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"We are not permitted to choose the frame of our destiny. But what we put into it is ours." - Dag Hammarskjold

C.O.W. working to convert additional restrooms to all-gender

Students, faculty, administrators collaborate to make most single-occupancy bathrooms available to all

Wyatt Smith
News Editor

Students, the administration and the Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies Department are collaborating to convert many of the campus's single-occupancy restrooms into all-gender restrooms starting in the fall. All-gender restrooms — a phrase considered more inclusive than 'gender-neutral' — are available to people of all gender identities.

Most of the restrooms scheduled to change will be those in academic buildings, especially faculty restrooms, which tend to be single occupancy. The bathrooms in residence halls will remain gendered, with the possible exception of some single-stall restrooms on the first floors of Armington and Stevenson Halls.

"We were talking about having one in Kauke," said Cas Wain '16, one of the leaders of the project. "That would be helpful, even if it was on a different floor. Just going in somewhere where someone isn't going to be like 'oh, you don't look like you belong in here.'"

A map of the locations of these new all-gender bathrooms is also in the works. The map will be incorporated into the Refuge Restrooms database, a website that helps users find the all-gender or gender-neutral restroom closest to them.

"I believe that all-gendered spaces are a need at this College and on other campuses across the country," said Whitney Wenger, the Campus Life program coordinator and campus events coordinator. "As higher education professionals realize the diverse needs of their students, I believe that all-gendered restrooms where everyone is welcome regardless of identity or preference will become more common. Every-



From left to right, Jacob Danko '16, Scott McLellan '15, Cas Wain '16 and Angela Neely '14 are leading the push for more all-gender bathrooms on campus. Although some of them were working on this change beforehand, their activism is now part of a class project for Associate Professor Christa Craven's Queer Lives course (photo by Wyatt Smith).

one needs a space where they can feel safe, and for some that will mean all-gendered space. I am enthusiastic about the College's efforts on this front and hope that more meaningful and productive dialogue

can continue as an open atmosphere is fostered."

Scott McLellan '15, Angela Neely '14, Jacob Danko '16 and Wain are spearheading the effort, with support from the Women's, Gender and Sexu-

ality Studies Department, the Dean of Students' office, the Campus Life office and the Center for Diversity and Global Engagement.

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All-gender continued

"It's important because there aren't that many spaces for gender nonconforming people on campus," said Danko. "I think a restroom is a space where you need safety. ... It's a good initiative in making the campus more inclusive toward gender expression."

"Part of this project is to be as transparent as possible and let everyone know what's going on," added McLellan. "The last thing that we want to

do is compromise a safe space for women especially. ... I think it's a very stereotype-saturated concern, but statistically speaking it is a concern."

There are already several all-gender restrooms on campus, including ones in Gault Library, Babcock Hall and the faculty side of Kauke Hall. The bathrooms in gender-neutral housing — currently located in Kenarden — are also

not gendered.

The idea for increasing the number of all-gender restrooms came from women's, gender and sexuality studies

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Jacob Danko '16

Associate Professor Christa Craven, who was inspired by a guerilla desegregation of all bathrooms at Wesleyan University. Wesleyan students covered every bathroom label with all-gender signage. Craven initially was interested in doing something similar at Wooster but decided to take a more official route when she learned that the administration was fine with gradually introducing

some all-gender restrooms.

Wain, Danko, Neely and McLellan hope to continue their project beyond next fall, eventually introducing all-gender restrooms to each residence hall. Their ambitions, however, are tempered by how far the administration is willing to go.

"Single-occupant is usually pretty easy to turn into an all-gender bathroom, because there's no issue of interaction," explained McLellan, "but when you get into having more than one person in the bathroom, people are very concerned about harassment or sex or whatever else is related to that."

Not all students are satisfied by the current rate of change. An anonymous resident of Kenarden Lodge has repeatedly changed the signs on two adjacent, single-occupancy rest-

rooms in the dorm's basement, identical but for their gendered labels. The individual, presumably a student, put up handwritten notes protesting the 'men' and 'women' placards, then covered up the labels with their own gender-neutral signage. Later, the gendered labels were torn off of the bathrooms — no one has claimed responsibility, so the damage will be billed to all Kenarden residents.

"I believe that the removal of the placards is a call to reconsider the College's policy regarding gendering bathrooms," said Wenger, who is also Kenarden's resident director. "The College is currently exploring options for creating more all-gendered spaces on campus, and this incident has certainly shown the desire to expedite the process."

Students interested in this topic can attend a panel on all-gender restrooms and trans* inclusivity, featuring alums Will Sherry and Estancia Cole, on April 17 at 4 p.m. in the Babcock formal lounge.