

LGBTQIA+ @ MiraCosta College, History & Inventory

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Throughout my sabbatical research, one of the general overarching best practices for serving LGBTQIA+ people in higher education that came up again and again was **VISIBILITY**. This is something that the LGBTQIA+ community has been able to recently do successfully at MiraCosta College. As such, I wanted to chronicle the hard and ongoing work of LGBTQIA+ (and ally) students, employees, and community members who have contributed - largely on a “volunteer” basis - to a more welcoming and affirming campus for sexual and gender minorities. Again, every one of the programs or initiatives below is - by virtue of contributing to *visibility* - a best practice for sexual and gender minorities at MiraCosta College.

GSA Club

The MiraCosta College Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA) Club is the third oldest student club at MiraCosta College. 1997 is the first recorded year of an LGBTQIA+ student club on campus at MiraCosta College. A very brief history of the club was provided from the first club advisor, Fred Steffy, Academic Information Systems:

“The club started as “GALA” (Gay and Lesbian Alliance) and had 4 very nervous male participants. Over the next few years we met in out-of-the-way classrooms to protect the identity of the members. During this time many of the requirements for being a club were ‘waived’ such as full names on the club sign up sheets as well as general participation in IOC. Jim Gonzales and I were the only ones that had full names and student ids (which were social security numbers at the time).

About two years or so we started growing and, along with the “Core Four” we grew to about 12 members, with the majority being self-identified lesbians who wanted more political exposure and were quite comfortable with being out. The group decided to have two functions, a support wing that would protect the identity of the members and provide support and an activity wing which would be the ‘face’ of the group. The group renamed itself GBLA, then LGBA, and soon we were known as the alphabet club as the students kept changing the name as they discovered new topics and situations. Those that wanted to remain private stayed on campus in the out of the way classroom meetings and those that wanted to socialize and talk about issues began meeting at the Art House for coffee meetings. This group also participated in beach

cleanups as well as AIDS Walks as well as a coalition of community colleges called the Rainbow Alliance.

The last few years [2008-2011] of my advisorship pretty much saw the private wing end and more “outness” as more students came to MiraCosta pretty much already comfortable with themselves. The major changes in this time were the students working around gender reassignment in their heads.”

The club advisor role changed from long-serving advisor Fred Steffy (AIS Department) to Steven Deineh (Library Department) and dara (Letters Department) in Spring 2011. Steven and dara co-advised the club until Fall 2017 when Sean Davis (Sociology Department) and JP Schumacher (Student Equity Department) co-advised, and then in Spring 2018 Jodi Mulhall (Student Equity Department) replaced JP Schumacher as co-advisor.

Since the Spring 2011 semester the GSA Club has shouldered the herculean task of planning, acquiring funding for, and implementing numerous programs and initiatives that have benefited MiraCosta College. These include the following:

- Queer Cupcake Party & Fundraiser (est. SP 2012)

The club’s most successful and longest-running program is their Queer Cupcake Party & Fundraiser, typically held at the end of April or early May. The first, held on May 1, 2012, was in a small room in the student center and featured educational posters made by the students on the theme of Gender Identity & Expression. Cupcakes were baked by club members and by enthusiastic MiraCostans supportive of club efforts. Because the cupcakes were not made in professional kitchens they were not allowed to be sold. Rather, students gave away the cupcakes freely and enthusiastically asked attendees for donations (no specified amount) to the GSA Club scholarship endowment.

The party has grown every year and is presently held in the student center in Aztlan A & B which is the largest space for students outside of the cafeteria. For the past few years, club members have requested - and been granted - general funds from the Interclub Council to purchase a number of professional cupcakes from a local (Encinitas) gay-owned cupcake bakery, Yummy Cupcakes. The owner, Renato Cautela, gives the students a 20% discount and sometimes donates prizes such as certificates for a dozen cupcakes or free cupcake decorating lessons if that year’s party features a raffle.

The cupcake party has become the primary fundraiser for the club's scholarship efforts. Each year, the party typically raises between \$1,500 and \$3,500 that goes directly to whichever scholarship the club is currently focusing efforts on. In addition to accepting donations before, during, and after the party, there is also usually an opportunity drawing for one of 4 dozen vegan chocolate cupcakes baked by Letters faculty member dara. dara typically offers to bake the cupcakes whenever opportunity drawing winners want them. As an example of how successful this fundraising mechanism is, dara's cupcake drawing raised \$764 in 2015.

April 2017 was an especially successful month of fundraising by the club for scholarships. During that month, the club was close to fully-endowing the Trans* Pride Scholarship so the fundraising efforts around that year's party were especially urgent. In addition to the cupcake party and vegan cupcake raffle, Thao Ha (Sociology Department) donated handmade jewelry sales to the scholarship, and RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars Season 2 winner and MiraCosta College alum Chad Michaels donated and also pushed out the scholarship efforts on his Facebook and Twitter accounts (more than 230,000 followers). These efforts, along with the utilization of a social media fundraising platform from Amplo raised a whopping \$8,644.55 in the month of April and led to the successful establishment of the scholarship in perpetuity.

- Coming Out Forum (est. FA 2014)

The Coming Out Forum was devised by students in the GSA Club as way of educating the MiraCosta College community about sexual and gender minorities, generally, but specifically, about the varied experiences of people coming out. Typically scheduled on or around National Coming Out Day (October 11), the first was held October 9, 2014 and featured the coming out experiences of people in different communities. The student who led the charge, Adam Weir Taylor, wanted to illustrate how the coming out experience may be different for people based on their ethnic community, religious community, military status or affiliation, socio-economic status, etc.

- Drag Show (est. SP 2015)

The very first Royal Drag Show was created and implemented by GSA President Brayan Astorga. The first event, held on February 20, 2015 was held in the cafeteria and featured amateur student drag queens and drag kings. Professional San Diego drag queen Landa Plenty

also performed. The drag show happens annually in the spring, a casual dinner (typically pizza) is served and donations are always accepted - but not required - for GSA scholarships.

In Spring 2016 the Royal Draw Show moved to the college's Concert Hall. The student organizers of the event planned and successfully implemented a widely successful event that featured choreography and backup dancers from the K-Pop (Korean Pop) student dance club, an art sale fundraiser, the phenomenal Landa Plenty, and additional non-drag performances by students featuring Native American and Korean Pop dance.

Additional semesterly events the club participates in include the San Diego AIDS Walk & Run, tabling at the North County Pride by the Beach event, and tabling on campus on World AIDS Day to educate their fellow students on the global AIDS crisis.

Despite these programs entertaining and educating thousands of students annually, the future of these programs is dependent on student involvement in the GSA Club, and usually require the students to scrounge for funds from various departments (Interclub Council, ASG, Student Equity, etc.)

LGBTQIA Safe Space Program

Safe Space or Safe Zone programs have been existence in colleges and universities since 1992. The first program, at Ball State University was named SAFE on Campus or Staff, Administration, and Faculty for Equality on Campus (Poyntner & Tubbs, 2008). In general, these programs require participation in a LGBTQIA+ diversity and sensitivity training and attendees typically receive a decal to put on their office or workspace to demonstrate they have successfully completed training.

The [MiraCosta College LGBTQIA Safe Space Program](#) training, first offered in August 2012 and co-designed and taught by MiraCosta faculty members Steven Deineh (Library Department) and dara (Letters Department), aims to increase awareness of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA) communities on campus, to support the college's efforts to promote an accepting, supportive, and diverse learning environment, and to create a welcoming and tolerant environment for all members of the campus community. The workshop was offered as part of the faculty professional development week ("Flex") and the safe space decals were designed by the Public Information Office and

purchased with a grant from the Classified Staff Professional Development Fund. Since then, the program has grown to the following 4 separate trainings:

1. LGBTQ on Campus for Faculty and Staff (Kognito interactive training)
2. LGBTQIA Safe Space 1.0 (Introduction)
3. LGBTQIA Safe Space 2.0 (2016 Update & Trans* Edition)
4. LGBTQIA Safe Space 3.0 (2017 Update & QTPOC Edition)

After participating in the training, individuals are given a decal, a lapel pin, are added to an online web directory, and are added to an email list to receive periodic email updates from program coordinators. Of note, the two most recent trainings focus on the experiences and unique needs of both transgender as well as queer and transgender people of color (QTPOC).

As of December 2017, the [online directory of trained employees](#) listed **252** district administrators, members of the board of trustees, classified staff, and part and full time faculty members. This number is, in fact, significantly higher. Because the list is updated regularly, retirees and employees no longer with the district are removed regularly. Students who have completed the training are also unlisted as they do not have a physical space and transition out of the college regularly.

Of particular note, in October 2016 a 12-person accreditation team from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) gave the LGBTQIA Safe Space Program the following commendation:

“Commendation 4 – The team commends the College for creating the Safe Space Program which aims to increase awareness of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersexed, and asexual/ally communities on campus. More than 200 faculty, staff, and administrators now display “safe space” stickers in their offices.”

This was one of 8 formal, public commendations; the rest may be viewed on page 5 of the [full external report](#). According to the ACCJC, commendations "are provided for excellent practice when appropriate."

In development since 2001, and launched in 2007, the [Campus Pride Index](#) is a national benchmarking tool that assesses campuses on 8 LGBTQIA+ “inclusion factors”: Policy & Inclusion, Support & Institutional Commitment, Academic Life, Student Life, Housing & Residence Life, Campus Safety, Counseling & Health, Recruitment & Retention Efforts. It was developed with a team of national LGBTQ researchers and has an advisory board including Genny Beemyn, Susan Rankin, and Shane Windmeyer.

The goals of the index are as follows: set forth a national standard of LGBTQ-inclusive benchmarks for policies, programs, and practices; offer an ongoing, effective measurement tool to improve quality of life for LGBTQ and allies on campuses; provide a tool for students & families to search for LGBTQ-friendly campuses; support campuses in recruitment & retention efforts for LGBTQ students, faculty, and staff; advocate nationally for further LGBTQ and ally progress by highlighting positive efforts.

In part due to [awareness of Santa Rosa Junior College's participation](#) in the index assessment, MiraCosta College participated in the Campus Pride Index assessment tool in Spring 2016. Each of the 8 assessment areas requires responses to a unique set of questions specific to different areas or departments of a campus. As such, the following individuals participated in responding to the questions: Sheri Wright, Director of Human Resources; JP Shumacher, Director of Student Equity; Robert Norcross, Chief of Police; Jane Sparks, Director of Admissions & Records/Registrar; Steven Deineh, Librarian; and dara, Letters faculty.

Based on submitted answers, the Campus Pride Index organization gave the MiraCosta College Community College District (MCCCD) an overall **1.5 out of 5 stars**. The [report](#) also gave individual rankings for each of the 8 areas and makes *specific, actionable recommendations* for how to improve scores in each of the areas. The individual statistics for the various inclusion factors are as follows:

- LGBTQ Policy & Inclusion - 3 of 5 stars
- LGBTQ Support & Institutional Commitment - 1.5 of 5 stars
- LGBTQ Academic Life - 1 of 5 stars
- LGBTQ Student Life - 1.5 of 5 stars
- LGBTQ Housing & Residence Life - N/A as MCCCD offers no student housing
- LGBTQ Campus Safety - 1.5 of 5 stars
- LGBTQ Counseling & Health - 1.5 of 5 stars
- LGBTQ Recruitment & Retention Efforts - 1 of 5 stars

A Spring 2016 campuswide [President's Update on Equity & Inclusion at MiraCosta College](#) shared this disappointing statistic. In the message, President/Superintendent Dr. Cooke stated, "Painfully, our college scored a 1.5 out of 5 stars. However, this is a starting point for conversations, which began in that room, regarding campus improvement solutions."

Endowed Scholarships

MiraCosta College has a recent, sizable, and storybook history for fundraising and establishing endowed scholarships for members of the LGBTQIA+ community and its active allies.

Fully-endowed scholarships generate a \$1,000.00 scholarship and the college presently has 3 fully-endowed LGBTQIA+ scholarships and is actively raising funds for a fourth endowment.

In Fall 2011 the then-named Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) Student Club decided to establish and begin raising funds for the first endowed scholarship - simply named **GSA Club Scholarship** - for LGBTQIA+ students and allies at MiraCosta College. The first major fundraising push was a silent auction at the December 2011 President's Circle holiday party (\$3,465); subsequent sizable donations were received from the San Diego Human Dignity Foundation (\$2,500), and the Vista Community Clinic (\$5,000). The largest donations to this initial scholarship, however, were 2:1 matching funds by the MiraCosta College Foundation (~\$8,500), and by individual donations from students, employees, and community members (~\$11,000). The GSA Club Scholarship was fully and successfully established in Spring 2014.

In November 2015, the GSA Club and its faculty advisors established and began fundraising for the college's second LGBTQIA+ scholarship endowment. This scholarship, named the **Trans* Pride Scholarship**, was created to highlight and draw attention to the unique experiences and needs of transgender and gender nonconforming individuals. MiraCosta College, in less than 18 months, [made history](#) in April 2017 by fully-endowing the first ever college scholarship (in the world) focusing on transgender students.

In Fall 2016, Joe Maak, CEO and Founder of the San Diego-based Pride Resource Partners LLC, donated the third endowed scholarship, **Joe Maak & Pride Resource Partners LLC Scholarship**. Joe Maak, a successful gay business owner, first generation college student, and immigrant from Germany, requested that the scholarship go to an LGBTQIA+ student or active ally who has financial need.

In Spring 2017 students and employees established - and began fundraising for - the **Queer and Trans People of Color (QTPOC) Scholarship**. Highlighting the problematic climate for queer and transgender people of color both inside higher education and out, this scholarship seeks to raise visibility for - and conversations about - the unique and specific needs of QTPOC individuals. Similar to the Trans* Pride Scholarship, this would be the first endowed scholarship of its kind in the world.

Queer Corner & Queer Library

In Fall 2014 GSA Club students began occupying an unused corner of the Club Room at the Oceanside Campus and ultimately named it the Queer Corner. In anticipation of criticism from the other clubs, the students specifically avoided naming it after the GSA Club. Formerly, dedicated space in the Club Room was only given to the two oldest campus clubs, the Black Student Union Club and the MeCHA Club. Despite being the 3rd oldest club continually in existence on campus, the GSA Club was never offered a space similar to that of the other two, older clubs. Within a semester, the Interclub Council (ICC), the governing body of all student clubs and the club room, voted to formally acknowledge the Queer Corner as a sanctioned space in the Club Room.

In Fall 2014, the GSA Club and its faculty advisors decided to begin developing a casual lending library of LGBTQIA+ themed and relevant books. The Queer Library efforts included soliciting books and monetary donations to the College Foundation to buy books. [Acquired books](#) were labeled with a rainbow sticker affixed to the book spine reading "GSA" and those that were donated or purchased with donated funds had a rainbow book plate on the inside cover listing the donor. A particular emphasis was made on acquiring LGBTQIA+ picture books and the Queer Library holdings were advertised to another campus club, the Parents on Campus Student Club. A [Spring 2015 Chariot student newspaper article](#) mentioned plans to redesign the Club Room including dedicated and equal space for the GSA Club, the Black Student Union Club, and the MeCHA Club.

All-Gender "Inclusive" Restrooms

California Education Code ([AB1266 signed into CA Law in 2013](#)) states "A pupil shall be permitted to participate in sex-segregated school programs and activities, including athletic teams and competitions, and use facilities consistent with his or her gender identity, irrespective of the gender listed on the pupil's records." As such, no student may legally be permitted from using restrooms consistent with their gender identity regardless of gender on file with the college.

In Fall 2016 single user restrooms were [resigned with plaques](#) reading "INCLUSIVE" and featuring a mixed gender icon. The MiraCosta Facilities department, at the request of then Vice President of Student Services Dick Robertson, worked with Associated Student Government President Brayan Astorga to design the signs.

Unfortunately, according to an [online directory of single user restrooms](#), MiraCosta's all gender (single user) inclusive restrooms have limited hours and are typically located in employee-only areas of the college. No student-accessible restrooms are available before 8 am on the Oceanside Campus and before 9 am on the San Elijo Campus. Some students have reported not using the non-inclusive restrooms on campus when they needed to for fear of being harassed or put in harm's way. A former student who is no longer at the college once had the police called when they used the restroom that the caller felt did not match their gender identity.

Some studies have shown that less than half of transgender people routinely receive medical care, that nearly one-fifth of transgender people have been refused care because of their transgender status, and nearly half have had to delay medical treatment due to financial hardship (Chrisler et. al, 2016). With such negative health implications, it is incumbent upon MiraCosta College to ensure that all students, and especially transgender students, have free, easy, and abundant access to restrooms they feel safe and comfortable to use.

Gender Pronouns

In Spring 2016, the Public Information Office [formally adopted](#) gender pronouns as options on college name badges and business cards. Additionally, many district employees have since added them to their email signatures and hyperlinked to a [quick pronouns guide](#) to educate the campus and broader community of why articulating pronouns is necessary. Also, many instructors, both in online and on ground classes, include gender pronouns when they introduce

themselves and encourage students to do the same. Some transgender students have expressed gratitude for this because it mitigates any confusion as far as how to refer to them.

Preferred Name Option

Preferred name is the default name automatically used on class rosters, student ID cards, in online courses (Canvas), and to borrow items from the college library. In order to ensure that an individual's name reflects their gender identity, MiraCosta College makes it easy for students to change their preferred name with the Office of Admissions and Records. In Spring 2018, inputting a preferred name [in the SURF enrollment system](#) was added as an option for students. Formerly, students had to visit (or fax/email) Admissions and Records to submit a [Preferred Name Change Form](#). This current system makes the process much simpler for students and is a welcome and needed change.

Gender Therapy & Gender Reassignment Surgery

Presently, both of MiraCosta College's health insurance benefits programs for employees offer gender therapy and gender reassignment surgery. This has not always been the case, though. It came to light in Fall 2015 that a faculty member was forced to leave the PPO insurance plan for the HMO insurance plan since their dependent needed access to gender reassignment treatments. Upon further research it was discovered that while the district's PPO did not cover gender therapy the district's HMO (Kaiser) did and was required to do so by the State of California as a recipient of state funds.

Carolyn Sneary, MiraCosta College Benefits Coordinator, presented the issue to the MiraCosta Fringe Benefits Committee (FBC) on April 14, 2016 and FBC members were supportive of her recommendation to match the PPO plan benefits to the Kaiser HMO plan. However, MiraCosta does not have the authority to change the PPO plan document since it is a "self-funded, shared risk pool plan." Therefore, that same semester she made a formal request (on behalf of the MiraCosta Community College District) to the San Diego & Imperial Counties Fringe Benefits Consortium Executive Board to include gender reassignment surgery as a base benefit. If approved by the board, this change would affect all San Diego school districts who offer the self-funded PPO plan. In late September, district employees were [notified by email](#) that as of January 1, 2017 the PPO insurance would cover gender reassignment surgery.

LGBTQIA Tri-Fold Handout

In Spring 2015, numerous faculty and staff worked with the Public Information Office to create an [LGBTQIA tri-fold informational handout](#). Funded by the Student Equity Department, these brochures are included in tri-fold displays around the college, are brought to and distributed at off-campus events, and are - according to MiraCosta Marketing Assistant Susan Walker - one of the most often-requested handouts on the district's [Information Request](#) page.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity on Job Applications

In Fall 2017 President/Superintendent Dr. Sunny Cooke and Sheri Wright, Director of Human Resources added sexual orientation and gender identity to all MiraCosta College job applications. The verbiage reads: "As part of our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, our institution conducts a survey of all job applicants. Submission of this information is entirely voluntary, and its contents are confidential to Human Resources. We do, however, appreciate your assistance and ask that you complete the following section. If you choose not to disclose this information you may bypass this section by clicking Save and Continue to Next >>."

The options for gender identity are: woman, man, transgender woman, transgender man, genderqueer or gender non-conforming, questioning, not listed. The options for sexual orientation are: heterosexual or straight, gay or lesbian, bisexual, asexual, questioning, not listed.

LGBT Studies

LGBT Studies, also known as queer studies or sexual diversity studies, is generally the study of sexual and gender minorities across histories and cultures, and "focuses on naming and deconstructing the effects of oppression of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people's lives" (Nelson & Hawley, 2009, 1277).

There are only a handful of California Community Colleges with LGBT Studies degrees or courses. Presently, only three colleges have Associate's Degrees and twice as many have standalone courses. They are as follows:

Degrees:

- City College of San Francisco, LGBT Studies Major
- Napa Valley College, LGBT Studies Certificate
- Sierra College, LGBT Studies Degree

Standalone Courses:

- College of Alameda, Humanities 60: Intro to LGBTQ Studies; English 70: Intro to LGBTQ Literature; Health Education 48 AA: Health Topics Impacting the LGBTQ Community
- Butte College, English 26: Queer Film and Literature
- De Anza College, Intercultural Studies 26: Intro to LGBT Studies
- Foothill College, ENGL 5: Gay and Lesbian Literature
- Pasadena City College, ENGL 058: Queer Studies in Literature

During academic year 2015-2016 Sociology faculty Sean Davis and Robin Allyn wrote MiraCosta College's first ever LGBT Studies course, [SOC 140: Introduction to LGBT Studies](#). During this year the course was approved by the Courses and Program Committee and was first taught in Fall 2017. The student learning outcomes for this course are as follows:

1. Determine the connections between historical and contemporary issues of LGBTQIA+ experiences through a sociological perspective.
2. Differentiate post-structural theories, such as queer theory from traditional sociological frameworks as modes of analysis.
3. Analyze the relationship between face-to-face interaction and the operation of social institutions as it pertains to minority sexual identities.

Notable achievements of this first class cohort include the [first annual LGBT-Ed Talks](#) in which students gave 10-12 minute TED-style talks on LGBTQIA+ topics. A sampling of the talk topics includes:

- Queer Theory
- Queer and Trans People of Color

- Trans Folk and Military
- The Role of Marketing in Marriage Equality
- Asexuality
- Violence and bullying of LGBTQ people
- Gender Nonconforming Children in Schools
- What is the Role of Heterosexual/Cisgender Allies
- Medical Pathologization of Queer Identities
- Dating Trans*/Gender Non-Conforming People
- Internalized Homophobia

During academic year 2017-2018, Sean Davis wrote an Associate's Degree for transfer called [Social Justice Studies: LGBTQ Studies](#). This degree should be approved by the Courses and Program Committee during the 2018-2019 academic year, and students should be able to begin graduating with this degree as soon as Fall 2019. This degree also comes with an Associate's Degree Transfer (ADT) agreement with local CSUs so students who complete this degree will receive priority admission to San Diego State University (SDSU) which has an LGBT Studies bachelor's and master's degree program.

The learning outcomes for this degree are as follows:

Upon successful completion of this program, students will be able to:

1. Upon completion of this program, a student will be able to articulate gender dynamics in face-to-face interaction, group settings, and large-scale social institutions.
2. Upon completion of this program, a student will be able to describe the ways in which gender interacts and intersects with race, class, sexualities, ethnicity, age, ability, and other identities to help shape a person's experiences in society.
3. Upon completion of this program, the student will be able to articulate both the historical and contemporary issues pertaining to the social status of LGBTQIA+ identified people.

North County GSA Awards

The North County LGBTQ Resource Center created the GSA Awards in 2009 as a way of acknowledging and celebrating regional high school GSA clubs for their visibility and activism in their schools and communities. At the awards the clubs receive a certificate and a monetary

award. Initially hosted at Cal State San Marcos the awards have been hosted at MiraCosta College annually since 2015. The Student Equity Department and GSA work closely with the North County Center's Project Youth Committee to plan the awards. The 2017 awards brought 100 middle and high school students to MiraCosta where they not only celebrated their respective GSA achievements, but learned about the college's services and resources that support LGBTQIA+ student success.

OUT @ MiraCosta

In Fall 2016 the [Out @ MiraCosta](#) campaign and directory was created. The purpose of the page and campaign is to let students (and to a lesser extent employees) know which MiraCosta employees publicly identify as LGBTQIA+. Because sexual and gender minorities exist across all communities, and because there are no physical identifiers, this directory serves as a tool for students actively seeking out someone from the LGBTQIA+ community. Although, in the two years that this has been in existence, I have not, personally, been approached by anyone. Regardless, inclusion on the page is modeling a level of outness and comfortability that members on the page likely want and hope for our students.

Unfortunately, some LGBTQIA+ employees are not - for various and personal reasons - out in some aspects of their home or personal life and have chosen not to be included in the directory. This is a testament and reminder that many people, including our students and colleagues, may be unable to be fully out. For some, the risk of abandonment, homelessness, or lack of access to financial resources prevents them from being fully out. The mental and emotional health implications for people who are unable to live life truly, honestly, and authentically are great. It is imperative that MiraCosta College strive to be a safe space for folks to be who they are without criticism or harassment especially because, for some, this is the only place for them to be who they are.

Rainbow Commencement Stoles

Allowing students to wear an item during commencement that represents a part of their identity is extremely common. There are quite a number of different stoles or cords that are worn at graduations across the country. In Spring 2015, [rainbow stoles](#) embroidered with "MiraCosta College" were added to the [list and descriptions of regalia](#) in the commencement program and

LGBTQIA Safe Space trained employees participating in the ceremony (primarily full-time faculty) were invited to purchase and wear a stole in support of our graduating LGBTQIA+ and ally students. In subsequent years, the college bookstore began stocking the rainbow stoles for students to purchase and Student Equity purchased some stoles that students may borrow if they are unable to afford one from the bookstore.

This current program, unfortunately, falls short of having a full [Lavender Graduation](#) ceremony which is common at many colleges and universities. This is similar to private, smaller, graduation ceremonies that are currently in place at MiraCosta for other groups such as Latinx students, African American students, nursing students, etc. Those populations have dedicated district resources for specific support, and therefore receive a different (and necessary) level of support and affirmation by the MiraCosta College District.

Transgender Support Group

In Spring 2015 a MiraCosta College Mental Health Counselor and Marriage and Family Therapist intern created a [Transgender Support Group](#). The announcement of the new program made by Marge Reyzer, Director of Health Services stated the following:

“The Mira Costa [sic] Transgender support group is dedicated to supporting the student transgender community. This includes anyone that identifies as transgender in any way. We welcome crossdressers, transsexuals, Female to Male, Male to Female, intersex, or anyone else seeking the support and community of their peers. At the weekly support group the hard questions that many people are afraid to ask will be discussed. Topics such as: Are you struggling with your gender identity/expression? Are you struggling with how others respond to you? What are the challenges of coming out to friends and family? What are your medical concerns? Legal concerns? Employment issues? Discuss any safety concerns and strategies. The group will offer a free, safe, confidential and therapeutic space to discuss the above topics as well as any other concerns that the group might have. The support group will be led and organized by Isabel Dansky, an MFT intern who has been at MCC for 4 years and has experience counseling transgender clients individually. Isabel will also bring in speakers that will cover other topics of interest to the group members.”

Unfortunately, this support group was temporary and there is no program in place currently. I was the product of a motivated intern with experience working with the transgender community

and when her internship was successfully completed the support group ended. At the end of the Spring 2015 term there were discussions over email by then Vice President of Student Services Dick Robertson and Marge Reyzer of identifying other mental health counselors who may be able to offer this program but there was no subsequent follow up communication.

Student-Promoted Educational Conference to Reaffirm, Unite and Mentor (SPECTRUM)

The SPECTRUM Conference was created and first held at the Community Learning Center (CLC) in Spring 2015. The next year it was held at the CLC again and it changed locations to the Oceanside Campus in Spring 2017. The Spring 2018 conference was also held at the Oceanside Campus. One of the main conference objectives is to make Oceanside Unified School District (OUSD) high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors aware of MiraCosta College, specifically, and to promote awareness of higher education opportunities, more generally, for LGBTQIA+ students. In addition to exposing local high school students to MiraCosta's resources the conference also seeks to foster a college-going culture among sexual and gender minority students.

LGBTQIA Resources Webpage - miracosta.edu/lgbt

[California Education Code Section 66271.2](#) indicates that the Governing Board of California Community Colleges has requested that each community college district designate an employee at each college as a point of contact for the needs of LGBTQIA faculty, staff, and students. In addition, "at a minimum, the name and contact information of the designated employee shall be published on the internet web site for the respective campus and shall be included in any printed and internet-based campus directories.

In Spring 2013, in order to comply with this recommendation, an [LGBTQIA Resources page](#) was created primarily to list the name of the MiraCosta College Campus Liaison for LGBTQIA Needs. Since then, the page has been built out and developed more fully and now is a robust resource page for students, employees, and community members. Notable elements to the page include:

- Incident Report link for the reporting of anti-LGBTQIA+ comments, actions, etc. on campus.
- LGBTQIA Safe Space Program links and directory.

- “For Students” page discussing the GSA Club, scholarships, rainbow commencement stoles, and mental health services on campus.
- “For Employees” page with links to handouts and suggested syllabus verbiage.
- Trans and gender nonconforming resources page discussing preferred name and listing all gender restroom locations and hours.
- Out @ MiraCosta employee directory.
- A link to MiraCosta College Library resources

References

When possible, references have been hyperlinked in text. Non-hyperlinked references may be found in the [Academic Research list](#).