**Lambda Alliance**

**Report on Gender Neutrality for On-Campus Living**

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Introduction

The University of Pennsylvania has a policy of advocating for gender neutrality. We offer gender neutral housing as an option to upperclassman.[[1]](#footnote-1) The University continues to promote the policy through official bureaucracy (polls, forms, etc.) However, students still face challenges in accessing gender neutral bathrooms in on-campus residence halls. As well, the requirements and process of applying for gender neutral housing are outdated and extremely complicated. Expanding the practices of gender neutrality for on-campus living will benefit all students as we become a more just society. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) students in particular face challenges in both . Many have and can continue to face harassment or awkwardness for being forced into heteronormative and gender binding situations. Gender neutrality in on-campus life is essential to the positive development of the students at Penn.

Gender Neutral Housing

According to the National Student Genderblind Campaign (NSGC), over 50 colleges and universities have gender neutral housing policies as of 2010. Under the current policy, all on-campus living situations are assigned with members of the same sex. Only through filling a long, detailed, and invasive form, can upper-class students choose a member/s of the opposite sex to live with each other.

This policy discriminates against underclassman who are not empowered to make their own adult choices. Nothing can guarantee – whatever the roommates sexual orientation- that there would be no sexual relationship. Socially, it can facilitate living situations which can define a terrible first year experience for LGBT students who do not conform to the other rooomate/s heteronormative ideals. In order for the upper-classmen policy to kick-in, students are forced to “out” themselves which is an invasion of privacy, and should not be a bearing on who wants to live with who.

Our university has officially embraced the evolution of gender relations. Through policy, we must look to update our practices

Students at the University of Pennsylvania are adults who should be allowed to freely choose who they would like to live with, regardless of gender. We are calling on Housing and Business Services to reform their policies to make Gender Neutral housing a more fair and accessible living option.

Our recommendation for reforms include:

1. An easier application for Gender Neutral Housing
2. Consideration of a Gender Neutral housing pool (opting for the living arrangement without knowing a roommate)
3. Making all bathrooms in on-campus residences Gender-Neutral

The partners for these reforms should include:

Housing and Business Services

The LGBT Center

The Lambda Alliance

The University Council (D&E Committee)

The Action Steps are still in development, and this report is not final.

1. <http://www.business-services.upenn.edu/housing/assignments/apply/genderneutral.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)