

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Stephens College Admissions and Enrollment Policy

#### **What are the mission and traditions of Stephens College?**

For more than 185 years, in the face of changing cultural norms and standards, Stephens College's undergraduate residential program has remained singularly dedicated to educating, empowering and inspiring women. Today, the College's undergraduate residential program reaffirms its identity as a living-and-learning community of women, a sisterhood that encourages and supports women's independent voice, free agency, and powerful leadership.

#### **What is the College's current admissions policy?**

Stephens College's undergraduate residential program is a single-sex institution. That means it admits and enrolls students whose application documentation (transcript, standardized test scores, application for federal financial aid, etc.) reports their sex as female.

The College's admissions policy has never considered gender. That means it has historically admitted some students who were born girls and whose admissions documentation reported that they are female, but who while enrolled at Stephens self-identified as men.

#### **What is the College's updated admissions policy?**

Stephens College has recommitted to its singular mission of educating women. Consistent with our culture's expanding understanding of the definition of womanhood, the College's admissions policy will recognize both sex and gender identity in its determination of a student's eligibility for admission and enrollment.

#### **Who made this decision?**

Under its bylaws, the Board of Trustees makes all policy decisions at Stephens College.

#### **OK, for those of us who don't really understand the terms or issues here, what does that actually mean?**

It means that the College's undergraduate residential women's program will continue to admit and enroll students who are women and who live as women, just as it always has. It will also admit and enroll students who were not born female, but who identify and live as women; those students will need to provide legal documentation that they are legally women or that they are transitioning to female.

Because the College has expanded its definition of womanhood to include both sex and gender, it is logically consistent that it also acknowledges both sex and gender in its definition of manhood. As a result, the College will stop admitting and enrolling students who were born female but who now identify as men or who are transitioning from female to male.

The College will also continue to admit and enroll students who were born female but who identify as non-binary, meaning students who experience their gender identity as falling outside the categories of man and woman. The College will no longer admit or enroll students who identify as non-binary but who are transitioning to male.

**What if a student transitions while at Stephens?**

A student whose sex or gender identity transitions after enrollment such that it is no longer consistent with the College's policies will be allowed to remain at the institution only to complete the current semester. Evidence of such transition may include self-identification as a man; change of legal name with the intent of identifying as a man; or physical transition to male associated with hormone therapy or a surgical process. The College will work with the student to assist in the process of transferring to another institution.

**Why did Stephens College revise its admissions policy?**

Stephens is the second-oldest women's college in the country. For 185 years, it has proudly provided a living-and-learning environment in which women have had the opportunity to become their best and most confident selves, free of the distraction and power relations inevitable in an environment influenced by the presence of men. The world's understanding of and definition of womanhood is changing, and Stephens is evolving — just as it always has — to ensure that it continues to provide the extraordinary experience of a Stephens College education to all women who seek and will benefit from it.

**Will this policy change have any impact on the College's identity under Title IX as a women's college?**

No. Title IX allows private undergraduate colleges to establish their own admissions policies in terms of sex and gender identity.

**When does this policy go into effect?**

This policy is in effect for any applicant for admission or readmission to the undergraduate residential women's program as of the fall semester of 2019.

**How does the policy affect currently enrolled students?**

Students admitted or readmitted prior to the fall semester of 2019 will not be affected by the new policy.

**How did Stephens come to this decision?**

All of the nation's women's colleges are reconsidering their admissions policies in light of the changing cultural understandings of sex and gender. Mills College, the first to change its policies, began in 2014 to enroll transwomen. Since then, of the 39 women's colleges that belong to the Women's College Coalition, 26 have adopted admissions policies that recognize both sex and gender (with the particulars of those policies reflecting the individual mission and culture of each institution). The remaining 13 continue to consider the issues.

Our community has invested more than four years into the consideration of these critical mission questions (see [stephens.edu/admissions-policy-development-timeline](http://stephens.edu/admissions-policy-development-timeline) for a complete timeline). Our discussions revealed many strong opinions but no consensus: Inevitably, the Trustees' decision will satisfy some and displease others. And yet the spirit of our process — thoughtful, civil and respectful of difference — has confirmed the resilience of our community and reaffirmed its unfaltering commitment to the College. For generations, Stephens has been preparing women for the lives that have awaited them. Today, she is evolving into a women's college for the world in which we live — one ready to admit, educate and empower women for generations to come.