

# Morehouse College Will Admit Transgender Male Students In 2020 — But The Policy Excludes Trans Women

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Morehouse College, the only all-male historically black college in the US, [announced](#) that it would begin admitting transgender men next year in a new policy that the college's board of trustees approved on Saturday. While non-binary and gender non-conforming students will be eligible for admission, trans women will not be, and students who transition or begin to self-identify as female during their tenure at Morehouse will not be eligible to receive a degree from the college.

“Once admitted to the College, all students are expected to self-identify as men throughout their education at Morehouse,” the new policy states. And in an [FAQ](#) about the policy, the school confirmed that non-binary and gender non-conforming students are also eligible for admission.

“We are a place that's been around for the last 152 years doing nothing but educating the minds of young men, and we are not stopping that now,” Terrence Dixon, Morehouse's vice president for enrollment management, told BuzzFeed News in an interview. “We've never shied away from social issues, and it's a time for us to be the leaders that we are ... to address gender identity in our rapidly changing world.”

Morehouse, in Atlanta, Georgia, is a college with a rich history and distinguished alumni — among them, Spike Lee, Samuel L. Jackson, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Its president, David Thomas, refers to it as “the West Point of black male development.”

The college's announcement is the latest in the trend of single-gender schools revisiting admissions policies for transgender students. Mills College in Oakland, California was the first women's college to admit transgender women in 2014. Spelman College, the all-female HBCU that shares an affiliation with Morehouse, adopted a new gender identity policy for students in 2017, and the first transgender woman graduated in 2018. But the road to colleges reversing their positions on admissions policies for trans students has rarely been smooth. Smith College, in Massachusetts, [drew national attention and sparked student protests](#) when it refused to admit a transgender woman in 2013, before finally agreeing to admit transgender women [in 2015](#).

Among all-male schools, Morehouse is the first in the country to adopt a transgender policy. Still, some students and alumni say the school's policy is not as progressive as it first looks.

Titi Naomi Tukes, a former Morehouse college student who graduated in 2017 and now works as a management consultant, told BuzzFeed News that they “unequivocally disapprove of” the new policy.

“It appears to be half-baked,” said Tukes, the former co-chair of [Morehouse College Safe Space](#), the school's alliance for gender and sexual diversities. “And at worst, it is violent and a clear target against trans femmes which includes women and nonbinary femmes.”

In Tukes' view, the policy would create a hostile environment that implicitly tells certain students that they are not welcome there. “Trans women will be antagonized and expunged from the college,” they

said.

Tukes added that to their knowledge, the school did not seek input from trans members of the community before implementing the policy.

Dixon disputed this, saying the policy was in development for 15 months and had “a large swath of community engagement” from members of Morehouse College.

Asked whether the school had any trans women as students, Dixon said he was aware of one, but added that the policy would not have an impact until the fall of 2020.

“This is all very new to the entire community,” Dixon said. “This is not something that’s going to change overnight or for the next year. We will form another group that will talk about how this will all play out for us operationally in implementation.”

Tatiana Rafael, a current student at Morehouse College who identifies as a transsexual woman, told BuzzFeed News she believes the policy is discriminatory against trans women students. She said she believed the policy would not affect her ability to graduate because she was "grandfathered in" before the policy would be fully implemented. "[I will] make history as the first fully transitioned woman in the school's 152-year history and the first female on the student record since the 1930s to earn a degree," she said.

At the same time, Rafael said she feels it is unfortunate for the trans women who come after her at Morehouse College, who won't be allowed to matriculate. "Morehouse is missing a crucial opportunity to become more inclusive by purposefully excluding trans female students," she said.

This is not the first time Morehouse College has faced challenges around LGBT or gender identity issues. In 2002, a 19-year-old student was accused of beating a fellow student with a bat when he mistook the actions of the latter as a sexual advance. In November 2015, BuzzFeed News published a [story about Jamal Lewis](#), a Morehouse student who struggled with how to conduct himself/herself as an individual that identified himself/herself outside of the gender binary.

For Tukes, the bottom line is that a student's gender identity, especially in the crucial formative years of college, is a journey for each person. “In my opinion, a private institution, which offers a social and public good, should not have the right to tell private citizens that they do not have the right to be at a college after they’ve been admitted,” they told BuzzFeed News.