

FALL 2016

# PORTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE COMMUNITIES

## OPPORTUNITY ALWAYS

A photo retrospective  
of our growing campuses

**PAGE 4**

## COMING INTO FOCUS

Shining a light on darkroom  
photography classes

**PAGE 82**

## BRAVE SPACES

New Queer Resource Centers  
support and celebrate  
LGBTQ students

**PAGE 84**



**Portland  
Community  
College**



**PCC Community Ed**  
Classes starting Sept—Dec  
Find them inside:  
Pages 9—79



# BRAVE SPACES

PCC's growing Queer Resource Centers serve students of all identities

by Rebecca Olson

**I**t took Ryley Ha'o-Magno a few months to get the courage to actually go inside the Queer Resource Center (QRC) on PCC's Rock Creek Campus. He'd seen the colorful decorations and free coffee sign on the door, and was curious about what it was all about—but he was worried about what people would think of him. He waited for an afternoon when no one was around, and then, practically sprinted inside.

"When the person at the desk said hello to me, I dropped my voice down really low. I didn't want people to think I was gay, and I thought that would help for some reason," he laughed. "It seems really ridiculous to me now."

*Ryley Ha'o-Magno*

Faking the sound of his own voice is something that Ha'o-Magno doesn't do anymore. Thanks to the support and affirming experiences he's had at the Queer Resource Center, he's a lot more accepting of himself.

For the last two years, Ha'o-Magno has served as a student advocate helping to empower and educate other students. His focus has been outreach and education, and he's visited dozens of high schools in Washington County to speak to students about being queer, being an ally and being a PCC student.

"Many people don't realize this, but PCC's Rock Creek QRC is the only resource center of its kind in all of Washington County," he explained. "Everyone in the community is welcome there—you don't have to be a PCC student to get help."



The Rock Creek QRC is the oldest and most established of PCC's four queer resource centers. Although each of the campus centers vary in their size and offerings, each of the campuses has a dedicated physical space and plans to expand their programs in the coming year. All of the queer resource centers welcome and support students of all gender expressions and identities. The centers host activities and events; offer students free coffee, tea and snacks; and staff and student advocates are there to connect students to campus and community resources in everything from tutoring to affordable sexual health care.

"Most of all, what we offer is a place where students can feel heard," said Becky Springer, coordinator for the Rock Creek QRC. "This is a place to have community and to feel welcomed and embraced."

One of the questions that the QRC's get often is why they are called "queer" resource centers.

"Queer is an umbrella term that encompasses LGBTQ+ identities," explained Springer. "Not everyone identifies as 'queer' within the community, but it's a negative term has been reclaimed and transformed into something positive."

The need for queer resources at PCC is great—and growing. According to a 2013 study by the Oregon Student Alliance, PCC has the most queer and trans-identified students of any college in the state with 14 percent of the student population self-identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual, and 6 percent as transgender.

"Supporting trans, genderqueer and non-binary students is especially important given the recent legislation attempts at restricting people's abilities to use a bathroom they identify with most," said Springer. "It doesn't matter if it's a classroom or a bathroom—PCC students should feel welcomed wherever they are on campus."

One of the ways the centers have worked to support trans students is by advocating for the addition of more campus gender-inclusive restrooms, which can be used by students of all gender expressions and identities.



(From right): QRC coordinators Kole Myrick, Bobby Waldner, and Becky Springer at the 2016 PCC Pride Parade.

PCC plans to have 33 all-gender bathrooms at its locations by 2017, and is in the process of passing a bathroom policy allowing students to access spaces in accordance with their gender identity and/or gender expression.



Sylvania's Queer Resource Center Coordinator Bobby Waldner started at PCC as a student in 2011. He came back to school at age 30, before there was a QRC on the

Sylvania Campus, and his transition was tough to say the least.

"I was already feeling nervous being one of the oldest people in my math class," he said. "You can imagine how I felt then when I heard one of my classmates calling me a faggot."

Waldner's experiences inspired him to seek out a place on campus where students could find support and community. He began volunteering at the Sylvania Women's Resource Center, and thanks to the encouragement of its director, Jeannie LaFrance, Waldner started a student Q club. This club became the foundation for Sylvania's Queer Resource Center, where Waldner now works on staff as a part-time resource specialist.

"I grew up in a small town where people were not very accepting or nice to me," he said. "To grow from there to where I am now is incredible. Never in my life did I ever think I would be this person for other LGBT people."

Among his many responsibilities at the QRC, Waldner was one of the key organizers who coordinated PCC's participation in the Portland Pride Parade.

Nearly 200 PCC students, staff, faculty and supporters marched with PCC in the Portland Pride Parade this year, which was held a week after the tragic mass shooting at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida. The PCC contingency marched in bright turquoise Panther Pride T-shirts, carrying rainbow signs with messages of love and solidarity for the LGBTQ community. For Waldner, the outpouring of support in the wake of a tragedy was bittersweet.

"It was the first time in a week that I cried happy tears," said Waldner. "To see all of the love and support that came from our PCC community—it was overwhelming." ◆



PCC flying the Pride flag at half mast in the wake of the Orlando tragedy.