

Pronoun Visibility in Health Professions Education

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Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the value of creating inclusive norms, by sharing pronouns, in medical education settings.
2. Identify ways to professionally share pronouns in a medical education setting.

Sharing pronouns in a professional context has become the norm in major academic settings. This is not surprising; many initiatives to improve education and healthcare come from students. At Maine Medical Center, we have received feedback from students coming from many institutions, inquiring why our healthcare system and educational programs have not taken steps to normalize sharing pronouns.

In 2018, an MMC workgroup, collaborating with The Gender Clinic, began to look at small ways to effect change and improve support for the LGBTQ+ community in Maine. Within a year, after consulting with providers and staff throughout the system, community members, patients, and other institutions, a recommendation was made to ask and encourage leaders to share pronoun education with their teams. Several departments and groups began to champion this education and share it widely as a way to shift their culture.

Why is it important to include your pronouns- in your email signature line, badge, zoom, or introductions?

When we normalize sharing our pronouns, we reduce bias and assumptions among colleagues and clients. We eliminate guessing gender identity from social cues, a process that is particularly harmful to transgender community members. Instead of relying on transgender and gender-nonconforming people to inform and educate others, we can cultivate an environment of learning, respect, and inclusivity.

In 2015, Harvard University students began offering pronoun selections during student registration. The Kennedy School of Government elevated those recommendations in the classroom, distributing stickers with pronouns on them. [Gender Pronouns Can Be Tricky on Campus. Harvard is Making Them Stick.](#)

Theodore Svoronos, 33, a lecturer in public policy, said the stickers took some of the stress out of teaching.

“I see those stickers as a gift,” he said. “It reduces the friction and the cognitive load for us to identify people the way they want to be identified.”

To understand the impact of normalizing pronouns in medical education, read about the experience of a medical student who recently published a personal narrative, [Pronouns and Advocacy in Medicine](#), in the AMA Journal of Ethics, describing the experience of a nonbinary person sharing their experience as a medical student at BUSM and the impact that normalizing pronouns had on their medical education. Consider also the recently shared experience of a recent Tufts graduate, planning to apply to medical school this year, [Embracing Medicine- and One's True Self](#).

In recent years, pronoun visibility and sharing has become more common in healthcare settings, as well as education.

"Adding pronouns to our email signatures is another step along the pathway to creating a more equitable, inclusive and accessible work environment and supports our commitment to a more safe and accepting society and healthcare system for all people." – [Fenway Health](#), VP of Communications

"By committing to using the correct pronouns, we are creating a space of respect and inclusion for all our patients, our staff and students." – [Mayo Clinic](#), Vice Chair of Administration

How do I edit my email signature?

Open your Outlook and select 'New Email' as though you are composing a new message. Select 'Signature' (next to attach item). Under the dropdown choices you can update an existing signature or create a new one.

What should I write in my email signature?

Consider what your pronouns are and add them following your name. At MyPronouns.org, they suggest the following format:

Jamaal Johnson *Pronouns: he/him*
OR
Jamaal Johnson (*pronoun: he*)

There is no single best way to share pronouns. You might use "she/her/hers" or "she/her" or just "she," which generally refers to a larger set of pronouns.

You may also want to add a link to a website, with your pronouns like this: "My Pronouns: they/them ~ See www.mypronouns.org to learn more," if you would like to include a resource that explains why you are making your pronouns visible.

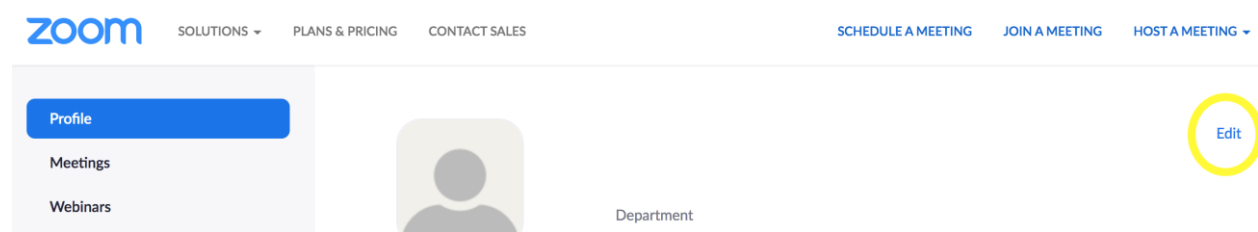
How can I include my pronouns on ZOOM?

Adding your pronouns to your name on ZOOM is another great way to increase pronoun visibility in the workplace.

If you have downloaded the ZOOM app to your computer, login as usual and select the profile icon in the top right corner and then select 'Settings.' Select the Profile tab and click 'Edit my profile.' This will launch a window in your browser where you can follow the steps listed below.

(If you do not have the ZOOM app, go to ZOOM.us on your browser and login.)

- In the 'Profile' section, click 'Edit' far to the right of your name
- Select 'Display Name'
- Here, you can add your pronouns after your last name. For example, Jamaal Johnson (he/him/his)



References

1. [Gender Pronouns Can Be Tricky on Campus. Harvard Is Making Them Stick. - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com)
2. [Pronouns and Advocacy in Medicine | Journal of Ethics | American Medical Association \(ama-assn.org\)](https://www.ama-assn.org)
3. [Embracing Medicine—and One's True Self | Tufts University School of Medicine](https://www.tufts.edu)
4. [Fenway Offers Employees Pronouns In Email Signatures | Fenway Health: Health Care Is A Right, Not A Privilege.](https://www.fenwayhealth.org)
5. [Mayo Clinic employees may now wear buttons displaying their preferred pronouns | Disrn](https://www.mayoclinic.org)