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Smith College to accept transgender students

College's trustees vote to expand eligibility pool

By **Laura Crimaldi** | GLOBE STAFF MAY 02, 2015

The Smith College board of trustees Saturday voted to begin accepting undergraduate applicants who consider themselves to be transgender women.

The shift to a self-identification admissions policy at the women's college in Northampton goes into effect for students submitting applications this fall. The decision was revealed Saturday afternoon in a message to students, faculty, staff, parents, and alumnae.

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Under the new admissions policy, applicants who were born male but identify as women are eligible for admission. Applicants must select "female" on the Common Application to be considered.

"From the civil rights perspective, we're saying trans women are women," Smith College president Kathleen McCartney said in a telephone interview. "What we're doing here is really affirming that we're a women's college and we have an unwavering mission and identity as a women's college."

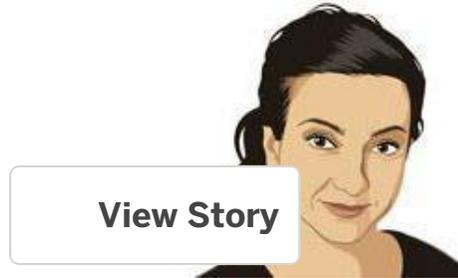
The school said the trustees voted after studying the issue for a year and appointing an Admission Policy Study Group, which examined the college's admissions rules "in light

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The study group solicited opinions from people on campus, alumnae, and parents; consulted with outside experts, including those in the legal field; and conducted its own research, the announcement from the college said.

"The Board of Trustees last year decided to study this because conceptions of gender are evolving," McCartney said. "We worked to develop a comprehensive approach . . . I feel really, really good about the process and I think our community will as well."

Before Saturday's vote, Smith required that the application and supporting documents from each prospective student consistently reflect her identity as a woman.

The new policy states that Smith does not accept undergraduate applications from men, including those who were born female but now identify as male.

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to identify as men while they are
all support of the college and this
asked-questions section on the

cy, president of Smith's student body, said the vote was "greatly anticipated" and that students have "a wide range of view on this topic."

& A, a student group that advocates for justice for trans women, said in a statement that they are pleased with the new policy but noted "there is still work to be done."

on to Smith College does not necessarily mean trans women will be admitted to a supportive environment where they can thrive," the statement said. "Changing attitudes about trans women will have to be challenged and changed."

Roberts, a psychotherapist in Baltimore and a graduate of Smith's School of Social Work, said the change is "spot on." Roberts, 32, said she started to transition to a woman when she was 25, but did not think it possible to apply to Smith growing up. The School of Social Work offers graduate programs to men and women.

and several volumes to affirming trans women as women," she said.

In a statement, GLAAD said it worked with Smith alumnae to urge the college to "open admissions to all women."

and no one should be denied an education simply because of who they are," said Sarah Gendron, chief executive of GLAAD (formerly known as the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Defamation).

The change makes Smith the fourth local college to create a more inclusive admissions policy.

Smith College said in March it will consider for admission any applicant who "lives as a woman and consistently identifies as a woman."

Worcester Polytechnic Institute in South Hadley considers all students except for those who are born male and who continue to identify with that gender.

Smith College accepts students born female, regardless of current gender identity, and those born male who now identify as female.

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