

gender-neutral housing
PETITION AND STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT

Presented by Everyone Allied Against Homophobia

to

Dean Michele Moody-Adams
Dean Feniosky Peña-Mora
Dean Kevin Shollenberger

May 3, 2010

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Everyone Allied Against Homophobia
552 West 114th Street, MC 5755
New York, NY 10025

May 3, 2010

Dean Michele Moody-Adams
Dean Feniosky Peña-Mora
Dean Kevin Shollenberger
Columbia University
New York, NY 10027

To Deans Moody-Adams, Peña-Mora, and Shollenberger:

The Core Curriculum remains our university's greatest tradition and most enduring legacy; for hundreds of years, students from around the world have gathered together to explore the Western canon, and for hundreds of years any two Columbia students of any generation have instantly been able to find common ground. Dependability can be very comforting, and it is humbling to know that, no matter the state of political stability or the amount of social strife in the world, Columbia has remained as steadfast as Alma Mater herself.

Of course, other times it feels like we are just stuck in the mud.

This year, a broad collection of students coalesced with the simple goal of making Columbia housing safer and more comfortable for all students, especially those students whose identities are regularly invalidated by housing regulations based on outdated, normative understandings of gender and sexuality. The events that brought gender-neutral housing from that initial idea phase to where it stands now need not be rehashed, nor do the many justifications for such a policy need to be restated. What was true then remains true now after two semesters of equivocation and deferred promises.

We understand the value of measured change; we recognize that our four years here as students are hardly enough to witness the long-term growth that administrators look for when considering policy proposals. And yet, urgency has its place as well. Addressing structural inequalities to ensure that all students feel safe in their living situations is a matter of urgency, and we expect our university to consider the welfare of the real students who suffer when bureaucratic friction slows down necessary change.

It is too late to correct the mistakes and missteps of the past year, and it is unproductive to harp on the frustrations we felt when we were informed that the policy would be delayed. And yet, despite the creation of Open Housing Task Force that will soon begin meeting to continue to work on this issue, there remains a resistance from the administration to speak bluntly about gender-neutral housing. Public statements continue to refer to a "possible" pilot program that will be "considered" in the future. EAAH was honored to win the King's Crown Impact Award, along with CCSC, CQA, and GendeRevolution, in recognition of our work to advance this

policy. Of course, the irony was palpable when neither the award nor the introduction of it ever used the words “gender-neutral housing.”

Support for gender-neutral housing has united our student body in ways that are rarely achieved by student policy initiatives. Attached to this letter is a petition signed by nearly 1,000 Columbia University undergraduates, ten percent of whom took the time to write personal messages expressing their frustration about the delay in implementing this policy. Also attached are statements of support representing twenty different student organizations; these diverse student groups, many of which have organizational goals that do not directly relate to this issue, have spoken up in a spirit of allyship. They believe, as we do, that talking about this issue has gotten stale. It is time to pull our feet out of the mud and take a step forward.

Our disappointment over the lack of progress this year is deeply felt, and yet we must acknowledge that, at many other universities, we would not have gotten this far. We remain grateful that Columbia administrators are willing to meet with students and listen to their ideas; and it is no small feat that every administrator we met with supported the basic ideas underlying gender-neutral housing. We have full faith that the Open Housing Task Force, which includes students and administrators, will complete the work necessary to implement gender-neutral housing for next year’s room selection process. We expect that the Task Force, and the administrators who are charged with overseeing its progress, will be transparent and forthcoming, and will approach this issue with the sense of urgency it deserves.

We will be there every step of the way to make sure students are doing their part to move this policy forward. Please do not let us down again.

Sincerely,

Everyone Allied Against Homophobia

Enclosed:

Gender-Neutral Housing Petition Form

Gender-Neutral Housing Petition Responses

Gender-Neutral Housing Petition Comments

Gender-Neutral Housing Group Statements of Support



I SUPPORT GENDER-NEUTRAL HOUSING AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

In December 2009, a coalition of student groups including the Columbia College Student Council, Columbia Queer Alliance, Engineering Student Council, Everyone Allied Against Homophobia, and GendeRevolution submitted a proposal for gender-neutral housing to Columbia University administrators. The proposal would allow any two students, regardless of sex or gender, to live in a double occupancy room in any Columbia residence hall. The policy would only apply to rising sophomores, juniors, and seniors who chose to room together (blind doubles would still be single-sex). The policy seeks to create more options in the room selection process so that ALL students are able to find a compatible roommate, and would ease tensions felt by gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer students who struggle to find safe and comfortable living spaces under the current housing requirements. Columbia's administration has decided to delay the implementation of this policy, and is no longer considering a pilot program for the 2010-2011 school year. Make your voice heard by signing your name below: TELL COLUMBIA ADMINISTRATORS THAT YOU SUPPORT GENDER-NEUTRAL HOUSING.

* Required

Name *

School Affiliation *

- Barnard College
- Columbia College
- Jewish Theological Seminary
- School of Engineering and Applied Science
- School of General Studies

Year *

- 2010
- 2011
- 2012
- 2013
- Other:

UNI *

Feel free to add any comments for Columbia University administrators
Please be respectful and keep your comments to the topic of gender-neutral housing

Would you like to receive updates about the status of gender-neutral housing at Columbia?

Yes

Submit

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gender-neutral housing

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

Q

The members of Q feel that Gender Neutral housing is imperative in order to make campus housing safe and welcoming for ALL students. Queer students are particularly affected by housing regulations because finding a supportive and queer-friendly roommate is often very difficult. Gender Neutral housing opens up the option for all students to pick a roommate based on compatibility, safety, and comfort without worrying about biological sex. This issue does not uniquely affect queer students—once Columbia students are done their first year, they should be trusted to make their own housing decisions, no matter who they decide they feel comfortable living with.

gender-neutral housing
STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

**SENIOR CLASS COUNCIL-ELECT
COLUMBIA COLLEGE CLASS OF 2011**

The newly-elected senior class council for Columbia College class of 2011 enthusiastically supports the gender-neutral housing proposal as passed by the Columbia College and Engineering Student Councils in December of 2009. We strongly believe that this policy should be implemented for the 2011-2012 academic year in order to ensure that all students are living in the most comfortable living situations possible. Furthermore, as one of the world's leading academic institutions, Columbia University must embrace all types of gender and sexual identities, and this policy will help demonstrate such. We look forward to working with Columbia University administration, staff, student groups, and students in order to ensure that gender-neutral housing becomes part of housing policy as soon as possible.

gender-neutral housing

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

COLUMBIA QUEER ALLIANCE

In 1967, Columbia University demonstrated its leadership as an institution appreciative of sexual diversity when it formally recognized the Student Homophile League, the nation's first gay and lesbian student group. Now the Columbia Queer Alliance, this organization urges Columbia University to once again demonstrate its dedication to embracing all kinds of sexual and gender identities by adopting the gender-neutral housing proposal as passed by the Columbia College and Engineering Student Councils in December 2009. This proposal recognizes that some students do not have a gender identity that mirrors their biological sex, and that these students should not be forced to conform to heteronormative conceptions of gender. By taking gender out of the housing process, this policy will demonstrate a more welcoming tone for students of all gender identities and allow students to live with whomever they feel most comfortable. The Columbia Queer Alliance strongly believes that the University should embrace these ideals and implement the gender-neutral housing policy as soon as possible.

gender-neutral housing

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

COLUMBIA MENTORING INITIATIVE

To whom it may concern,

I am writing on behalf of the LGBTQ family of the Columbia Mentoring Initiative (CMI), a student organization dedicated to building an on-campus community of guidance and support. Through CMI, alumni mentor current Columbia students, while upperclassmen are given the opportunity to introduce first-year students to campus life. Students interact with each other in casual settings, which create safe spaces for differing opinions, gender identities, and sexual orientations. Different aspects of life at Columbia and in New York City are explored and, more than anything, questions, concerns, and points of insecurity are encouraged and discussed. Having spent the last year as a unit facilitator of the CMI LGBTQ family, I strongly believe that the availability of gender-neutral housing would send a positive message about our university's promotion of diverse identities and ways of living to all students, especially new students who may otherwise feel unsupported and estranged.

Thank you for your time and I hope you understand the urgency of this important policy change.

With kind regards,

Stephanie Zhang
CMI LGBTQ Family Unit Facilitator

gender-neutral housing

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

BLACK STUDENTS ORGANIZATION

The Executive Board of the Black Students Organization encourages a Gender Neutral Housing Policy at Columbia University. As a group that was founded to support a minority interest, it is embedded in our organization's structure to acknowledge and defend those policies that may not be sustained by mainstream school of thought. Gender Neutral Housing affords students who were previously ignored in housing discourse to have the option to live comfortably while obtaining an education. Whether Gender Neutral Housing is approached as an equality issue, or simply an extra option in choosing where and how to live, providing a wider spectrum that caters to student's necessities can only prove beneficial in the long run. The change in housing policy is a step towards challenging the established systems that may have become outdated to a point of detriment to the students. In summary, we support a progressive housing option that will enhance the student experience at Columbia, and we find that in Gender Neutral Housing.

gender-neutral housing

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

AFRICA-DIASPORA LITERARY SOCIETY

We, the Africa-Diaspora Literary Society at Columbia University, fully support gender-neutral housing and commend the proposal's co-authors, activists, and task force on their hard work and the progress that they have made thus far towards implementing this policy at the University. As students, we clearly see and understand the principle behind gender-neutral housing: Giving us the opportunity to live with whomever we want regardless of gender, enabling all students to be comfortable in their living spaces. Amidst the daily stress of classes, activities, and other responsibilities, a living space in which we feel comfortable is one of our fundamental needs as students. Though gender-neutral housing benefits all students, LGBTQ students often fall into the category of those who are more comfortable with opposite-sex roommates. As an organization that celebrates intellectual thought and identities outside of Columbia's academic hegemony, ADLS also supports gender-neutral housing for its accommodation of students from lesser represented identities.

Currently, about 30 universities in the nation allow students of opposite sexes to room together. Columbia, which prides itself on a liberal and progressive culture that attracts so many students applying to the University, should surely be one of the leaders of gender-neutral housing. We hope that our administration ensures that this policy comes into full force next academic year and support the continued work of the policy's student task force towards this end.

Sincerely,

The Executive Board of the Africa-Diaspora Literary Society, Columbia University

gender-neutral housing

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

ROOSEVELT INSTITUTE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY CHAPTER

The Columbia University chapter of the Roosevelt Institute supports the immediate implementation of gender-neutral housing on this campus. The Fair Housing Act, part of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, “prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of dwellings, and in other housing-related transactions, based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status.” Columbia treats its dorm rooms as rentals; it should therefore abide by the stipulations of the act and allow individuals to determine their roommate, regardless of gender. This is a university that prides itself on its tolerance and history of progressivism, most notably the student activism of the 1960s that helped push through the Civil Rights Act to begin with. Columbia should take a path of immediate action rather than the slow process of bureaucratic negotiations. Given the successful precedent set by peer institutions, it is clear that a gender-neutral housing policy can be effective and beneficial to the Columbia campus community.

gender-neutral housing STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

PHILOLEXIAN SOCIETY OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



WHEREAS it is well-known that not every member of Columbia University recognizes or exemplifies the binary distinction between male/masculine and female/feminine,

WHEREAS even a passing acquaintance with literature, history, and philosophy will show that gender is an arbitrary basis on which to make social distinctions,

WHEREAS it is perfectly obvious that people of different genders and/or sexes are capable of cultivating a friendship without immediately making a beeline for the nearest private room,

WHEREAS persons romantically inclined toward their own sex and/or gender have been living with members of their own sex and/or gender for many years now with no exceptional incidence of poor sexual conduct,

and WHEREAS all members of the University are adults and must be considered free to make their own decisions and face the consequences thereof,

the general membership of the Philolexian Society of Columbia University hereby calls for the immediate implementation of a housing policy whereby undergraduate members of the University will be allowed to choose with whom they are to live, regardless of either the sex or gender of the parties involved, in testimony of which the Moderator, the Censor, and the Nomenclaturist General have affixed their signatures and the seal of the Society on this sixteenth day of April in the Year of Our Lord two thousand and ten, of the Philolexian Society the two hundred and ninth.

Samantha Kuperberg
Moderator

Jane Friedhoff
Censor

Daniel Walden
Nomenclaturist General

gender-neutral housing

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

GAYAVA

Gayava strongly supports the timely implementation of gender-neutral housing. As people who have experienced the challenges of navigating intersecting identities and communities we recognize the critical importance of having access to a living space that feels safe, comfortable, and affirming regardless of a student's religion, sex, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity. To this end we feel it is imperative to the well being of our community and the campus community at large to implement gender-neutral housing as quickly as possible. Each year that goes by without gender-neutral housing is a year in which hundreds of students are forced into living arrangements they may feel uncomfortable with. Gayava believes all students deserve the right to choose their living situation and knows that many students do not feel comfortable living with students of the same gender. We are grateful for the initiative the student councils and administration have already taken on this issue and urge its full implementation as soon as possible.

gender-neutral housing

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

JUST PEACE

Just Peace supports the timely implementation of gender-neutral housing. As a group, we feel that people should have the right to live where they feel safe and comfortable. It is important that students have the freedom to live with a roommate with whom they feel at ease, regardless of religion, sex, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity. One goal of our group is to give voice to students whose viewpoints are sometimes marginalized on campus, and the current situation in which students are forced into living arrangements they feel uncomfortable with is no different. These students should have the same right as others to choose the living situation they prefer. We are grateful for the initiative the student councils and administration have taken on this issue, and we urge its full implementation as soon as possible.

gender-neutral housing

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DEMOCRATS

The Columbia University College Democrats strongly support the speedy implementation of gender-neutral housing at Columbia University. Our organization, and this institution, places enormous value on diversity and equality; everyone benefits from a policy that will allow members of our community to live, work, and learn in a more inclusive environment. The many reasons to adopt such a policy--to ensure that all students are able to find safe and comfortable living spaces, to move our collective understanding of gender identity beyond the antiquated binary system, and to show faith in our students to make adult choices when selecting a roommate--have been rehearsed endlessly by students, student organizations, and campus media. It is time to move past the justification stage of this policy and get serious about taking the steps necessary to implement it. We call on Columbia administrators to begin the work of enacting this policy with a strong sense of urgency that is appropriate for fixing a structural inequality that has forced many students into unsafe living situations. We expect that implementation will be transparent, will include many student voices, and will not get caught in the bureaucratic black-hole that has stalled progress thus far. The Columbia University College Democrats stand with the myriad other student groups on campus in calling for this important policy to be implemented as soon as possible.

gender-neutral housing

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

COLUMBIA COLLEGE STUDENT COUNCIL ENGINEERING STUDENT COUNCIL

WHEREAS currently undergraduate students can only live in a double occupancy room with someone of the same sex,

WHEREAS some students feel uncomfortable living with someone of the same sex,

WHEREAS the Office of Housing and Dining cannot guarantee that the aforementioned students will always be placed in single occupancy rooms,

WHEREAS it is both inconvenient and expensive to live off-campus if a student is uncomfortable in a same sex double occupancy room,

WHEREAS double occupancy rooms on campus are less expensive than single occupancy rooms,

WHEREAS independent of sexuality or gender identity and expression, there are students who would prefer to live with someone of a different sex,

WHEREAS many of Columbia University's peer institutions already provide a gender-neutral housing option for their students who live in double occupancy rooms,

WHEREAS designating certain residence halls or sections of residence halls as gender-neutral would segregate sections of Columbia's diverse community and give certain students either an advantage or disadvantage in the housing lottery,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Office of Housing and Dining remove the requirement that double occupancy rooms be single-sex, thus allowing any two students to pick into a double occupancy room during room selection.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this policy only applies to rising sophomore, junior, and senior undergraduate students going through the room selection process together, ensuring that gender-neutral housing occurs only through an opt-in basis and with mutual consent from both students involved.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the undersigned commit to assisting the Office of Housing and Dining to make the transition to gender-neutral housing as smooth as possible and to aiding in conducting the education and outreach that will be necessary to inform students of the new policy, in addition to offering assistance in implementing any updates to the housing application and/or process.

Signed,

Kelly Chen, Vice President of Policy of Engineering Student Council

Sarah Weiss, Vice President of Policy of Columbia College Student Council

Avi Edelman, President of Everyone Allied Against Homophobia and Vice President of Columbia University College Democrats

Miranda Elliot, President of GendeRevolution

Sean Manning Udell, Vice-President of Columbia College Class of 2011 and Treasurer of the Columbia Queer Alliance

gender-neutral housing

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

GENDEREVOLUTION

To whom it may concern:

GendeRevolution wishes to express its deep and abiding support for the gender-neutral housing initiative. Having been co-authors of the proposal that was passed unanimously by the undergraduate student councils, we were greatly discouraged to learn earlier this year that, despite repeated assurances as to the likelihood of the program's implementation, the administration nonetheless would not accommodate the needs and wishes of the Columbia student body. Firstly, we fail to see why consenting adults may not choose to live together, and think this alone sufficient reason to pass the policy. More importantly, however, gender-blind housing not only provides a privilege, which is, in any case, reasonable to grant, but actually addresses a fundamental and important need. We all need to feel safe and comfortable in our houses and rooms. Not to be able to room with any but those designated with the same legal sex stifles the fulfillment of that need: gender-aware housing cannot accommodate those students who find living with a same-sex roommate a violation of safety and privacy, cannot accommodate students whose gender identity is at odds with legal, assigned sex. The current system is especially problematic because it disproportionately affects students in the queer community, and does most harm to transgender students in refusing to acknowledge that one's legal sex can be utterly divorced from one's actual gender. It is simply the reality of things that students at Columbia overwhelmingly live in campus housing, and that, for all students save those in their final year, sharing a room remains a strong likelihood; the gender-discriminatory housing system is therefore something with which nearly all students have to contend, and affects many in deeply negative ways. In particular, to transgender and gender nonconforming students, or any who are questioning their gender identity, the current system is a symbolic declaration that the university does not accept their gender variance, and thus cannot accept them on a very basic level of their identity.

None of this addresses the egregious timing of the decision not to implement gender-neutral housing. Coming as the decision did within a few short weeks of housing registration, it disrupted many students' plans for housing for the 2010-11 school year, and left students scrambling to find new, same-sex roommates. It placed into deeply uncomfortable positions students who thought they would be free from such situations. It did a disservice to all those who had worked very closely with the administration to ensure that gender-neutral housing would be a reality in the coming year.

It is thus that GendeRevolution expresses its eagerness for swift administrative action, assuring all those in charge of this most important decision that the passage of the policy will insure safer living to many Columbia students, while failure to pass will perpetuate the deep problems that these students now face. It is not a trifle; it is urgent.

Sincerely,

The GendeRevolution Executive Board

gender-neutral housing

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LIBERTARIANS

To Whom It May Concern,

As you may know, a policy regarding gender-neutral housing was presented last year as an alternative to single sex housing. The main goal of the policy was to create an alternative for homosexual students who may not necessarily feel comfortable living with another person of the same sex. This policy should ease tensions felt by the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer communities when it comes to being in a safe and comfortable environment. This policy seemed like it was going to pass, but a final decision was postponed to next year. As a student group in Columbia University, the Columbia University Libertarians would like to express our support for this important policy.

The reasons the Columbia University Libertarians support this policy differ somewhat from other student groups. One of the major reasons we support this policy is because it upholds the value of individual choice, by being able to choose who we want to live with, regardless of sex or sexual orientation. Being able to choose what we want to do is one of the fundamental beliefs of libertarianism, since it promotes the independence and freedom of the individual. We also believe that the safety of our LBGTQ community is also extremely important, and that everything be done to ensure their safety, as well as the safety of those students who may be homophobic. As economic conservatives, we believe that if there is a demand for something, it should be satiated. Remember, we as students are your consumers, and we are willing to pay a price to attend this university, as are the potential students who may want to attend Columbia University. But if this policy doesn't go through, and there are potential students who are concerned for their safety and comfort as part of the LBGTQ community, the University may lose out on potential consumers and even possibly promising students.

As social liberals, we believe that being able to freely choose who will live with is extremely important in our lives. Even as fiscal and economic conservatives, we believe that there is a demand for gender-neutral housing, and that this demand needs to be satiated. We hope that you pass this policy because of the huge amount of support there is for gender-neutral housing.

The Columbia University Libertarians

gender-neutral housing

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

Q HOUSE

To Whom It May Concern:

The residents of Q House, Columbia University's LGBTQ Special Interest Community, stand in solidarity with the efforts of Everyone Allied Against Homophobia and our peers to ensure that gender-neutral housing becomes a reality. Q House is a residential community dedicated to providing a safe living and community space for LGBTQA students on campus. Gender-neutral housing would allow students outside of Q House to create their own safe spaces without the fear of being marginalized. The members of Q House stand behind any initiative that works toward allowing students to pick whom they want to live with regardless of gender and/or sexual identity.

Sincerely,

Q House

gender-neutral housing

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

LUCHA

Too often, biological sex is conflated with gender identity, an egregious error. It is vital that the Columbia administration does not make this mistake in refusing to implement gender-neutral housing. To do so would represent a disregard for the fluidity of gender self-identification, and would be disrespectful to those who do not feel comfortable living in an environment that forces the choice of a male or female gender identity upon its students. The living space should not be an area of stress and isolation for students. To combat this, and to contribute to a sense of recognition of the diverse identities in existence within the Columbia community, gender-neutral housing merits the support of the university at all levels. Lucha stands with groups across campus in calling for gender-neutral housing as a necessary element of campus life.

gender-neutral housing

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

CHICANO CAUCUS

Chicano Caucus, dedicated to providing a voice for Mexican American students at Columbia University, stands in solidarity with Everyone Allied Against Homophobia, our LGBT members, and other organizations in support of gender-neutral housing. Students should be able to choose whom they live with regardless of sex or gender.

As members of a historically underrepresented minority, we understand how gender-neutral housing will be both beneficial and progressive for queer students and all members of the undergraduate community. The implementation of open housing will provide safe spaces for students who feel more comfortable living with the opposite sex. Additionally, Chicano Caucus pledges to do what it can to champion the equal rights of all students who make up our diverse community.

It is for this reason that Chicano Caucus supports gender-neutral housing.

Sincerely,
Chicano Caucus

gender-neutral housing

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT

We assert that all students deserve to feel safe in their living spaces. Unfortunately, approximately 60% of transgendered individuals are survivors of some form of harassment or violence. It is with this statistic in mind that we at Take Back the Night speak up and join the fight for gender-neutral housing on campus. Because we know that queer, trans, and/or gender-nonconforming individuals are disproportionately victims and survivors of violence, it is important that we discuss the ways in which harassment is grounded in sexist, homophobic, and/or transphobic ideology. Consequently, it is equally important that we take these students' demands for safe housing options seriously. We strongly encourage the university administration to implement the gender-neutral housing policy in order to continue to struggle against violence on campus and to make Columbia University a welcoming safe space for all students.

gender-neutral housing

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

BARNARD-COLUMBIA INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST ORGANIZATION

To whom it may concern:

As members of the Barnard-Columbia International Socialist Organization, we'd like to express our support for the immediate implementation of a gender-neutral housing policy at Columbia.

The university's current guidelines rest on the mistaken belief that what is "normal" is for two people of the same gender to reside together. Whether the administration would like to admit it or not, this is based on the obviously false idea that all students at the university are heterosexual – and therefore opposite gender students should be prevented from cohabiting a room. The assumption is that women should live with women, and men should live with men, because mixing genders would naturally result in inappropriate sexual lasciviousness!

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) students are rendered invisible by this policy. Some LGBTI students may feel more comfortable rooming with a fellow student who is not of the same gender, and they should have that option. In fact, many students at Columbia, regardless of their sexuality, may feel more comfortable with a roommate of a different gender.

In addition, gender and biological sex are hardly clear-cut, fixed designations in the lives of many students. This is especially true for transgender and intersex students, some of whom may be in the process of transitioning between identities. No student should be forced to adopt a particular gender identity simply to live with whom they like, in order to conform to an antiquated university housing policy.

And what if roommates -- of whatever gender -- engage in a sexual relationship? That is their personal decision, not a choice that should be policed by the university.

The university provides resources to LGBTI students through the Office of Multicultural Affairs, we have numerous LGBTI student groups, and in many of our classes we talk about the lives, history, and struggles of LGBTI people. So, why has the university failed to reform its housing policy to meet the needs of its own LGBTI students?

The inconsistency is glaring.

If two students of different genders prefer to share a double-occupancy room with each other, they should be allowed to do so.

We are fully capable of making healthy decisions about what that is best for us. The University needs to trust its students, not police them.

Barnard-Columbia International Socialist Organization

gender-neutral housing

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

COLUMBIA COLLEGE STUDENT COUNCIL 2010-2011 EXECUTIVE BOARD

The incoming executive board for the Columbia College Student Council (CCSC) 2010-2011 supports the implementation of open housing (i.e. gender-neutral housing) for next year. The e-board believes that students should be able to choose whom they live with regardless of sex or gender. After working extensively on this issue with several administrators over the past year, the e-board hopes to work with the gender-neutral housing work-group to resolve the remaining obstacles presented by the administration, including the language in housing contracts. Although the membership of this work-group extends far beyond the CCSC body, we plan to use the student council to advocate for the implementation of this policy. Our election indicates the support of the student body for this proposal, and we will continue to engage students and solicit feedback regarding open housing.

We expect transparent communication with the administration, and wish to set reasonable expectations regarding the timeline of this proposal, so that all bases are covered as we prepare to implement open housing without further delay.

Additionally, the incoming executive board will help to make Columbia University a safe space for all members of all communities, including the LGBTQA community, and plans to assemble and distribute information regarding gender-neutral bathrooms on campus, along with the aid of concerned students and student groups.

Sincerely,
Learned Foote [President]
Andrea Folds [VP Campus Life]
Andrew Nguyen [VP Policy]
Brandon Christophe [VP Funding]
Karishma Habbu [VP Communications]