Transgender in the American academy: a review of social work

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Abstract: Gender-non-conforming (GNC) and transgender students, faculty
and staff have become more visible on American college campuses. Although
policies and programmes to support them are increasing, discrimination
remains widespread. Social work is a discipline and profession committed to
non-discrimination and inclusion of GNC/trans* social workers and students. In
this multilevel review, the authors identify teaching, peer education and
advocacy strategies for creating an inclusive, non-oppressive environment for
and with GNC/trans* students. We then explore ways that internship faculty
can educate, plan, provide resources and build trust to assist GNC/trans*
students to have a positive internship experience. The next level examined
focuses on the discrimination experienced by GNC/trans* faculty and staff and the allying, advocating and educating roles their colleagues can play. We then conclude the review by examining the strategies that social work administrators can use to foster an inclusive culture for GNC/trans* faculty, staff and students.

Keywords: American academy; anti-oppressive practice; faculty; field education; gender expression; gender identity; GNC/trans*; internship; social work education; student; transgender.


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1 Review of aims, limitations and key terms

The authors aim to provide a multilevel review of inclusion efforts for gender-non-conforming (GNC)/trans* people in US universities and colleges, focusing particularly on education and training programmes in social work. We describe common experiences and needs of GNC/trans* social work students, faculty and staff, then we identify methods to foster inclusion within social work programmes and the American colleges and universities in which they are housed. The first portion of the review focuses on inclusion strategies that faculty can use to create a positive climate for GNC/trans* students and support them in class and on campus. We then examine inclusion efforts for GNC/trans* students in internship sites. At the next level, we review inclusion strategies for faculty and staff. The final portion of this review focuses on strategies that social work programme administrators can use to foster respect, unbiased treatment and a culture of inclusion for GNC/trans* faculty, staff and students in social work academic programmes and the larger academy in the United States.

The review is limited to the study of social work as an academic discipline in the US academy. Models of higher education vary considerably across the world, including decision-making authority and the rules governing faculty job permanence and promotion. Nations differ in their policies and practices around gender identity and gender expression, altering the political context for GNC/trans* inclusion in institutions of higher education. Finally, the focus, culture and requirements of social work educational programmes vary across the world. US academic programmes of social work are accredited and highly regulated by the Council on Social Work Education, providing a uniform context for application of strategies for GNC/trans* inclusion.

The authors use the term GNC to describe non-dominant gender expressions (e.g. in the United States, a man wearing makeup or a woman wearing a man’s suit). GNC/trans* is used in this paper to describe non-dominant gender identities (e.g. transgender, genderqueer, transsexual). Cisgender is used to describe people whose gender identity is congruent with the gender they were assigned at birth (e.g. a person assigned ‘boy’ at birth who grows up to identify as a man). These terms are becoming more commonplace in the literature on gender identity, including in the WPATH Standards of Care (Coleman et al., 2012).

2 GNC/trans* in social work background

The transgender movement in the United States is beginning to yield visibility through civil rights advancements in places that once excluded them, such as college campuses. At the same time, discrimination faced by GNC/trans* people remains widespread in higher education and elsewhere in the United States (Beemyn, 2003; Beemyn et al., 2005). One percent or more of the population is estimated to be GNC/trans* based on the limited estimates that exist (Olyslager and Conway, 2007) and a survey of teaching faculty at all accredited graduate social work programmes in the United States and Puerto Rico (N = 1561) found that 1% identified as transgender (Rassi, 2011). A comprehensive count of the GNC/trans* population in the United States or within the American academy remains elusive so far. GNC/trans* people are gaining visibility on campus and the academy is increasingly aware of the need to create a non-pressive, inclusive climate for GNC/trans* people (Rankin et al., 2010).
Nearly 1,000 US colleges and universities have expanded their non-discrimination policies to include gender identity, with many also including gender expression (Beemyn, 2015c). One hundred and forty-five US colleges and universities have made it possible for students, faculty and staff to change their name and gender marker in campus records and directories (Beemyn, 2015a). More than 160 schools allow students to choose roommates of any gender (Beemyn, 2015b) and colleges and universities throughout the United States have created gender-neutral bathrooms in dormitories and other campus buildings.

Despite this momentum, discrimination against GNC/trans* people remains widespread and it is challenging to enforce GNC/trans*-inclusive non-discrimination policies (Seelman et al., 2012). While US Federal Law - Title VII and Title IX of the federal Civil Rights Act are currently interpreted to prevent discrimination against employees and students based on gender identity and gender expression (US Department of Education, 2015; US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.), an inclusive federal non-discrimination law has not been passed and non-discrimination policies exist at one-fifth or less of the nation’s 4,726 colleges and universities (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). More than one-third of the GNC/trans* participants in a national survey reported harassment or bullying on campus (Grant et al., 2011). More overt bias is found based on gender identity and gender expression than based on sexual orientation (Rankin et al., 2010; Yost and Gilmore, 2011). Rankin et al. (2010) found that GNC/trans* study participants felt less comfortable on campus, feared more for their safety, were more likely to consider leaving the school, and less frequently disclosed their identity than cisgender lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer (LGBQ) participants.

2.1 American social work professional values and ethics

The GNC/trans* community has been gaining attention in the social work profession in the United States and some other parts of the world. Social work education is tasked with preparing students to serve this population and is beginning to heed that call.

The US social work profession is committed to uphold the rights of GNC/trans* people and to work to end GNC/trans*-based discrimination both on and off college campuses. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) (2015) Educational Practices (EP) requires US social work programmes to build students’ ability to recognise institutionalised oppression based on gender identity and expression and to understand and control the impact of personal bias regarding gender identity and expression (CSWE, 2015). Furthermore, CSWE EP 3.0 requires that social work programmes express commitment to diversity of gender identity and expression through programme leadership, use of resources, composition of students, faculty and staff and choice of internship sites. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2008) Code of Ethics calls on social workers to educate themselves about gender diversity and GNC/trans* oppression (1.05), to neither participate in nor enable GNC/trans* discrimination (4.02), to avoid making demeaning comments about social work colleagues’ gender identity or expression (2.01), and to work to prevent and eliminate discrimination based on gender identity and expression (6.04).
3 Advancing GNC/trans* students inclusion in the academy

Faculty are key to create an environment that affects how GNC/trans* social work students experience their courses and programme. At this level of analysis, the review reveals important considerations that include classroom content, course climate and campus interactions.

3.1 Classroom and course climate

Faculty affect GNC/trans* students’ wellbeing through classroom climate and course content. GNC/trans* students have identified management of transphobia in the classroom and respectful recognition of names, pronouns and gender identities as methods for building an inclusive climate (Seelman et al., 2012). Moreover, faculty should also prepare guest lecturers to be inclusive and respectful of GNC/trans* students (e.g., name and pronoun use) and topics.

While faculty in one study maintained a GNC/trans*-inclusive atmosphere in their classrooms, their coverage of gender identity and expression topics was inadequate (Yost and Gilmore, 2011). Inclusion of this content raises GNC/trans* people’s visibility and issues for all students and provides opportunities for GNC/trans* students to see themselves represented (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2011). It is essential that faculty take responsibility for GNC/trans*-related content without expecting GNC/trans* and GNC students to provide or carry it (Seelman et al., 2012).

Social work faculty need curricular resources. More than four-fifths of those surveyed among United States and Canadian social work faculty agreed on the importance of including content on GNC/trans* populations in social work courses although nearly one-half did not have materials available to teach this content and one-fourth were unsure whether teaching resources were available (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2011). Faculty with access to resources were more likely to incorporate GNC/trans* content into courses (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2011). Social work faculty must teach about GNC/trans* oppression. Fredriksen-Goldsen et al. (2011) noted that, while social work faculty agreed that GNC/trans* people experience discrimination, they were less likely to support teaching about transphobia than about GNC/trans* populations. Faculty play a key role in educating one another on the importance of course content on GNC/trans*-related bias.

3.2 Interactions outside the classroom

GNC/trans* students recounted negative experiences of being outed by faculty and campus leaders who neither understood the implications of this nor were held responsible for the harmful impact (Seelman et al., 2012). Faculty can improve campus climate outside of the classroom by educating faculty and administrators and advocating alongside GNC/trans* students. Faculty can also support students when they face repercussions for advocacy. Each of these areas is discussed below, along with strategies for supporting students outside of the classroom.

GNC/trans* social work students in the United States and Canada were more likely to be out about their gender identity when they felt supported in their social work programme and when their peers seemed comfortable with this identity (Dentato et al., 2014). Ji et al. (2009) found that undergraduate students gained confidence, knowledge
and skills as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender (LGBT) allies through experiencing a heterosexual faculty member’s modelling of allyship, participating in experiential learning activities and receiving positive feedback as their knowledge and skills increased. This suggests that, as faculty work with cisgender students to understand their gender privilege and act against GNC/trans* bias, these students’ attitudes towards GNC/trans* peers and willingness to ally with them may improve (Ji et al., 2009).

In addition to shaping classroom climate, infusing GNC/trans* content into courses, and raising cisgender students’ awareness, faculty can support GNC/trans* students by partnering with them to create institutional change (Case et al., 2012). Cisgender faculty at a public university in Texas worked with a transgender student to create policy, change culture and build the campus community’s understanding of gender-conforming privilege (Case et al., 2012). The faculty supported the student’s leadership while educating, networking and lobbying in situations in which they exerted more influence or held greater institutional safety based on their position or social identity (Case et al., 2012). The faculty and students noted that this approach flattened out the hierarchy among members of the group, built trust and improved the team’s effectiveness (Case et al., 2012). The faculty often held invaluable institutional knowledge that allowed them to describe to the students the institutional structures intended to be responsive to their needs (Case et al., 2012).

Faculty should be aware of the potential for negative consequences due to their advocacy and take steps to mitigate this. Retaliation may appear in formal situations, such as promotion decisions, or informally, such as exclusion from networking. Strategies used by faculty to prevent or lessen negative repercussions include communicating carefully to avoid misunderstandings and working to regain inclusion with their faculty peers when this was lost due to advocacy efforts (Case et al., 2012). Tenured faculty (i.e. those who have been awarded permanent faculty status) can undertake the visible advocacy roles to lessen risk to untenured peers (i.e. those who have temporary or probationary faculty status). Administrators can use their greater institutional power to enforce policies against retaliation.

4 Advancing GNC/trans* students inclusion in social work internships

All social work students in American programmes of social work complete an intensive internship, where they apply social work values, knowledge and skills and are assessed for professional competency. These internships occur at social service agencies and community organisations that serve vulnerable and poor people. An internship instructor, who is generally employed with the agency, oversees the student’s day-to-day tasks. An internship faculty, who works in the social work educational programme, evaluates the student’s progress and works to ensure a quality professional experience for the student.

Internship, the ‘signature pedagogy’ (CSWE, 2008, p.8) for preparing students for competent social work practice, serves a pivotal role in the professional growth of social work students (Corcoran and Thomlison, 2008). Recognising the unique circumstances of GNC/trans* students in internship is a critical area for social work education and one that is largely unaddressed in the literature (Martin et al., 2009).
4.1 Inclusion in internship

Preparing internship faculty and internship instructors to support the learning needs of diverse student populations requires continuing education in targeted areas (Munson, 2009). However, many internship instructors do not have the training or experience needed to provide culturally responsive environments for GNC/trans* students (Messinger, 2013). This presents a unique stressor to the internship experience, especially when students feel alone in grappling with GNC/trans* identity issues. The absence of diversity training related to GNC/trans* students and clients may result in internship placements that are not inclusive, and will require efforts from the internship programme and schools of social work to develop appropriate internship sites for GNC/trans* students.

4.2 Building inclusive internship sites

GNC/trans* students are often called on to educate internship instructors about gender identity and expression, placing an uncharacteristic burden on trainees (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2011). Social work departments can play an important role in supporting both students and internship faculty by creating internship programmes that address this salient issue. Internship programmes that reflect understanding about GNC/trans* individuals and the psychosocial issues surrounding their lives aid in putting students at ease to identify and express their gender and seek out support. Explicit, positive recognition of GNC/trans* people’s lives helps to forge trusting relationships with internship faculty and successful internships (Newman et al., 2008). At the same time, internship faculty and internship instructors need to maintain and respect each GNC/trans* student’s wish regarding confidentiality about their gender identity.

Internship programmes must engage in proactive, targeted identification and programming to secure welcoming community sites for GNC/trans* students (Martin et al., 2009), including recruitment of agencies that work with GNC/trans* communities and issues (Messinger, 2013). Only half of surveyed Canadian and US MSW programme faculty could identify available internship placements that dealt with GNC/trans* populations or GNC/trans* oppression (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2011). Prior to placing GNC/trans* students in the community, it is important for internship faculty to assess prospective internship instructors’ comfort level, interest and competence in working with GNC/trans* students, employees and clients and to understand their commitment to create inclusive environments (e.g. gender-neutral bathrooms). Social work programmes might offer continuing education workshops for internship faculty and instructors to raise awareness of the unique challenges for GNC/trans* students, their supervisors and their colleagues in internship. Internship faculty and instructors can gain support and insight through establishing mentoring relationships with more experienced internship faculty or members of the GNC/trans* academic and practice community (Messinger, 2013).

Providing resources to GNC/trans* students supports their success in social work education. Internship programmes can create materials for GNC/trans* and LGB students preparing for community internships and include relevant articles about GNC/trans* populations in internship seminar syllabi (Dooley, 2007; Messinger, 2013). These initiatives would provide helpful information and underscore the programme’s commitment to inclusive environments. Compiling a comprehensive toolbox of GNC/trans* community resources for students will support personal and professional
4.3 Preparing GNC/trans* students for internship

The internship experience may be challenging and intimidating for GNC/trans* students, who often struggle with pressure to blend in ways that invalidate their gender expression or gender identity, decisions on whether to transition or disclose GNC/trans* identities, and management of others’ cisgender biases and assumptions (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2011). Providing internship environments and faculty that convey GNC/trans* commitment and competence will increase students’ comfort in disclosure. GNC/trans* students need to feel safe enough to turn to internship faculty as they consider possible responses to gender expression or transitioning on the job. Internship faculty can then strategise with students to best manage potential situations (Messinger, 2013). When trusting relationships are established with students, internship faculty are in a better position to support them in navigating these concerns.

Concerns regarding disclosure, non-conforming gender expression and transitioning are important aspects of internship decision-making (Messinger, 2013) and ideally are raised with internship faculty before the internship is accepted. Students may fear, due to widespread employment discrimination against GNC/trans* workers (Grant et al., 2011), that their gender expression or gender identity will affect how others at the internship agency perceive them or how their supervisors will evaluate their professional abilities (Dooley, 2007; Pepper and Lorah, 2008). Students may worry about not having day-to-day collegial support in internship because of the lack of understanding and stigma often attached to GNC/trans* identities (Messinger, 2013). Once appropriate sites have been identified based on practice interests and each agency’s stated openness to having GNC/trans* interns, students may want to meet with prospective internship instructors to explore their commitment to provide inclusive, supportive learning environments.

GNC/trans* students will be at different stages of embracing or expressing a GNC/trans* identity, making this an important area of student-internship faculty discussions (Messinger, 2013). Some GNC/trans* students are out and visible in their everyday lives, others are strategising how and when to orchestrate a transition, and still others are at the early stages of questioning and contemplating their gender identity or expression. For the latter two groups, actualising their visible emergence may bring fear as well as emotional relief. It is important that students do not push themselves prematurely in directions they are not ready to undertake (Dooley, 2007) and that they think through the pros and cons (Hunter and Hickerson, 2003). It is critical that students arrive at this decision themselves, consider the implications and develop a plan, including an empathic support system, to manage the stress that may come with publicly expressing or identifying their gender.
4.4 Supporting inclusion efforts: roles for the internship instructor as ally

Internship instructors’ contributions to students’ learning are central to the success of the internship experience (Bogo, 1993) and critically important for the professional socialisation of their GNC/trans* interns (Satterly and Dyson, 2008). GNC/trans* interns need to know that they can turn to internship instructors for validation and support and can trust that their internship instructor is at ease having conversations about transgender identity and gender non-conformity. Internship instructors who have minimal experience with GNC/trans* clients or students will need to seek out professional development and guidance from outside mentors (Messinger, 2013). Messinger’s (2007) research with heterosexual internship instructors and LGB students suggests that internship instructors who come into supervisory relationships with prior knowledge of GNC/trans* issues are more apt to provide helpful support to GNC/trans* students. Supportive supervision includes feeling comfortable enough to initiate conversations about gender expression and transition with GNC/trans* students who have disclosed their identities; otherwise, students may think the topic is off-limits (Newman et al., 2008). It is the student’s decision whether to disclose their gender identity to internship instructors or clients.

To promote an inclusive environment at the internship site, internship instructors and other agency personnel can provide professional development conversations and trainings about social work practice with GNC/trans* persons (Messinger, 2013). This normalises GNC/trans* lives, creating space for students to feel comfortable disclosing their identities to their supervisors without fear of recrimination (Newman et al., 2008). In this way, when GNC/trans* social work interns discuss their gender identity or expression in supervision meetings or with colleagues, it will not feel controversial.

5 Championing inclusion for GNC/trans* faculty and staff

The next level of the review focuses on faculty and staff. GNC/trans* faculty and staff are negatively impacted by bias on campus. A national survey of more than 5,000 lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer (LGBTQ) college or university faculty, staff, students and administrators found that GNC/trans* faculty and staff, particularly transmen (FTM), were less likely than cisgender participants to feel comfortable with the climate in their work area, classroom and on the overall campus (Rankin et al., 2010). The campus experience of GNC/trans* faculty, staff and students in Colorado was influenced by whether their departments were inclusive of GNC/trans* identities, recognised their name, pronouns and non-binary gender identity and responded positively to their gender expression or physical transition (Seelman et al., 2012). Cisgender faculty and staff can support their GNC/trans* peers by allying with them in the department, across campus and at professional conferences. This includes correcting the use of the wrong name or pronouns and interrupting biased language and actions.

Cisgender faculty and staff can help enforce policies that protect GNC/trans* faculty and staff from discrimination in hiring, promotion and their daily work environment. Seelman et al. (2012) found that GNC/trans* faculty, staff and students endured discrimination despite inclusive non-discrimination policies and had negative experiences as they sought new identification cards, gender marker changes and other transition-related changes to records.
Cisgender faculty and staff can educate their colleagues and develop their allyship. Faculty at 15 US colleges and universities began working for policies to improve the campus climate for LGBT people due to their professional role, awareness of bias towards LGBT people, commitment to social justice or self-interest in the outcome (Messinger, 2011). Faculty and staff at a south-eastern US university who spoke out against GNC/trans* bias viewed it as their professional responsibility (Ryan et al., 2013). The National Association of Social Workers (2008) calls on its members to work against discrimination based on gender identity and expression and this call can be used to spur action by cisgender faculty and staff.

Cisgender faculty and staff can provide or advocate for training that teaches their peers to interrupt group bias, work for structural change and assist individuals. Ryan et al. (2013) found that faculty and staff became involved in LGBQ initiatives on their campus through seeking professional training. Campus LGBT Ally Training Programmes prepare staff and faculty to recognise their bias and to understand the dynamics of GNC/trans*-based oppression (Woodford et al., 2014). These programmes sometimes teach participants how to support individuals and provide referrals, but few teach faculty and staff how to seek institutional-level change or how to interrupt oppression in group settings (Woodford et al., 2014).

Advocacy with and on behalf of GNC/trans* colleagues carries some risk, including network exclusion, intimidation and harassment (Messinger, 2011). It is common for faculty to wait until they have achieved permanent status, achieved in the United States through tenure, before undertaking advocacy work. Tenure provides protection from actual or anticipated consequences of speaking out, and there is a strong cultural norm for untenured faculty to postpone their advocacy due to the potential negative impact on achieving permanent faculty status (Messinger, 2011). To manage these risks, faculty involved in initiatives for improving LGBT campus climate found they primarily used collaborative tactics, such as task force work, research and networking, rather than confrontational ones (Messinger, 2011). These strategies aid the individual by framing the problem and response at the institutional level, without the faculty member being individually exposed for GNC/trans* advocacy. In addition, cisgender faculty and staff with more job security and greater institutional power, such as tenured faculty, can support GNC/trans* colleagues and protect less well-positioned cisgender allies by leading public advocacy efforts (e.g. initiating communication with key campus leaders or chairing key university committees focused on inclusion). Finally, tenured faculty can work to limit negative repercussions for those who advocate for GNC/trans* inclusion and non-discrimination on campus by advocating for university-wide non-discrimination policies that include gender identity and expression (Messinger, 2011) and enforcement of those policies.

6 Fostering inclusion of GNC/trans* students, faculty and staff by academy administrators

The final level of this review focuses on the efforts of academy administrators in fostering inclusion for GNC/trans* students, faculty and staff. Administrators are influential in leading efforts to create and enforce institutional policy and culture. Social work programme administrators interface with GNC/trans* students, faculty and staff and must be aware of common challenges that each faces in the academy (Beemyn, 2003).
Social work programme administrators are mandated to work against discrimination and for social justice based on gender identity and gender expression (CSWE, 2008, 2015), and thus are natural allies. Marshall (2004) argues that academy administrators should adopt a prosocial stance in working for cultural diversity, equity and democracy. Hurtado et al. (1998) also posit that active promotion of equity is essential for maintaining a climate in which students who carry non-dominant identities can thrive.

Administrators should ensure or advocate for expanding their institution’s affirmative action policies and practices to include gender identity and gender expression. Each social work programme can adopt a non-discrimination statement that explicitly covers gender identity and expression and a policy that all people will be addressed by their self-identified name and pronoun (Messinger, 2011). Another strategy for improving campus climate is through compulsory in-service training for faculty and staff on barriers faced by GNC/trans* persons in higher education. By grounding the training in the NASW Code of Ethics (2008), administrators can focus on the values of social justice and respect for the inherent dignity and worth of the person. It is recommended to highlight examples and prevalence of verbal or physical harassment and discrimination, examples of inclusive written and oral communication and a discussion of appropriate pronoun usage (Beemyn, 2003; Markman, 2011). Evans (2002) suggests providing time and resource support for employees to attend trainings designed to maintain environments supportive of LGBTQ individuals. Encouraging posting of signs of support in the department is a welcoming approach and provides an important visual reminder to the department and its visitors of the value of inclusion (Evans, 2002).

Administrators should ensure that GNC/trans* students, faculty and staff have access to bathrooms that match their gender identity and/or gender expression (Beemyn et al., 2005). This is accomplished by enforcing people’s right to use the gender-specific bathrooms that most closely align with their gender identity and creating one or more gender-neutral bathrooms located in or near the department and classroom spaces. Gender-neutral restrooms also indicate that GNC/trans* inclusion is important to the department. Another strategy is to create a campus map locating gender-neutral bathrooms. This map can be shared with faculty, staff and students and with the University administration as a conversation starter, if the map indicates that GNC/trans* students and employees are disadvantaged by the infrequency or locations of these facilities (Beemyn et al., 2005).

6.1 Inclusion efforts with students

Student preparation and development are important roles for the social work educational programme administrator. In-service training content on diversity, respect and social justice can be delivered during new student orientation that helps students understand that the social work programme is committed to respecting the inherent dignity and worth of GNC/trans* persons (Markman, 2011).

Beemyn (2008) indicates that GNC/trans* students face multiple forms of discrimination in the academy, including lack of health care access; biased medical care; discrimination in residence halls, bathrooms and locker rooms; obstacles to changing records and documents; and limitations in student programming, training and support. Social work programme administrators are positioned to address problems with medical care, housing, bathrooms and locker rooms, while modelling respect for and celebration of diversity. Title VII of the federal Civil Rights Act is interpreted by the US Department
of Education to protect GNC/trans* students from discrimination (U.S. Department of Education, 2015), which provides a legal mandate for administrative action. McPhail (2004) advises administrators to review programme websites and admission documents to identify and correct gender bias and to promote student programming that is inclusive of GNC/trans* individuals. Administrators may also explore their campus diversity offices for resources and potential campus collaborations. This bolsters the notion that the University, not just the individual department, supports GNC/trans* students (Beemyn, 2003).

6.2 Interfacing with staff and faculty

Grant et al. (2011) report that up to 90% of GNC/trans* persons have been harassed on the job. It is important for administrators to know federal, state and city employment protection laws that prohibit discrimination against GNC/trans* individuals (Broadus, 2006) and to become familiar with the non-discrimination protection provision in Title IX of the federal Civil Rights Act (U.S. EEOC, n.d.). Likewise, it is important to know university policies that affect GNC/trans* individuals. Administrators should understand and enforce non-discrimination policies that protect GNC/trans* persons and advocate to create such protections, if they are absent (Beemyn et al., 2005).

The administrator can ensure that job-related recruitment and application materials reflect inclusivity (Dietert and Dentice, 2009). Advocating for insurance plans that cover transition-related healthcare is critical. Relatedly, the administration should review and update programme infrastructure to be certain that policy, education and support are in place for employees who transition their gender in the workplace. The United States Office of Personal Management (n.d.) recommends additional workplace supports for GNC/trans* persons, including ensuring that privacy and confidentiality protocols meet the standards of the federal Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552a) and upholding dress and appearance policies that allow GNC/trans* people to maintain a consistent gender expression. An additional suggestion to maintain compliance with the Privacy Act is to ensure that employee records (e.g. pay reviews, training records, benefit documents) are consistent with the individual’s gender identity.

7 Summary

In summary, GNC/trans* faculty, staff and students continue to experience discrimination in US social work education settings, contrary to CSWE accreditation standards and the NASW Code of Ethics. Social work faculty and administrators have essential roles to play alongside GNC/trans* students, faculty and staff in creating inclusive, non-oppressive work and educational environments. This allyship happens through advocacy for individuals experiencing discrimination and for policies and procedures that protect and welcome GNC/trans* people in the classroom, on campus and in internship placements. Advocacy begins with careful planning alongside GNC/trans* students and educators to identify needed changes and identify how to work for these changes while minimising negative consequences to those who are the most vulnerable. Allied social work faculty, staff and administrators set the foundation for effective advocacy and social change by educating cisgender students, internship faculty and instructors, and social work staff and faculty about gender identity and expression, oppression faced by
GNC/trans* people, and ways to create welcoming, inclusive school and work environments through advocacy and policy change.

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