LSU

INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

One key thing to know when creating messages about sensitive subject matter is that it is important to be mindful of the language you're using, but that no message can ever be created so perfectly that no one is able to find some issue with it. If someone does object to a well-intentioned post, always begin by listening carefully to the issue raised as well as the worldview that it represents. The person speaking out may have good insight or may be feeling pain from a personal experience and simply needs the opportunity to be heard, but substantive and thoughtful revision may also be required.

Below are a few helpful tips that may help your communication team with drafting more inclusive messaging.

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (APA) INCLUSIVE AND BIAS FREE LANGUAGE

Writing inclusively and without bias is the new standard, and APA's new publication manual (7th ed.) contains a separate chapter on this topic. The guidelines provided by APA help authors reduce bias around topics such as gender, age, disability, racial and ethnic identity, and sexual orientation, as well as being sensitive to labels and describing individuals at the appropriate level of specificity.

Some examples include:

- **The singular "they" or "their" is accepted and endorsed as a gender-neutral pronoun.**
    - Not Advised: A researcher's career depends on how often he or she is cited.
    - Preferred: A researcher's career depends on how often they are cited.
- **Instead of using adjectives as nouns to label groups of people, descriptive phrases are preferred.**
    - Not Advised: The poor
    - Preferred: People living in poverty
    - Not Advised: Blacks
    - Preferred: Black individuals, Black people, Black communities
- **Instead of broad categories, you should use exact age ranges that are more relevant and specific.**
    - Not Advised: People over 65 years old
    - Preferred: People in the age range of 65 to 75 years old

MEMBERS OF UNDERREPRESENTED COMMUNITIES

When speaking of members of the university community, avoid using the term "minority"; this term can be received as micro-aggressive. One better phrase to describe someone might be "a person from an underrepresented community." For example, "In seeking to diversify our faculty, we aim to increase the number of professors and instructors from underrepresented communities."

RACE AND ETHNICITY

When discussing race, the first letter should always be capitalized; for example, the b on Black.

Whenever possible, and when the subject of writing is comfortable doing so, use the most specific terms possible to describe an individual's account of their ethnicity and use the term that individual has chosen to self-identify (for example Mexican American, or Brazilian American, or Uruguayan) to avoid flattening the distinct experiences of different communities.

The terms Hispanic, Latino/a/@/x, and Chicano/a/@/x are non-interchangeable, and care should be taken to ensure they are used appropriately.

The terms "Asian" and "Asian American" are very broad; Asia comprises numerous countries and is home to more than half the global population. Again, use more specific terms when possible to describe an individual's account of their ethnicity: for example, refer to your subject as Pakistani American or as Japanese American, or Kazakhstani.

The terms "Native American" and "American Indian" are generally interchangeable, though "Native American" is preferred in federal communications. These terms, however, should only be used to describe two or more persons from different tribal affiliations; when writing about an individual or a specific tribe, use their preferred tribal affiliation.

When writing about a group of people under circumstances that make it important and relevant to describe the group members, while also making it impossible to ask each member how they self-identify, defer to the language used by representatives of the group to refer to the group members collectively, or the language used to refer to the members collectively in public-facing materials or media, or the relevant institutional or organizational aegis that has brought this gathering together (for example, "members and supporters of the Black Women's Empowerment Initiative" or "leadership representatives from Asian American Ambassadors at LSU, Latinx at LSU, and the Native American Student Organization at LSU"). Depending on context, and if it is possible to solicit self-identifying language from some but not all participants, it might be appropriate to refer to the group as including members who self-identify as "x, y, and z", so as to indicate that not every member of the group might identify in the same ways.

The Diversity Style Guide offers definitions of each term, with the understanding that the usage of these terms continues to evolve, and that one should always defer to how an individual self-identifies.

LGBTQ+

The language for describing the lives, identities, and experiences of members of the LGBTQ+ community continues to evolve, and regularly-updated resources like the LSU LGBTQ+ Project's terminology page or the UC Davis terminology page are helpful for understanding the nuances of specific terms. Here are a few guidelines for general usage, offered with the understanding that language is as alive as the people who use it to claim their true and authentic selves.

First off, when writing about LGBTQ+ individuals, be sure to ask these individuals ahead of time how the would like to be identified within the text, what pronouns they use, and what courtesy title (if applicable) they prefer

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

When writing about people with disabilities, use "people first" language, unless someone specifically prefers to self-identify with "identity-first" language: that is, write "a person with a disability," instead of "a disabled person." The "people first" convention is preferred in the US, and is the style prescribed by the APA and used by federal legislation including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Even though this is the preferred default in American contexts, there are members of the disabilities community (especially within the deaf community and among those with Autism) who prefer "identity-first" language, and that preference should be respected. in text, with a phrase like, "[name], who identifies as a disabled person," or, often, "[name,], who identifies as Autistic."

RELIGION & FAITH

When it is relevant and important to mention someone's religious affiliation, defer to the way the individual self-identifies. In general, though, ensure that reference to religious affiliation is made only when necessary, and that the representation of religion or religious affiliation is as specific and precise as possible; there is much diversity of opinion and practice within any faith system, and within any congregation, and care should be taken to distinguish between individual members of a faith community and the faith or faith community as a whole. The Diversity Style Guide offers helpful usage recommendations for specific terms and vocabulary related to numerous faith systems, including on how to manage religious titles.