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Emera Greenwood
University of Kansas

Megan S. Pacey
University of Kansas

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Transphobia in Class, Anti-trans Legislation at the State: A Commentary on Navigating Harm and Hope in a Social Work Education Program

Emera Greenwood
University of Kansas

Megan S. Pacey
University of Kansas

EG (they/them): I was misgendered on day one of my BSW program; isolation and transphobia continued for two years. While I did my best to advocate for myself, I learned that you can't fight institutionally entrenched oppression alone.

MP (they/them): EG joined my class mid-semester after repeated incidents of transphobia. For two years, during an onslaught of anti-trans policies across the U.S., we advocated for changes in our school and social work education.

EG's experience is not unique. Numerous studies document transphobia experienced by transgender and gender expansive (TGE) social work students and the lack of TGE content, visibility, and support for TGE students in social work education programs. Through a narrative reflection of our own experiences situated within the context of research on TGE students in social work, this commentary issues a call to action for social work education within the broader contexts of a national anti-trans political climate and the values and core competencies of social work education.

Keywords: transphobia, cissexism, social work education, anti-trans legislation

This commentary begins with a narrative of our experiences as a trans-nonbinary Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) student and a queer faculty member navigating a social work education program during repeated onslaughts of anti-trans policies sweeping the United States during the early years of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through individual and joint reflective exercises and journaling, we engaged with the transphobia and cissexism enacted within social work education and the broader context of the anti-trans political climate. We explored the role of self-advocacy and community and found moments of hope that alleviated some of the trauma. In our narrative, we share key aspects of our experiences, with two caveats: (1) only parts of our narratives are shared here to maintain privacy and due to space constraints; and (2) these experiences are not unique to us or our school but are widespread systemic issues in social work and social work education. We share our narratives to illustrate the harm caused within social work education programs, even within a profession rooted in social justice, and the opportunities for hope and advocacy that exist within them. We then reflect on our narrative, connecting our experiences to the academic literature on transgender and gender expansive (TGE) students and social work education. We end with a call to action for social work education programs to increase affirmation of TGE students, staff, and faculty and more competently train students to engage in anti-oppressive practice with TGE people.

Narrative

EG: (they/them): I am a queer and trans-nonbinary social work student enrolled in a MSW program at the same institution that I earned my BSW degree. I am a white, U.S. citizen living below the poverty line. I was fortunate to have my undergraduate degree funded by grants and scholarships. I have multiple mental and physical disabilities that stood as barriers to my academic success. My research and advocacy experiences have focused on the liberation of queer and transgender people.

MP: (they/them): I am a queer, femme, and genderqueer tenured social work professor. When I met EG, I was not yet tenured, nor had I begun to identify as genderqueer. I am a white, middle-class,

U.S. citizen with non-apparent disabilities. My scholarship centers queer and trans youth equity and justice.

EG: I began my academic journey with hope and a belief that a social work program would attract professors and students invested in social justice and the dignity and worth of others. I now realize that those expectations were naive; my experiences have reshaped my view of social work and renewed my commitment to disrupting oppression in our profession and educational model.

My junior year was bookended by transphobia from a classmate. On day one, during a paired introduction exercise, I was misgendered repeatedly over the course of 30 seconds, even though I had been very clear about my pronouns. I felt humiliated. It was the worst introduction to my fellow students I could imagine. Months later, at the end of my junior year, I once again had to endure the same student sharing anti-trans beliefs in class. I had also experienced misgendering and transphobic microaggressions in other classes and spaces from classmates and instructors in my program. That year left me questioning whether social work was right for me and whether I was right for the profession. It left me disillusioned, but also instilled in me an understanding that if I wanted to see change, I would need to be a part of the solution. I came to realize that solidarity is essential when pursuing anti-oppressive goals. By necessity, I was forced to learn new skills like practicing self-advocacy, finding affirming resources, and collaborating with likeminded people.

Six weeks after that painful and humiliating introduction, I had been repeatedly misgendered by students and instructors and subjected to anti-trans sentiment in that class with no intervention from the instructor. I reached out for help from a professor in another class who I trusted—one who had addressed misgendering and was supportive of me. She connected me with MP and I was able to transfer out of the hostile class and into their section. In their class, I saw that anti-oppressive social work was an achievable goal and perhaps my hope wasn't unfounded.

MP: My impetus for becoming a professor was based, at least in part, on my own experiences as a social work student more than a decade before EG's. As a queer person starting a MSW program, I

had the same hopes as EG. I naively expected my peers, professors, and other social workers to be affirming of queer and trans people. While many were, the ones that were not stood out for me and impacted my educational experience. Like EG, I realized that if I wanted to see change, I would have to work toward it myself.

Fast forward more than a decade when a colleague reached out to try and find support for a trans-nonbinary student. After some advocacy efforts, EG joined my class. Their first day came six weeks after the other students had been developing relationships with each other. It had the potential to be a challenging transition, albeit one where they felt safer than they had previously. EG and I talked about how to make that transition easier for them and how they wanted to be introduced to the class. I had already set expectations around pronoun use with the class but being nearly midway through the semester and with EG's prior experiences, it bore repeating. However, I also did not want to do any of that without EG's explicit consent. They agreed and asked me to do a small lecture on pronouns after introducing them to the class.

EG: During that year, I learned to hold disappointment in one hand and hope in the other as queer faculty pulled me into a network of support and collaboration. I began screening professors for the spring semester based on their reputation for support of queer and trans causes and enrolled in classes with instructors I trusted. I learned that if I had at least one class that was affirming, I could build more capacity to handle the transphobic experiences in others. It allowed me to dispute internalized oppression, because I could clearly see that when I wasn't being invalidated and isolated, I was able to feel like a normal student and person.

My experience showed repeated opportunities for anti-oppressive advocacy that classmates failed to engage with. On the rare occasion that another student corrected a microaggression, there was rarely encouragement for that advocacy and sometimes even negative responses from professors. Some made it clear that they privileged politeness over rejecting oppression. As my first year in the BSW program came to a close, I noticed an increase in microaggressions and overt transphobic behavior from classmates. I attribute this escalation of oppressive behavior in part to professors failing to push back on transphobia, and in some cases, modeling

oppression in their teaching. It also became clear to me that the same students were capable of avoiding transphobic behavior in the classes that were facilitated by trans-affirming professors.

My pronouns were clearly added to my name on zoom to aid others in remembering them, but that seemed to have little positive effect. I learned to be even more hypervigilant, often muting my video on zoom because I'd rather be humiliated off screen than in front of my whole class. I frequently found myself wondering if some of my classmates planned to wait until graduation to recognize the dignity and worth of others, or if they didn't think that our call to advocacy applied to experiences in the classroom.

While planning for practicum, I was burdened with trying to find a site that would not be discriminatory and began contemplating how to advocate for myself and clients in an agency when transphobic bias occurred. My first practicum interview was with a manager who showed prejudices that made the site feel unsafe, for example, referring to me as "young lady" while introducing me to a colleague, which was both invalidating and demeaning. In processing with MP, they shared what would become the most important break of my academic career. I learned that the queer and trans research center they were co-leading was planning to hire a practicum student. I applied and was accepted to the position. That practicum placement became my anchor for the program.

MP: It was early 2021 and anti-trans policies were being proposed and passed across the U.S., including in our state. While we discussed these policies regularly among ourselves, the research center, and in other queer and trans spaces, we noted the silence coming from many social work practitioners, organizations, and education programs. The silence spoke volumes.

Simultaneously, EG worked with us on planning a national symposium and then began their practicum with the research center their senior year. It was clear to me how much EG was benefiting from having a community of queer and trans faculty to support and advocate with them. I had read the research on how and why it was important for queer and trans students to have visible queer and trans faculty in their programs. I had already made an intentional effort to be visible in my classes and other spaces, but I recognized that not all students would have the same opportunities

and experiences as EG. I knew it was very difficult for students to assess which professors would provide inclusive classroom experiences, especially for transgender students. This was a hard realization as I knew we could support EG, but I worried for the other trans students who did not have connections to affirming faculty or who were not able to disclose their own identities or experiences for myriad reasons.

EG: I was able to collaborate on research and advocate for my community within a trans affirming, non-hierarchical queer space. That experience reshaped my understanding of what social work education could be and has allowed me to lift my expectations of our profession. As anti-trans rhetoric increased nationally, and that bled into classroom discussions, I had a space where my colleagues were fighting for liberation. I look back on the times that I wanted to give up and wonder how many students have left programs because they didn't have support to counterbalance their oppression as I did.

I made careful plans for my senior year classes to avoid being in sections with the same cohort from my junior year by attending zoom classes with a cohort from a different campus location. The day before classes, I logged on to introductory discussion boards and saw greetings from those same classmates from whom I'd experienced hostility. I shut my laptop and gave up for a few hours, then transferred all my classes to in-person, deciding that I'd rather be exposed to COVID than transphobia. The next year was a big improvement, but my junior year had taken a large emotional toll on me.

MP: The spring 2022 semester rolled around and the hostile rhetoric of the anti-trans policies only seemed to worsen while the silence within social work and social work education continued. My colleagues and I, along with EG as the practicum student, met to discuss how we wanted to respond as a research center. Simultaneously, colleagues who were queer and trans social work educators were reaching out to do the same and to find community. The sense of isolation we felt within our profession was palpable, for some of us more than others depending on our own intersecting identities, where we were located in the country, and how our department

was responding (if at all). Some of us were in states that mandated social workers to investigate families who supported their TGE children—yet, many of our social work education programs were not addressing this very real ethical issue.

EG: Working with the research center, I had the opportunity to meet professionals from different parts of the country and learn about how other universities were responding to anti-trans policies. I was surprised to learn that, while my experiences were awful, our school was far more supportive of queer and trans students and of faculty than many others. I credit that to the queer and trans faculty and staff in our department. In response to the February, 2022 executive directive of the Texas governor to investigate and punish parents and providers for providing gender affirming care to transgender youth (see Kraschel et al., 2022), the research center created a love letter to trans youth (Paceley et al., 2022), crafted from the messages we received from members of the community and supporters who could see the harm that such policies cause. As we were drafting the love letter, I read words that I needed to hear as a young queer and trans person. It was empowering to be able to give that gift to trans youth, knowing how much it could mean.

MP: We also worked collectively with colleagues across the country to organize a national town hall on anti-trans policies and social work education (Center for LGBTQ+ Research & Advocacy, 2022). Our school's administration supported the town hall, financially and otherwise, sending a message of support and solidarity we desperately needed, which many of my colleagues elsewhere were not receiving. That day was one of the best of my career, witnessing social workers and social work educators unite to radically call to our own profession to do better. I felt empowered and a sense of community that I didn't realize I was so desperately needing.

EG: As my senior year came to a close, and I was accepted to an MSW program at the same school, I found myself once again needing to confront institutional barriers that impeded me from attending MP's class on a different campus site than my own. At this point, I had learned that having at least one safe class was important for my mental health; however, some procedural issues were

potentially limiting my ability to do so. I worked with MP and staff in my program and was able to register for summer classes that I felt would be affirming. Having to put so much work into obtaining permission to take classes that would be a good fit was exhausting, but worth the trouble.

MP: At the end of that semester, after addressing a procedural issue to help EG take classes where they needed to feel safe, I reflected on the past two years of advocacy. While I had been advocating and working with colleagues to increase queer and trans inclusion and support in my school, and in social work more broadly, the intensity of the anti-trans political climate alongside my experiences with EG and other TGE students illustrated to me that my advocacy needed to be more proactive. I ended that semester in a meeting with my school's leadership where I expressed commitment to creating a group to identify and address issues impacting trans students, staff, and faculty. My school leadership was supportive.

Three months later, I received an email from a student experiencing misgendering and other anti-trans bias in the classroom. It has been two years since I got a similar email about EG and their experiences—two years of addressing these issues and concerns, mostly favorably. Yet, it's two years later and another student's email sits in my inbox begging for help so that they can be respected and safe in class. I was frustrated. It should not be this way—anywhere, but especially in social work. I'm not naive to think that social workers are immune to transphobia (and other forms of oppression), but I'm still frustrated. I want to see lasting change.

EG: As I was preparing to begin my MSW program, I learned that I had been awarded a prestigious scholarship that would fund nearly half of my graduate tuition. The scholarship also required me to complete my MSW full time. At the start of my summer MSW classes I began to realize the toll that my undergraduate experiences had taken on me and struggled with whether I would have the capacity to complete my degree as a full-time student. Halfway through the summer, I acknowledged the signs that I was overwhelmed by that residual trauma and needed time to recover. I made the difficult and painful decision to switch to part-time, which required me to give up my scholarship and find other ways to fund my tuition.

Looking back, I believe I could have completed my program full-time, but I was unwilling to undertake a clinical practicum knowing that I would not be able to do my best for clients. I believe that if I hadn't had the oppressive experiences in my undergraduate program, I would have had the capacity to finish my MSW full-time. How many other students have been robbed of their potential and opportunities in this way?

Reflection

Our narratives reflect two interrelated stories in one social work education program in a particular region of the United States during a specific period in history. It is not, nor is it meant to be, generalizable to other people or contexts and yet, we see our experiences reflected in the broader literature. As many as half of TGE students in social work education programs report experiencing transphobia in the classroom, challenges with practicum placements, and structural barriers related to gender identity and/or expression (Acker, 2017; Austin et al., 2016; Messinger et al., 2020). As was evident in EG's experiences, TGE students rarely experience these as one-time occurrences, but "daily and consistently" in their social work programs (Austin et al., 2019, p. 916). In one study, nearly two-fifths of TGE social work students reported transphobic attitudes and behaviors from faculty and almost one-third reported that faculty did not intervene when students conveyed transphobic ideas (Austin et al., 2016). When TGE students enter or begin to prepare for practicum placement, they often face additional challenges, including anti-trans attitudes and practices in agencies and a lack of TGE-affirming agency options (Messinger et al., 2020). These experiences leave TGE students feeling ostracized, excluded, and isolated (Austin et al., 2016).

Both of us also experienced silence related to TGE issues, particularly the anti-trans policies proposed and passed across the United States during this time. While research has not yet explored the ways in which social work education programs respond publicly to local, national, or international social justice-related events, related research has examined lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) competence and content within social work curricula. Importantly, there is a direct relationship between how

LGBTQ+-competent a social work program is and the experiences of LGBTQ+ students in those programs (McCarty-Caplan, 2022). Given that many social work programs lack TGE-inclusive content and readings, as well as faculty who are competent and comfortable teaching about TGE people and transphobia as a systemic oppression (Acker, 2017; Austin et al., 2016, 2019; Erich et al., 2007), this translates into poor experiences for TGE students. Moreover, when TGE content is discussed in social work classes, it is often introduced by students rather than faculty (Austin et al., 2016). This is reflected in findings that one in five U.S. social work faculty indicated TGE content was not important to class content; one in three believed transphobia was not important to include (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2011). Relatedly, nearly half of transgender social work students in one study reported that when TGE topics were discussed in class, they were often handled poorly; less than one in ten reported them being handled well (Austin et al., 2016).

Of critical importance to our reflection is that while harm was enacted on multiple levels, there were numerous areas where hope occurred, namely in the spaces in which queer and trans community were facilitated. Two key studies provide important connections to our own narratives and this phenomenon in social work programs. One study examined the strategies LGBTQ+ students in social work programs used to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion in their programs (Wagaman et al., 2021), finding that they primarily engaged in individual-level strategies such as being visible in their identity and bringing up LGBTQ+ content in class. Additionally, some students worked collectively with other students, staff, and faculty to build LGBTQ+ community, engage in advocacy, and increase LGBTQ+ content in the curriculum. Both individual and collective strategies were done in response to challenges faced in the program, as well as in a proactive manner. In a study of how and why faculty choose to disclose their own social identities, TGE and queer social work and family studies faculty shared disclosing their sexual and/or gender identities to students in order to promote visibility and support of queer and trans students (Holman et al., 2022). They described the importance of being out and visible so that TGE and queer students felt supported and as if they had a community. These studies reflect the community built at the research center and with other TGE, queer, and allied students in the program.

Call to Action

Our narratives reflect one story to illustrate what we know from research—that despite social work’s stated commitment to challenging systemic oppression, TGE social work students regularly experience transphobia, cissexism, and silence related to TGE issues in their education programs. Yet, like the research, our story does not reinforce binaries of good/bad or competent/incompetent programs, but rather the complex and interrelated nature of harm and hope that can occur within all social work education programs. Therefore, we close this commentary with a call to action for social work programs. Based on our own experiences and the literature on social work education, we provide concrete recommendations to increase TGE competency and affirmation in social work education programs. We echo Shelton and Dodd’s (2020) recommendation that social work classrooms that are TGE-affirming will be inclusive and safe for TGE students while training all students to competently work with TGE people in an anti-oppressive manner.

Take Inventory

First, social work education programs must engage in ongoing assessments of their program to take inventory on where they are failing to affirm and support TGE students, staff, and faculty and competently train students to engage in anti-oppressive practices with TGE communities. Identifying potential areas of growth and change can include taking an inventory of course syllabi and content, policy and procedure manuals, student handbooks, and practicum placement sites for where TGE people are included in affirming and safe ways and where they may be absent or explicitly harmed (see the following sections for specific recommendations). TGE students, staff, and faculty should be invited to engage with which aspects of programs are assessed and how to know if these program components are affirming or supportive. Importantly, this inventory must move beyond what is documented in text to examine the specific practices, teaching strategies, and values of faculty and staff who teach and engage with students. For example, an inclusive policy is important, but only goes so far if students are

witnessing unchecked cissexism in the classroom. Taking inventory as part of a program assessment should be considered both an early step toward establishing a TGE-affirming program and one that is never finished.

Create Inclusive Policies, Procedures, and Other Written Materials

The policies, procedures, and written materials in our programs should set standards and expectations for what we expect from all students, staff, and faculty related to affirming TGE identities. Therefore, all policies, procedures, student handbooks, syllabi, and other written materials should be reviewed and modified to ensure TGE inclusion and affirmation (Shelton & Dodd, 2020). Gender inclusive language that avoids binaries should be used throughout our written materials. For example, binary language related to gender, such as *she/he*, should be removed and replaced with the singular *they* or *she/he/they*. Policy documents and syllabi should address expectations around pronoun use, non-discrimination of TGE people and communities, actions for addressing discrimination and holding the school community accountable, and locations of inclusive restrooms. Procedures should also be examined for where they may inadvertently set up barriers for TGE and other historically marginalized students. For example, by nature of the cohort effect in many programs, students may not be able to select courses outside of their cohort, as was the experience for EG. Relatedly, students may be mandated to stick with specific modalities such as in-person, online, or hybrid, based on how they initially registered for their program. Flexibility in policies and procedures with the goal of affirming TGE students should be considered. These important aspects of our policies and procedures should not just live in documents or our websites, but should be communicated to students, staff, and faculty in ongoing and structured ways, such as during orientations and while setting classroom expectations. Communicating these expectations early and enforcing them often sends a message that they are important to the program and the profession.

Increase TGE Competence for Faculty

One of the strongest indicators of classes being inclusive of TGE people is having a professor who can recognize transphobic micro-aggressions and behaviors. An understanding of issues that TGE people face is essential for faculty to facilitate discussions related to cissexism and discrimination (Austin et al., 2016). Additionally, in EG's experience, having TGE-affirming spaces in their social work program increased their expectations of other spaces. Therefore, increasing the number of classes and spaces that TGE students experience as affirming may have a ripple effect on other classes and areas of the school.

Social work students are directed to reflect on the implicit biases they hold; likewise, faculty should be encouraged and provided structured opportunities to assess their own biases and have access to resources and mentorship to help address them. Ongoing training opportunities should be provided for faculty at all levels (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2011) to engage in the work that's required to dismantle ideas and values rooted in cissexism and engage in more TGE-affirming ways. Programs should identify strategies for ensuring all faculty receive these trainings. Importantly, social work education programs should also do more than offer trainings. Systematic efforts should be made to hold faculty accountable to becoming more TGE competent inside and outside the classroom, such as through formal and informal mentoring, professional development opportunities, structured feedback opportunities from students and colleagues, and ongoing reminders of the importance of affirming TGE identities in classrooms, meeting spaces, and the community.

Create Trauma-Informed Classrooms

TGE people are more likely to experience victimization and discrimination than their cisgender peers (Eisenberg et al., 2017; Sterzing et al., 2017). The resulting trauma from these experiences can impact TGE students' ability to successfully achieve college degrees and their success in the classroom (Hinojosa et al., 2018; Jantzer & Cashel, 2017; Kosciw et al., 2020). Some strategies for establishing

trauma-informed classrooms include empowering students by offering flexibility in assigned work, learning methods, and deadlines; checking in with students to allow moments to decompress; and giving students safe opportunities to address marginalization or conflicts that they experience with classmates or faculty (Paceley et al., 2022). Similar to how MP checked in with EG before discussing pronouns with the class, when supporting individual TGE students, it is important that faculty check in with students about what might be the most helpful prior to implementing any supports. Maintaining a trauma-informed approach to college classrooms would reduce stress on TGE students, while also benefiting other students who have experienced trauma (Davidson, 2017; Paceley et al., 2022).

Provide TGE-Affirming Curricular Resources

Even when social work faculty identify the importance of including TGE issues in class, many lack access to resources that are TGE affirming (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2011). Social work education programs can create resource lists or link existing resources to curriculum that centers and affirms TGE people and communities, such as readings and learning materials written by TGE authors (Shelton & Dodd, 2020). Additionally, case studies that include TGE clients and TGE social workers is an essential component to enhancing competency to practice with people with diverse genders (Messinger et al., 2020). Going beyond individual programs, our accrediting body should provide resources for teaching about TGE issues and transphobia (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2011). This could have the impact of increasing access to TGE-affirming curricular resources while also reinforcing an expectation that accredited social work education programs should be teaching students to be anti-oppressive and affirming in their practices with TGE communities. Scholars also recommend that when faculty teach about TGE people, issues, and transphobia, they do so from an anti-oppressive and socially just lens (Austin et al., 2016) that de-centers population differences and focuses instead on structural oppression (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2011).

Ensure Practicum Placements are TGE-Affirming

While providing students sufficient opportunities to gain experience in practicum is a high priority, maintaining practicum sites that engage in anti-TGE practices conveys a message to TGE students that their safety and success is secondary. Practicum sites should be screened for oppressive ideologies, practices, and policies and, at minimum, provided with expectations and training opportunities to shift to a more affirming practice (Messinger et al., 2020). Additionally, within practicum orientation, seminars, or classroom teaching, all students should be prepared to advocate for inclusive policies and practices within their practicum placements (Messinger et al., 2020) so that it is not solely up to TGE students to self-advocate for their own safety. Additionally, as a profession rooted in social justice and progressive social change, we posit that practicum sites that are not meeting the minimum standards of anti-oppressive practice with any marginalized population, including TGE people, should not be a place where we send students to learn to be competent practitioners. To support this move within social work programs, we argue that our accrediting body should build in accountability for programs to maintain affirming placements and discontinue ones with harmful policies and procedures. This may also help programs communicate the importance of such work to the broader university.

Support and Affirm TGE Faculty and Staff

While our narrative and call to action focuses primarily on students, the experiences of TGE faculty and staff are relevant and important. Therefore, social work education programs should ensure they are supporting and affirming TGE faculty and staff through inclusive policies and procedures and the same recommendations we make for students in this call to action. For example, TGE faculty may need support in navigating misgendering from colleagues and from students, access to gender inclusive restrooms, and gender inclusive healthcare policies. Affirming TGE faculty and staff sends a message to all members of the school, including students, that TGE people and communities are valued and worthy of protection and

affirmation. Supporting TGE faculty and staff also may help with retention, which ultimately increases representation of TGE faculty and staff in social work programs and provides additional supports for TGE students.

It is also important to consider the impact that witnessing microaggressions and misgendering toward TGE faculty and staff can have on TGE students. When TGE students observe anti-trans bias toward faculty and staff, who have significantly more power in the educational setting, it can be detrimental to students' mental health and may erode students' trust of social work programs. The work of addressing these injustices should be the responsibility of those committing the harm and accountability should be ensured by our policies.

Create Opportunities for Community & Belonging

A key aspect of an affirming experience for TGE students is access to other TGE and TGE-affirming students, staff, and faculty. Social work education programs should facilitate ways for TGE students to establish community and increase a sense of belonging. This may be done formally through a school-initiated student group or informally by supporting student interests in creating their own group. Care should be taken to consider the needs of students involved, such as safety and confidentiality, and community spaces that meet the needs of TGE students.

Center TGE Voices & Expertise

Within all these recommendations, we posit that TGE voices and expertise should be centered. This may be through creating leadership opportunities for TGE students, staff, and faculty that do not increase their burden or workload but center their expertise through compensated and affirming ways. TGE and queer faculty often have an increased burden of invisible labor to support TGE students and advocate for more inclusive practices in their programs. This work should be made more visible in terms of workload, compensation, and service commitments. Additionally, TGE experts should be hired to consult with and train social work education programs on becoming more TGE inclusive and competent. Another strategy for

centering TGE voices and expertise is by creating pathways for students to provide feedback about how faculty and staff are meeting the needs of TGE students (or not). Structured and unstructured feedback mechanisms can provide opportunities for TGE students to share how they are being treated in the program, providing opportunities for individual faculty and systemic change.

Conclusion

We are not the first, nor will we be the last to issue a call to action for social work education to do better—to stop engaging in practices that further marginalize and harm TGE people, whether explicitly or implicitly. We are here to add our voices to the growing list of scholars, students, and practitioners who demand more and better from a profession rooted in social justice and progressive social change. We do so as a reminder that social work has a stated commitment to progressive social change and that social work educators are required to assist our students in meeting these competencies related to social justice.

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