

COLLEGE DOESN'T OFFER TRANS SERVICES

BY COLLIN BEREND

Over the years, transgender rights have been in debate as advocates push for acceptance and others argue against the notion. Someone who is transgender is a person whose sense of personal identity and gender do not correspond with their birth sex, by definition.

Students and faculty members who are transgender, or wish to come out, may seek refuge in a place of acceptance or look to the school to help in any type of resource to help them.

"We don't actually have many resources here on campus," said department chair of counseling Stephanie Schaefer. "Basically the [Gender and Sexuality Alliance club] and the counseling department." Schaefer also pointed out that the disability center may provide some use, such as how to "navigate challenges on campus."

For transgender students, coming out or being oneself can be far more arduous struggle.

Some may live their lives comfortably, others may endure publicly being demonized as mentally ill and comparable to a pedophile or a freak, severely affecting a group of individuals who hold a high suicide rate as it is.

The Williams Institute, a gender and sexuality legal research institute at the University of California, Los Angeles, School of Law, published a paper that showed suicide rates are higher for the community and for those who are transwomen - male to female - and those that are transmen - female to male.

The Williams Institute reported that those transitioning from male to female have a 42 percent

suicide attempt rate. Female to male transgender individuals have a 45 percent suicide rate. The general population's attempt suicide rate is 13.26 percent rate.

According to the paper, Oregon ranks at number seven on states with transgender people based on percentage to general population, at 0.66 percent - which is 19,750.

Studies have shown that even undergoing surgery and transitioning does not falter those numbers. However, the actual cause why even those who have undergone sexual reassignment surgery - SRS - still have a high suicide rate. Only people's hypotheses fill the air as to why the suicide rates are so high, but nothing actually confirmed via peer-reviewed papers.

What resources exist for those attending or working for Clackamas Community College?

"When Planned Parenthood was looking at opening an office in the Clackamas County area," said Schaefer, "they came and talked to us about needs we saw in the community and one of the things I had mentioned was that we basically have no resources for transgender folks, particularly things like hormone treatment."

Schaefer explained that due to the lack of resources, not only on campus, but in Clackamas County, people are forced to go to places like Portland.

"These are resources we would like to have in the Multicultural Center and are working on obtaining and making available to students," John Ginsburg, interim associate dean of academic foundations and connections, said in an email.

Those who feel threatened or afraid on campus should look no further than what was plastered around campus in emails and posters last month for Sexual Assault Awareness Month: stickers and reminders of Title IX.

Title IX starkly highlights that the school cannot discriminate against someone based on their gender.

"There are processes in place for students," said English department chair Carol Burnell. "For example, changing your name in the system, you [can make the request at student services]. And that's something that is very helpful. It's not great when you go to class and someone is reading the wrong name. It creates awkward situations."

"I do know that in all new building construction, there will be [gender neutral bathrooms]," said Burnell. "Locally, depending on age, there are different resources. For folk under 21 there is The Living Room. And that's a resource for all queer youth and they're very [transgender] friendly."

Joanna Ponce is a former employee at CCC who taught English as a second language and is also transgender. She transitioned while employed at CCC.

"I was a teacher with the [ESL] program," said Ponce. "And I've done that almost all my life, for [about] 40 years."

"I transitioned at the college in [spring] 2004," said Ponce. "I went to see the [Human Resources] department and told them that I was going to transition."

"When I came back onto campus [in] September,

I would be Joanna. They understood the law," said Ponce. "They understood my rights."

"I gave them information about transgender people and I said that I'd be willing to help in any way they needed help," said Ponce. "But my intention was to send out a letter via email to all the faculty and administrators at the college about my change and that when I came back to the campus in the fall, I would have a new name and a new gender."

During her time at the college, Ponce mentions that she didn't have a glamorous struggle story, that people were tolerant, even if they didn't accept it, acting in a professional manner. She recalled one moment where a close friend she knew inquired about addressing her in her former male name, to which she said, "Oh you may not."

During her last few years, she said that she went to the LGBTQ+ club that existed and handed her card out to students, to which she was contacted by some transgender students and other who were questioning or curious about transgender.

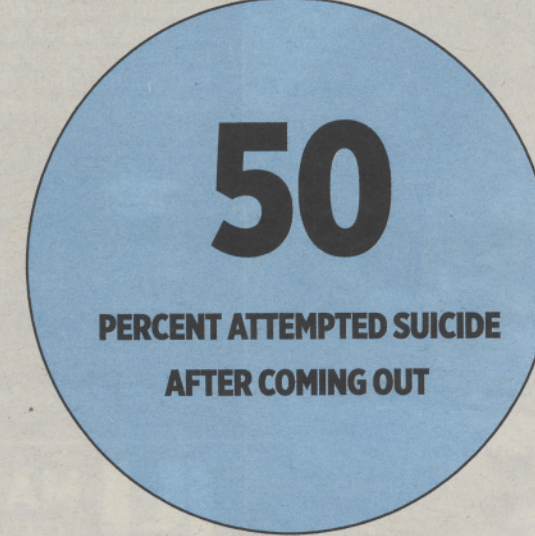
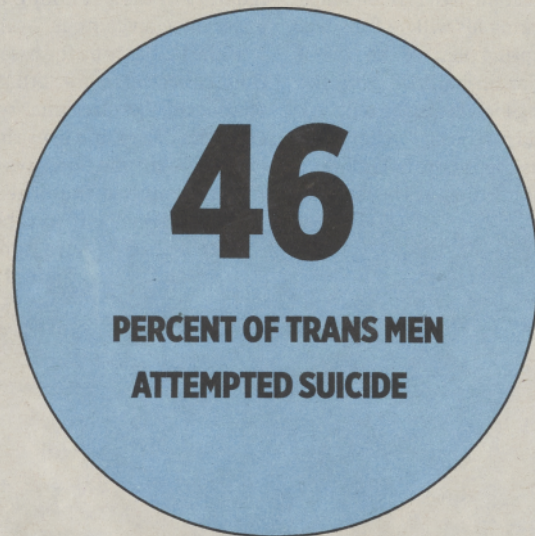
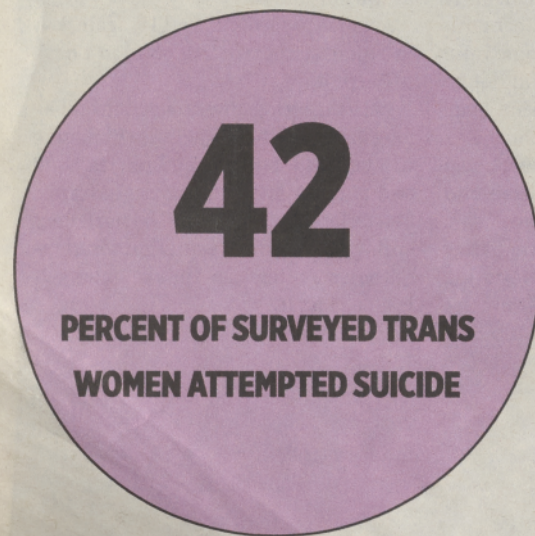
Ponce currently resides in Mexico where she continues educating others on the English language.

For those over 21, there is the Q Center and the Clackamas County Health. The Q Center, 4115 N Mississippi Ave in Portland, is a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer plus (LGBTQ+) community center that offers many resources, including support groups. These group are inclusive to all ages, not just 21 and over.

*"We don't actually have many resources here on campus."
- Stephanie Schaefer*



PONCE



Source: Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law