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Transgender Task Force makes its debut to Chico State students

The term “transgender” has not been commonly heard or discussed on Chico State’s campus until now. The Transgender Task Force (TTF), an organization dedicated to educating Chico State and the surrounding community about gender diversity, was established Feb. 27, 2009.

Lana McKnight PhD, a licensed psychologist in the Counseling and Wellness Center, saw a need for a task force that would provide assistance and educate the Chico community about gender diversity, specifically transgender issues.

“I saw people looking for support and resources on transgender issues, but there was nothing offered on Chico State’s campus,” McKnight said. “I wanted to create a practical force, where people could learn and we would get things accomplished.”

McKnight was also inspired to create the TTF because of her friend and Chico State alumnus, Aydin Kennedy. As a transgender student, Kennedy dealt with obstacles daily. These obstacles included harassment in the university bathrooms and professors using the wrong pronouns when addressing him in class.
“I think it’s important to have a safe and inclusive campus,” Kennedy said. “Students and teachers need to be aware that there are students on campus who are transgender.”

The term “transgender” is often used as an umbrella term to mean those who defy rigid, bipolar gender constructions, and who express or present a breaking or blurring of cultural and stereotypical gender roles. According to the TTF Web site, a transwoman is considered to be a biological male who has transitioned into a woman. A transman is a biological woman who has transitioned into a man.

The TTF, made up of students, faculty, and staff members, has been busy over the past few months conducting biweekly meetings and planning events to educate Chico State students and the community on transgender issues.

Some events that have occurred recently include the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) presentation titled “Creating a Transgender-Inclusive Campus for Our Students,” a Trans 101 Workshop, a performance by the band Coyote Grace, and the Transitioning as a Couple panel, presented by band members Ingrid Elizabeth and transman Joe Stevens.

The Transgender Day of Remembrance, one of the most recent events planned by the TTF, occurred Nov. 20. This day memorialized those who have been killed because of anti-transgender hatred or prejudice.

“As a culture, we need to step up and realize that violence against people who are transgender is not OK,” McKnight said. The TTF is also working to accommodate transgender students at Chico State by creating a list of “safe bathrooms” to be published on the TTF’s Web site, working to update all forms on campus to be more transinclusive and making an effort to protect the confidentiality of students who are transgender.

“LGBT stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, but the ‘t’ is often underrepresented,” McKnight said. “We’re trying to reach out to people who are transgender and give them a network of support.”

McKnight pointed out that people who are transgender commonly go through physical and emotional struggles and changes. Having the TTF at Chico State for the transgender community is essential to equally representing them on this campus.

The TTF’s ultimate goal is to make Chico State and the Chico community a more transgender-inclusive community.

Kennedy said he hopes Chico State and the surrounding community will learn and become more accepting with the help of the TTF.

“We’re not like the people on Jerry Springer,” Kennedy said. “We have families and lives and are an active part of society. We just want to be respected and live our lives.”

If you would like to learn more about the TTF, visit its Web site at www.csuchico.edu/ttf/.

1 Transgender, transsexual and transvestite mean the same thing.
2 All people who identify as transgender are seeking sex reassignment surgery.
3 No one on Chico State’s campus identifies as transgender.
4 Gender differentiated bathrooms don’t create safety issues for transgender individuals.
5 All individuals who identify as transgender are either gay or lesbian.
6 Your gender is determined by your genitalia.
7 It doesn’t matter what pronouns you use if someone is transgender.
8 Chico State’s nondiscrimination policy does not cover gender identity or expression.
9 It is easy to spot someone who is transgender.
10 Individuals who are transgender aren’t at risk for being victims of hate crimes.
The Associated Students Women’s Center helped raise awareness for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community during Chico State’s second annual Queer Week.

The week of awareness began Monday, Oct. 5 and lasted through Saturday, Oct. 10. Workshops, panel discussions, a musical performance, films, and a march were just some of the events put on to celebrate and educate the campus about the LGBTQ community.

“The week, as a whole, is about creating a presence for the LGBTQ community at Chico State,” said Angela Cordell, program coordinator for the Women’s Center. “It’s about giving the LGBTQ community a safe place and a voice on this campus.”

Monday kicked off the week with a movie night on the lawn. The movie, Venus Boys, portrays the journey through a universe of female masculinity. On Tuesday a panel of speakers discussed the myths and truths surrounding the LGBTQ community.

Wednesday was the march against violence. A group of 60 people met at Trinity Commons and proceeded to make their way through downtown Chico. The group grew to around 100 people, most of which were community members, by the end of the march. “In my opinion, the march against violence was the most successful event,” Cordell said. “The march gave everyone a voice and an opportunity to be heard.”

A workshop on LGBTQ intimate partner violence was on Thursday. The workshop helped participants define intimate partner violence and was followed by a discussion on awareness and breaking the silence.

Friday consisted of another panel titled Queer Across Cultures. The panel deconstructed cultural differences and stimulated discussion about being a minority in the LGBTQ community.

The final day of Queer Week was Saturday and consisted of three events. A conference was held in the beginning of the day and covered topics including identifying as queer in a religious family, gay marriage, coming out to family, and LGBTQ scripts.

Following the conference was a transition workshop presented by Coyote Grace band members Ingrid Elizabeth and Joe Stevens, a transman. The workshop concentrated on the struggles of gender transitioning while in a relationship. After the workshop, Coyote Grace performed.

Queer Week was a successful event overall, sparking interest and raising awareness about the LGBTQ community. Having Queer Week every year at Chico State is essential in making this campus a more accepting community, Cordell said. “There’s still discrimination,” Cordell said. “That’s why it’s so important to have an event like Queer Week to bring these issues into the light.”
WITH GROWING DIVERSITY ON CAMPUS, MORE STUDENTS ARE STUDYING ABROAD

By Jennifer Lovelace

During the past two years there has been an increase in the number of African-American, Hispanic, Hmong and Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) students venturing overseas and exploring different cultures all over the world.

Through the Study Abroad Office ethnic students, low-income and first-generation college students have the opportunity to travel to dozens of countries.

Tasha Dev, international exchange and study abroad coordinator, plays an important role in the increasing number of diverse students studying abroad.

Dev works with EOP students and other students from different ethnic backgrounds at Chico State encouraging them to explore the world through education. There are many students who want to travel but think it is impossible to study abroad; Dev helps turn these dreams into reality.

“It is wonderful and exciting,” Dev said. “It makes my job richer working with more diverse students.”

There are a number of scholarships available for students from various backgrounds, whether it be ethnicity or economic.

“California is such a diverse state,” Dev said. “The students going abroad should be diverse as well.”

Cecilia Fernandez is one of the many students studying abroad this year. She is part of EOP and is currently spending a year in Madrid, Spain through International Programs.

Fernandez wants students to know that it is possible for anyone to share the same experience as her, regardless of their financial situation.

“I cannot stress enough how lucky I am with no parental support,” Fernandez said. “I am here and I accomplished it.”

In the future, Dev hopes to see an even greater increase in the number of students who do not necessarily have the economic means to travel to another country.

“When the students come back, they open up doors for other underrepresented students,” Dev said. “They are models of success.”

Returning students inspire others to travel to another country for a semester, or even a year, and validate the phrase, “If you can do it, I can do it.”

“Upon my return, I aspire to help and motivate those students who believe they cannot be abroad because it costs too much,” Fernandez said.

No one should be discouraged from traveling the world and learning at the same time. The Study Abroad Office at Chico State can help turn each student’s dream into reality, despite the barriers.

Dev suggests that all students start planning as soon as possible because anyone can further their education by traveling around the world.

A NEW DIRECTOR WITH A NEW OUTLOOK

By Haley McHenry

Chico State has a new director of employment practices and dispute resolution who brings a fresh outlook on diversity to campus.

Maurice Bryan has an interesting way to explain people’s lack of participation in diversity events and interest in cultural awareness.

“People are not necessarily apathetic, they are selectively non-involved,” Bryan said.

Bryan came to Chico State in July to work primarily with faculty and staff, but he also works with students. More specifically he deals with general harassment, sexual harassment, and age, gender and racial discrimination.

From Bryan’s perspective people are too concerned about having a literal definition of diversity.

“Part of what diversity is all about is looking at differences of various sorts and embracing those differences, challenging ourselves with those differences,” he said.

Bryan was born in New York City and has a PhD in American Studies. For several years he worked in affirmative action and equal opportunity at Western Washington University. He also worked at the University of Kansas as the associate vice provost for diversity and equity.

“I had been in Kansas for the last 16 years and was ready to make a move and definitely looked west...
Since kicking off in April 2008, the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California has helped protect the rights of residents of the Chico community.

The Chico chapter consists of volunteers who meet once a month to tackle civil liberties issues and put on events in the community. The ACLU helps protect the rights of those who are not always treated as equals in the community.

The ACLU was founded in 1920. According to the Web site, this nationally known nonprofit and nonpartisan group has more than 500,000 members nationwide and helps with more than 6,000 court cases every year.

While many people are aware of the ACLU and its work, many do not realize that there is a chapter in Chico. The ACLU is working on awareness through billboards, monthly meetings and working with Chico State students.

The solid relationship the ACLU has with Chico State is informal, but is very successful. The ACLU networks with the Office of Diversity on campus to recruit volunteers. A number of faculty and students are involved with the ACLU and its work.

Some of the various groups the ACLU in Chico has worked with include: people of color, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender people, women, people with disabilities, prisoners and the poor.

“To the ACLU, diversity means diversity not only in race, ethnicity, gender, and orientation,” said Leslie Johnson, active member and secretary of the ACLU in Chico. “Only by open lines of communication with a range of different groups and individuals can we know where the areas of need are in our region.”

The ACLU works with the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities to help protect the civil liberties of these individuals.

This growing relationship is an opportunity to build bridges and friendships among the diverse groups in the community, Johnson said.

Most recently, the ACLU in Chico has actively worked against Proposition 8. The ACLU believes that all different groups must stand together and help one another, Johnson said.

“In this way, we go from being minorities to the majority,” Johnson said.

The ACLU in Chico follows the lead of ACLU in San Francisco in its fight against Proposition 8. The local chapter works with different groups such as, Stonewall and Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) to make the community aware of the work against Proposition 8.

“If more people knew gay and lesbian families personally, they would ultimately have to accept the heartfelt desire of these families to have the recognition and acceptance accorded to every other family,” Johnson said.

The ACLU is continuing to expand across Northern California. The organization currently serves five counties and will soon be expanding to seven counties. For people interested in volunteering with the ACLU, there are regular meetings regarding immigrants’ rights, youth advocacy, restorative justice and police practices.

For more information about the ACLU or how to get involved, visit the Web site at http://www.acluchico.org.
Located in Siskiyou Hall 115 is Safe Place, a comfortable room with friendly and welcoming people. Just as the name implies, Safe Place provides Chico State and Butte College students who have experienced domestic or sexual violence with a secure environment that acts as a support system.

Lori Beth Way, project director and author of the Collaborative Response to Violence Project grant, had the idea behind Safe Place.

“It was just the number of students who were coming to me and talking to me about being victims of these crimes and feeling like I didn’t have a single place to send them,” Way said. “There are a lot of people on campus that could help them, but they couldn’t put all of their services together in one package.”

Safe Place does just this. It provides clients with a one-stop shop and advocacy.

Dawn Frank, violence prevention response coordinator, plans all grant activities with Safe Place’s project partners, which consist of University Police, Catalyst Domestic Violence Services, Rape Crisis Intervention and Prevention and many more. Frank also provides prevention education on Chico State and Butte College campuses.

“We are definitely victim centered and victim focused,” Frank said.

Safe Place has seen 50 –75 Chico State and Butte College students since the open house in February. In addition to advocacy, the client also receives follow-ups to make sure he or she does not feel alone during the process. Some clients want support when attending court or filing a restraining order against the perpetrator, and Safe Place employees, such as Frank and Way, are there to be of assistance.

“The way that we know we are making a difference in victims’ lives is because they tell us,” Way said. “In terms of how we measure success, a big part of it is our prevention activities, and then also a big part of it is what efforts are coming out of our collaborations on campus.”

Prevention of these crimes, which is very hard to measure, comes with the success of Safe Place. Domestic violence, sexual violence and stalking are three of the most underreported crimes in America. According to Way, Safe Place encourages the reporting of these crimes.

Since the beginning of the semester, Frank has given about 25 educational presentations to different classes on the Chico State campus. Assessments and surveys were given to students, which have gone over well.

“It’s everyone’s job to create an environment where violence is just not tolerated,” Way said. “Violence is not appropriate in our community, and we won’t accept it.”

Safe Place has drafted a Mutual Referral Protocol so that Chico State and Butte College will refer the student victims to Safe Place. Safe Place is continuing to work with partners to provide training to campus groups as well as examining policies on campus.

The Collaborative Response to Violence Project is the three-year grant that helped establish and fund Safe Place. Safe Place first received the grant in 2008. After three years, Safe Place will reapply for the same grant with hopes of receiving funds for the following three years.

“We want to honor the work that was done prior to Safe Place: counseling services, University Police, and the Women’s Center. We can always do more and are trying to build on that work,” Way said.
SOME MAY THINK JUGGLING SCHOOL AND SPORTS CAN’T BE DONE, BUT ZACH GRAVES HAS BEEN DOING IT SINCE THE FIRST GRADE.

Looking for a new college experience, Graves transferred to Chico State from the University of Montana. He was not playing as much basketball at UM as he had hoped. Because basketball was so important to him, he left to find a school where he could play more.

Graves’s former high school basketball coach informed Greg Clink, Chico State men’s basketball coach, of Graves’ departure from UM. As a local basketball coach in the Sacramento area, Clink was familiar with Graves and invited him to Chico State for an unofficial visit. Graves committed that day and is now a junior.

“I was excited about the type of athlete he was,” Clink said. “I loved his personality, and he’s been a great addition for us.”

Graves said that he never considered attending Chico State when he left UM, but now he could not ask for anything better in a school or basketball team.

“I just fell in love with the community and everything about Chico,” Graves said. Currently enrolled in 15 units, Graves is working hard toward a degree in communications because he said he feels it fits his personality. Graves is also minoring in business marketing and theatre arts.

This season will be Graves’s second season as a guard for the Chico State Wildcats. As a leader on the court and inspired by determination, Graves is driven by basketball. Clink said Graves puts in extremely long hours to be one of the best players on the court.

As a student athlete, Graves does not find it hard to manage school and basketball as they are both important in his life. He gets a lot of support and motivation from his parents, team and coaches, which makes his job as a student-athlete easier.

Clink said he believes that Graves holds many qualities that make him a leader.

“He has a magnetic personality,” Clink said. “People just like to be around him.”

Clink also said that Graves is one of the many guys on the basketball team that attends and supports all Chico State sporting events.

Clink described Graves in one word — infectious — because Graves has an impact on everyone he comes in contact with.

“Zach is one of the most well-rounded students that I have ever had the pleasure to coach,” Clink said. “He brings energy into the atmosphere and lightens everything up.”

Graves has one more year as a Wildcat. He would like to pursue a career as a college counselor or advisor in student affairs and attend graduate school at UCLA or USC.

Basketball is never out of sight for Graves. If the opportunity was right, he would consider playing basketball overseas.

“I loved his personality and he’s been a great addition for us.”

- Coach Greg Clink

Zach Graves, a Sacramento native, is driven by determination to succeed in basketball and school.