in for a meeting with administrators. The story, originally reported by The Miami Hurricane, was picked up by national outlets as questions emerged concerning how the students had been identified.

More than 20 human rights organizations, including Fight For the Future, demanded to know whether the UM police tapped facial recognition technology for this task, and signed a petition challenging school officials to ban its use on campus.

Soon after this incident, UM senior Cassie Couri, who took classes remotely last fall, received an email from administrators stating that she had been “identified as being on campus” and was required to come to the school for a COVID-19 test.

“I asked them for evidence of my being on campus,” she said. “I received no response.”

University of Miami Police Department officials did not respond to Distraction’s request for a comment. However, UM Police Chief David Rivero denied the use of facial recognition in the fall via an email to Miami Hurricane reporters, though he did note that of the campus’ more than 1,300 surveillance cameras, at least “some” are monitored 24/7 and all have recording capabilities.

While the school’s practices have garnered controversy, faculty like Visser and Froomkin are studying machine learning, privacy-violating technologies and related laws, educating students on them and working to ensure they are used and regulated ethically.

For example, Choudhary said, Professor David Dodson, who taught her an “Ethics in Computing” class, discussed with his pupils the moral dilemmas involved with information technologies. He challenged them to think about case studies such as the extent to which social media sites like Facebook are responsible for their content.

Visser, along with colleagues Rahul Kumar Dass and Nick Peterson from UM and Marina Omori from the University of Missouri at St. Louis, recently completed a study focused on looking at how facial recognition software underperformed when it came to identifying Black and female faces and making systems more inclusive.

Datasets fed to machine learning entities to teach them to identify faces, he said, are often composed of athletes, celebrities and politicians—white males are often overly represented in these groups. Further, he said, machine-learning considers backgrounds in photos. So, a palm tree in the background of a picture could serve as an indicator just like a facial feature. To eliminate this issue, the team ran AI tests on mugshots taken against a plain wall, using the same amount for four groups: White non-Latinx, White Latinx, Black non-Latinx and Black Latinx. The study found that with a balanced sampling of races, successful identification of individuals was very high—and relatively the same between races—though the technology struggled more when it came to predicting ethnicity.

While Froomkin acknowledged that the lower accuracy of AI for BIPOC could pose a number of issues, he questioned how this issue should best be addressed outside of studies, and whether giving machine-learning technologies more information about any individual was the best way to go.

The future, he said, remains unknown. But one thing is certain: “Privacy doesn’t really matter if you’re dead,” he said. "Behind tackling COVID-19 and addressing environmental issues, Froomkin said, informational privacy concerns are number three on the list of pressing issues that Americans are currently facing.

The answer isn’t stopping innovation—it’s regulating potentially sinister technologies. He said that some countries present a good model, and that California is on the right track. But in the United States, this is an uphill battle due to powerful lobbyists and First Amendment concerns. “Protect yourself,” he said. "And if you’re in a room with a politician, say something."
“When I came out on Facebook, I wasn't expecting two professors I'm friends with my past, respond accordingly and instantly change how they refer to me,” Riddle said. While she was nervous at first about communicating with nonbinary students, she found that “it’s a very supportive” classroom climate that keeps her dysphoria at bay.

Keefe, knowing their birth name would still appear on attendance sheets, opted to email professors over the summer to avoid awkward first-day confrontations and “get the point across” about the name they go by.

“Redefining—the act of calling a trans person by their former or ‘dead’ name—is dehumanizing when done intentionally. But everyone, of course, accidentally slips up sometimes. According to Riddle and Keefe, the best recovery from a mid-conversation mishap is to just self-correct and keep going. When people apologize and make a big deal about it, they ‘loss unecessary guilt on the trans person that we then feel pressured to alleviate,” Riddle said.

In terms of pronouns, Keefe noted the contrast between a teacher initially challenged by singular they/them usage and an assembly of UM students who, according to Keefe, once derogatorily labeled “he, she, or it,” whatever at their footsteps.

When done “out of malice,” misgendering someone is a blatant gesture of transphobia, which Planned Parenthood defines as the “hate, dislike or mistrust of transness and the gender-variant population.”

Transphobia encompasses a broad set of activities devaluing and belittling trans and non-binary people’s existence, from deliberate pronoun mocking to some “compliments” that are actually bullying. “OMG, he never goes you were trans!” may seem like an obvious no-no, but to Riddle and Keefe, it’s a silent dog whistle that all trans people are expected to look a certain abnormal or inhuman way. “We must put our pronouns, but our sex-year of college, couldn’t be kept hanging behind their birth name anymore and publicly reintroduced themselves as Oseyle, a non-binary trans masculine person. Both Riddle and Keefe set feet on the UM campus last fall with new names and pronouns. They had newly ignited senses of self-confidence that were tinged only slightly with a trace of fear their peers’ impending reactions.

“It’s hard for trans folks to come out and be visible. Many are dependent on their allies to build safer spaces to speak about who you are attracted to—if anyone at all. Riddle selected and embraced the name Oseyle—meaning ‘one who is happy’ in Egyptian—as a token to her ‘journey to be honest and kind’ to herself. Oseyle Riddle (they/them) said they empathize with Riddle’s journey. For Keefe, a 2020 UM graduate, the journey began when they transferred to a boarding high school for two years, granting them an opportunity to “figure out” their gender identity while abroad. When they first donned a pixie cut hairstyle, Keefe was instantly stamped by classmates as gay.

“She never identified as lesbian. That term never felt right to me,” Keefe said, because, in Keefe’s words, they’re not doing the work to engage conversation—being hydrogenated in danger than lie to myself and still face danger.”

—Oseyle Riddle
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
UNDERGRADUATE

Through initiatives like the IIR’s Ally Network and yearly Greek Week pronoun campaign, UMS LGBTQ Center has trained students, faculty and staff to be at the forefront of LGBTQQ+ empowerment, addressing the social issues and welcoming of all genders.

“Dr. Vega underscored that each person’s transition is an individualized process that requires different timelines to fully embrace their internal and external beings. In one case, Dr. Vega discovered a student who was transitioning from male to female, but their transgender identity was not the same. Vega suggested that each person’s transition is an individualized process in which each person’s gender identity is unique and must be respected. In the average top surgery (an operation that reshapes the breasts of a trans woman) or “female-to-male,” Dr. Vega stated that surgeries involve a complex process that involves the body and mind. In some cases, surgeries involve the body and mind, and may require additional medical treatment. In these cases, Dr. Vega recommended that individuals seek medical advice and support from a healthcare provider to ensure the best possible outcome.

The Transgender Identity and Expression Guide
Transgender identity and expression can be complex and nuanced, and it’s important to be respectful and understanding of others. Here are some tips for understanding and respecting transgender identities:

1. Avoid making assumptions about someone’s gender identity or expression. Ask them how they would like to be referred to.

2. Use the pronouns they/them when referring to someone who identifies as transgender. If you’re unsure, it’s always better to err on the side of being respectful.

3. Use the name and title that the person identifies with. If you accidentally use the wrong name or title, apologize and correct yourself.

4. Avoid using gendered language (such as terms like “he” or “she”) when referring to someone who identifies as transgender.

5. Be aware of the language you use and avoid using derogatory terms or slurs.

6. Respect people’s preferences regarding physical appearance and dress. For example, some people may prefer to wear clothing that is traditionally associated with a different gender.

7. Listen to the person you’re speaking to and be willing to learn and adapt as they express their identity.

8. Remember that gender identity is complex and can be challenging for both individuals and society. Be open-minded and willing to learn more about the experiences of transgender people.

9. Support transgender rights and advocate for social change. Vote for candidates who support equality and inclusion for all people, regardless of their gender identity.

10. Finally, be kind and compassionate. Transgender identity and expression can be challenging, and it’s important to support and be there for those who are transgender.

—Transgender Identity and Expression Guide

Trans Terminology
Go beyond putting pronouns in your bio. Brush up on current gender grammar to speak respectfully about and toward the LGBTIQ+ community.

Don’t say “they’re a transgender” or “they’re transgendered.”

Do say “they’re trans,” “they’re a trans person,” “they’re a transgender person” or “trans people.” “The word transgender is an adjective, not a noun or verb.

Don’t say “male-to-female” or “female-to-male.”

Do say “trans woman” or “trans man.”

Don’t say “biologically female” or “biologically male.”

Do say “assigned female at birth” (AFAB) or “assigned male at birth” (AMAB).

Don’t say “they changed genders,” or “they had a sex reassignment operation.”

Do say “they transitioned” or “they underwent gender confirmation surgery.”

Don’t say “preferred pronouns.”

Do say “pronouns.” Pronouns are important.

Don’t ask about genitalia when someone comes out.

Do listen to their story. Understanding that being trans doesn’t revolve around surgeries and acknowledge your cisgender privilege.

Don’t assume all trans people are gay.

Do learn that gender identity and sexual orientation are distinct qualities. What you identify as has nothing to do with who you are attracted to—if anyone at all.