Gender Diversity at Spence

For the past 18 months, Spence’s Administration, Faculty and Board have been conducting a conversation on the topic of transgender students. Like many of our sister schools, we have consulted with experts in the field to understand better gender diversity at girls’ schools.

As our point of departure, we start from our core values. We seek to be a school with a national reputation of educating scholarly women of the highest order. Spence’s all-girls environment forms a very considered community that embodies what it means to share sisterhood in defining our own education. We put equal importance on self-agency and development of self as we do on purposeful citizenship and care for others. Our charge undoubtedly is preparing our students for the world ahead, and it has always been the charge since the School’s founding in 1892 by Clara Spence. In fact, Clara’s vision continues to define purpose and to give us the words we honor each day. In her 1898 address to seniors, Clara shared: “The importance of each individual is the collective actions of the community and if the school has been faithful to its charge, each one of you should have an earnest desire to help others.” This legacy frames our mission.

We strive to apply this framework to all in our community. As we nurture each student’s lifelong transformation of self, foster mutual care and respect, and prepare our students for the future, we seek to build and sustain a community that embraces safety and inclusion for all.

With the aim of bringing empathy, compassion, and attention to all Spence students, our Board has adopted the following principles:

- Our mission is and remains girls’ education. As our Philosophy Statement reads, “We believe in the strength, intellect and vitality of women.”
- With respect to admissions, Spence will continue to consider any student who identifies as a girl.
- With respect to students who no longer identify as girls, they will be welcome to remain at Spence if they continue to embrace our mission of girls’ education and are comfortable in a gendered environment. As always, we will work compassionately and on a case-by-case basis with each family to determine whether Spence continues to offer the best arena in which the student can thrive.
- With respect to supporting transgender students, Spence will seek to follow guidance from the New York State Education Department and the New York City Department of Education relating thereto. With the rapidly changing cultural dialogue around gender, we will continue to stay up-to-date on the topic of gender diversity. As we implement these general principles, we will be eager to learn how they can best serve our mission of providing excellence in girls’ education to prepare our students for the contemporary world.