more than two genders and that every person does not fit one of the biomorphic masculine or feminine gender. A gender expression descriptor that indicates a non-traditional gender presentation (masculine woman or

feminine man), and bears a gender identity label that indicates a person who identifies outside of the gender binary.

Queer: a political statement, a theory and an identity. Someone who identifies as queer is a person who redefines or plays with gender, or who refuses society's definitions or expectations assigned to gender altogether. It is often a label that people choose who bend or break their socially assigned gender roles. Queer identity is not a sexual orientation, but it is an identity that allows people to move outside of the boxes for female or male. In the past, queer has been a negative word for people who do not identify as a heterosexual, and some people find it offensive.

Questioning: allows people to say that they are not sure what their sexual orientation is, or if it is only one way. Someone's sexual attraction might change several times over their lives. If they don't want to make an absolute statement about their sexual attraction/orientation, then they will identify as questioning.

Sexism: a reflection of attitudes of hostility towards women. These are based on common societal assumptions which are played off into attitudes and translated into actions and behaviors.

Hostile Sexism: open prejudice, discrimination and hostility against women

Benevolent Sexism: covert or hidden hostility which comes off as protective attitudes or romantic love objectification. Can be seen as positive but sharing the underlying assumptions of Hostile sexism. Refer to [Ambivalent Sexism Inventory](#).

Sexual Orientation: describes someone's continual (not just one time) attraction - it can be a physical, sexual, and/or emotional attraction - to a group of people. We'll get into the different groupings of people in our letter soup discussion below. Now the important thing to remember about someone's sexual orientation is that the definition doesn't

mention any sexual acts. Let's make this idea into an example. If a guy receives oral sex from another guy BUT he does not have a continual attraction to men, then that 1 sexual act does NOT define his sexual orientation. However, his behavior does mean that he has had sex with another man (your actions don't disappear just because you don't identify as a different sexual orientation.)

Transgender: A person who has a gender at odds with their physical sex assigned at birth, and a social gender at odds with his or her genitals.

Transgender is unique in this "alphabet soup" of sexuality because it doesn't really refer to a sexual orientation. However, in our society, we tend to put together all "groups" of people that are "different." So, people who identify as transgender are considered part of the LGBTQIA community.

Transgender People: those whose psychological self ("gender identity") differs from the social expectations for the physical sex they were born with. Transgender people may have any sexual orientation

Oppression, Prejudice and Discrimination

Cultural Humility: involves an ongoing process of self-exploration and self-critique combined with a willingness to learn from others. It means entering a relationship with another person with the intention of honoring their beliefs, customs, and values. It means acknowledging differences and accepting that person for who they are.

Discrimination: the behavioral manifestation of prejudice involving the limitation of opportunities and options based on particular criterion (i.e. race, sex, age, class, disability, national origin etc.).

Dominance: The systemic or institutional attitudes and behaviors of prejudice, bias, superiority, and self-righteousness of members

of one group in relation to others considered outside that group. Group membership can be based on race, ethnicity, national status, mental health status, or occupation.

Ethnocentrism: the belief that one group/nation/ cultural values are right, is used to judge/evaluate others that are different, and must be protected and defended. The negative aspects involve blatant assertion of personal, national, and cultural superiority. "My/our way is the right way, I/we are the leaders and the best".

Hate Crime: Any criminal offenses (Criminal Homicide; including Murder and Non-negligent Manslaughter, and Manslaughter by Negligence, Sexual Assault; including Rape, Fondling, Incest and Statutory Rape, Robbery; Aggravated Assault, Burglary, Motor Vehicle Theft, and Arson, and any incidents of Larceny-theft, Simple Assault, Intimidation, or Destruction/Damage/Vandalism of Property that were motivated by bias.

Marginalized Identities: People that are expelled from the useful participation in social life and who are potentially subjected to material deprivation because the systems of labor cannot or will not use them. These include racially marked identities (Blacks or Indians in Latin America; MBE - minority black ethnic) in Europe; elderly, single mothers and their children, Native Americans on reservations, disabled, Blacks and Latinos, prisoners in the United States.

Microaggressions: the subtle, stunning and often automatic and non-verbal exchanges which are put-downs insults, dismissals, and casual degradations experienced by marginalized individuals that are meant to diminish some aspect of one's identity.

Oppression: the systematic enclosing structure of forces and barriers (unquestioned norms, habits, symbols, consequences of following set rules) which results in the immobilization and reduction of a group or categories of people -

may be economic, political, social, psychological, or professional. Should not be stretched to meet the scope of all human experience of limitation or suffering.

Prejudice: a negative or positive attitude toward a person, group or thing, based on pre-judgment and usually having no merit. Often using a thimbleful of experience to inform an ocean of facts.

Privilege/Internalized Entitlement: unearned entitlements-things that all people should have-such as feeling safe in public spaces, free speech, the ability to work in a place where we feel we can do our best work, and being valued for what we can contribute

White privilege: the unearned advantages and the concrete benefits of access to resources and social rewards and the ability that it brings to shape the norms and values of society that whites receive, unconsciously or consciously, by virtue of their skin color.

Racism: A system of advantage and disadvantage based on social, historical, and cultural constructions of race and ethnicity where power is misused to benefit, or disadvantage. Occurs at the individual, internalized, interpersonal, institutional, and/or cultural levels; may be overt or covert, intentional or unintentional.

Cultural Racism: the individual and institutional expression of the superiority of one race's cultural heritage and values over another.

Internalized Racism: the personal conscious or subconscious acceptance of the dominant society's views, stereotypes and biases of one's ethnic or racial group. It gives rise to patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving that result in discriminating, minimizing, criticizing, finding fault, invalidating, and hating oneself and others in one's group, while simultaneously valuing the dominant culture.

Interpersonal Racism: actions that perpetuate inequalities on the basis of race during personal or group interaction. Such behaviors may be intentional or unintentional; unintentional acts may be racist in their consequence.

Institutional Racism: laws, customs, traditions, policies, and practices that systematically result in inequalities in a society. It also involves the use of power to oppress those that resist the system's values. This is the institutionalization of personal racism.

Internalized Racism/Oppression: the internalization of conscious or unconscious attitudes regarding inferiority or differences by the victims of systematic oppression.

Racial Microaggressions: brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color.

Retaliation: Punitive sanctions enacted for someone asserting their rights to resist

oppression (sexism, homophobia, racism, classism, xenophobia, hostile work practices)

Whiteness: The location of structural advantage, of race privilege, a 'standpoint,' a place from which White people look at ourselves, at others, and at society.

White Fragility: a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation.

World View: a framework or set of fundamental beliefs through which we view the world and our calling and future in it...It is the integrative and interpretative framework by which order and disorder are judged, the standard by which reality is managed and pursued.

On Campus Resources

[Center for Inclusive Excellence](#)

[Center for Ministry and Service](#)

[Center for Student Engagement](#)

[Counseling Services](#)

[Hospitality Center](#)

[Finucane and O'Sullivan Institute for Learning](#)

[Office of Accessibility Services](#)