**Gender Inclusive Community Program History**

In support of our mission, goals, and values, University Housing and Dining Services seeks to offer world-class living and learning environments that meet the needs of all of our students. Our Gender Inclusive Community, housed in Halsell Hall, is directed at students who have an interest in being able to freely choose their roommate and/or suitemate regardless of their gender identification. This option reduces limitations to roommate and room selection, which is intended to appeal to many student populations including Trans\* & gender non-conforming students.

Improving our living communities for Trans\* & gender non-conforming students supports our commitment to our diversity values. Traditionally, students who identify as Trans\* & gender non-conforming can often face unique obstacles when living in residence halls. A major structural issue that leads to this is that most residence halls were designed and built to serve only two genders, male and female, which can be challenging for someone who is gender variant. Students are often limited to having a roommate who is male or female based on how they self-identify on an application, which may not line up with how they personally identify, who they are interested in sharing space with, or can complicate gender expression or transition processes. Community bathrooms and shower facilities are another example of how a building designed for only two genders can impact the experience of someone who feels they do not fit into that binary. In these cases, a student must make public choices about how they identify or express their gender. This is an example of how the structural aspects of residence halls overlap with the social and interpersonal aspects. Another social issue that Trans\* & gender non-conforming students can often have is when roommate and neighbors do not understand identity outside of this gender binary. Interpersonal conflict can arise resulting in discrimination, harassment, and exclusion by community members to do not seek to understand and support persons of transgender identities.

Halsell Hall strives to reduce the structural and interpersonal challenges that transgender and gender-variant students typically face when choosing to live on-campus. Halsell offers apartment style suites which students share with 3 suitemates. Students are able to self-select to live within a gender-inclusive suite. Students share single-use bathroom and shower area amongst the suite. Students in Halsell experience more privacy to do this apartment style, and because 80% of the bedrooms are single rooms. Students and staff in Halsell are better prepared to understand and support Trans\* & gender non-conforming, by being more exposed to education and awareness efforts about issues of difference (including gender identity and gender expression) through more frequent programming and trainings. Research shows that students are most successful in an environment that is inclusive and supportive of all identities. In addition to having the gender inclusive theme and programmatic support, Halsell Hall, which is close to OSU’s Pride Center, offers the opportunity to connect with peers and allies more easily. The Pride Center’s vision – “The Pride Center envision and environment where lesbian, gay, bisexual, Trans, queer, questioning, and intersex individuals and our allies at OSU are affirmed as whole people; unified as a community towards our common goals; and cared for in a positive education setting.

The overall student population benefits from the gender inclusive living option as well. In addition to gender-variant students, Halsell appeals to anyone who wishes to not be limited in their selection of a roommate. Siblings, couples, and best friends can all choose this option if they wish. Due to the limitation of space and nature of apartment style living, students living in Halsell are typically upper-class, older than average freshmen, or transfer students.