

Shoreline Community College

All Gender Restroom Project

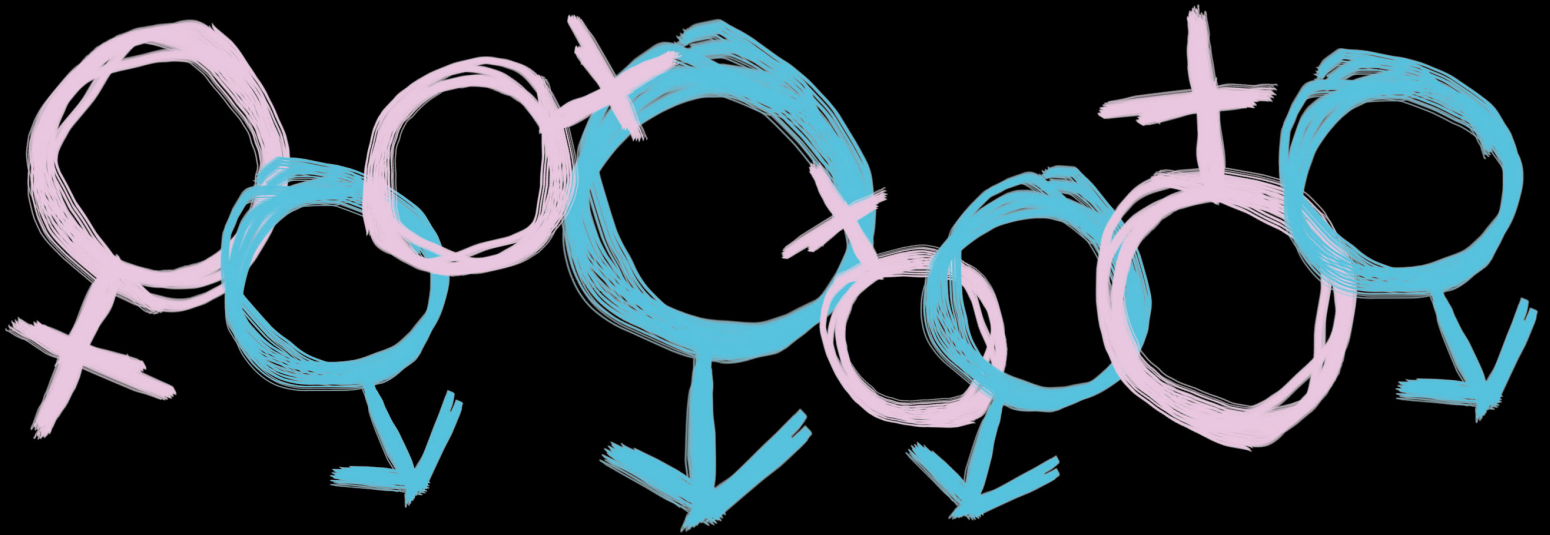


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Introduction

For many, the idea that a regular public restroom can be a source of constant stress and even a place of danger is almost unheard of. But for some, it is common knowledge. Discrimination on the basis of gender presentation has been an ongoing problem in public restrooms across the nation. Despite existing protections on the basis of gender identity, transgender and gender nonconforming people often experience harassment, intimidation, refusal of access, and in some cases, violence when trying to use public restrooms and other gender-specific facilities consistent with their gender identities. These experiences sometimes lead to significant health problems from having to avoid using public restrooms. Several states and counties have recently worked to create solutions that will ensure the safety and security of all people when using public facilities; now, it's Shoreline's turn.

Proposal

According to a recent letter to the campus community¹⁵, Shoreline Community College currently has four “family” or unisex restrooms. However, two of the restrooms mentioned in this letter, located in the 5000 building and on the first floor of the library, are restricted for faculty and staff and/or are not accessible to students. All of the locations listed in the letter are single stall restrooms, are not presently labeled as “all gender”, and are somewhat inconveniently located.

The All Gender Restroom project seeks to convert some of Shoreline Community College's existing multiple-stall restrooms into all-gender restrooms, for the purpose of ensuring that everyone - regardless of their identity - has a safe place to do something as simple as use the restroom.

We are specifically proposing that four of the existing restrooms on campus should be converted and appropriately labeled as “All Gender Restrooms,” with designated signage in place. We would like to see these conversions take place in the PUB, the 1800 building, and the 2900 building. Having the restrooms in these locations will help to ensure the highest level of accessibility for students, faculty, staff and community members in need.

Terminology to Know

Transgender: A broad term for people whose gender identity, expression, or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth.

Cisgender: A person whose gender identity aligns with their birth sex.

Gender Identity: A person's internal sense of being male, female, or something else. Note: Because gender identity is internal, a person's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

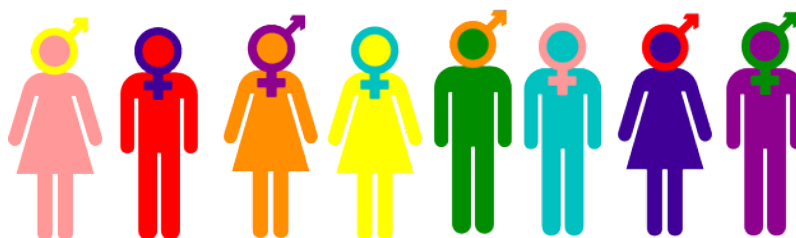
Sex: The classification of people as male or female (or intersex) based on a combination of bodily characteristics, including chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and features that appear during puberty. *Not the same as gender.*

Gender Non-Conforming: A term for individuals whose gender expression is different from social expectations of masculinity and femininity. *Note: Not all gender non-conforming people identify as transgender, and not all transgender people are gender non-conforming.*

Genderqueer: A term used by some people who identify as neither entirely male nor entirely female. Note: This term is not a synonym for "transgender."

What is an All Gender Restroom? Why is it important?

An all-gender restroom is a restroom which is accessible to people of all different gender identities. It may come in the form of a single-stall room with a locking door, or a multiple stalled room with the same internal appearance and facilities as a standard restroom.



Who can benefit from the presence of All Gender Restrooms on Campus?

- Transgender and genderqueer individuals.
- Gender-nonconforming individuals whose appearance does not fit the ‘norm’ for their sex or gender.
- Parents assisting their children with using the restroom.
- People with disabilities who may need assistance from someone else to use the restroom.
- All students and staff, due to the increase in inclusivity, diversity and awareness provided by all gender restrooms.

In particular, gender-nonconforming and transgender individuals often feel uncomfortable or face harassment in sex-segregated restrooms, and so they may opt to prioritize their safety over their basic needs and avoid the use of public restrooms altogether in the absence of an all-gender restroom option.

Because they do not feel comfortable using public restrooms, transgender or gender-nonconforming individuals may choose to abstain from drinking water throughout the day, or they may simply choose to “hold it in.” This has been known to cause increased risk of dehydration, kidney pain, kidney dysfunction and urinary tract infections ^{3,7,16}. If they do use the restroom, they can face harassment that may harm their academic or work performance and overall well-being ^{2,3,17}. The presence of all-gender restrooms on campus would help to alleviate these effects.

All-gender restrooms also benefit the student body by acknowledging the reality of multiple gender identities outside the binary of male and female. They carry the added benefit of not forcing anyone to align themselves with a binary gender in order to use the restroom safely, thereby creating a more progressive and positive environment for people of all identities.

The Argument for Multiple Stalls

The creation of a multiple stall all-gender restroom rather than a series of single stalled ones carries many benefits:

- Single stall restrooms can only be used by one person at a time, which limits accessibility as it can create waiting lines and unnecessary pressure. Multiple stall rooms maximize accessibility and efficiency by offering a usable space to multiple people at any given time.
- As multiple stall restrooms are already in place on campus, converting some would be far more cost-effective than building and maintaining new single-stall rooms.
- Single stall restrooms tend to reaffirm the idea that people who are 'different,' require special provisions that separate or isolate them from the rest of their peers, which can be harmful to the individual as well as the campus' mission to create an inclusive and welcoming environment for all.

Community Standard Statement

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly..."

-Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Shoreline Community College is a place for students, employees, and the community to pursue excellence in education in an environment dedicated to equity, inclusiveness, and self-reflection. We value respectful, dynamic interactions and lively discussion. We strive to create an environment where everyone is supported and valued. Shoreline Community College does not tolerate hateful, violent, or discriminatory actions that target any person or group based on their beliefs, customs, identity, or affiliations. When one of us is diminished, all of us are diminished. "

"It is our core value that everyone who comes to this campus feels respected and supported."

-President Cheryl Roberts

Personal Account

The members of the Associated Student Government attended a conference in the Fall of 2015 in Wenatchee and there were a number of (temporary) all-gender restrooms available on site. Over the three day period, several ASG members took part in using the all-gender restrooms, and there were no observable incidents of harassment or discrimination to report. Some attendees did express confusion, discomfort or uncertainty about the restrooms, but by the end of the conference people had become more comfortable with it. The effort to be inclusive did not go unnoticed and was the subject of several positive conversations after the fact by ASG and other attendees.



Common Questions & Concerns

Will this type of restroom environment be more dangerous, particularly for women and children?

To some, the idea of the different sexes sharing a restroom space is unfamiliar and perhaps a little unsettling. However, thus far, there have been no reported increases of harassment or assault with the introduction of all-gender restrooms on any campus in the area^{9,10, 12, 14}.

It is also important to note that sex-segregated labeling on a restroom does not necessarily do anything to prevent attacks and in fact, it can make it more dangerous for those who are transgender, androgynous, genderqueer or gender nonconforming, etc. The risk of assault and harassment that these groups routinely face in traditional restrooms is far higher than any safety risk posed by the existence of an all-gender restroom on campus.

Does this mean that traditional gender-segregated restrooms won't be available on-campus anymore and everyone will need to use all-gender restrooms?

No. The goal of the all-gender restroom project is to create another option, in addition to traditional restrooms, so that **all** students have a choice and a place to feel safe when using the restroom. No one will ever be forced to use an all-gender restroom and the vast majority of campus restrooms will remain unchanged by this initiative.

Will conversion of a regular restroom to an all-gender one be expensive?

The cost of conversion depends on the configuration of the restroom. It is much more cost effective to convert a regular, multiple-stall restroom into an all-gender space than to build a separate, single-stall space. The only cost and change required for converting existing women's restrooms would be purchasing and adding new signage. Changing existing men's restrooms would require measuring and ordering new stall dividers. According to Facilities, this process would take about 8 weeks, construction would take 4 weeks, and costs are estimated to be roughly \$10,000.

Common Questions & Concerns

Transgender people are a minority of the population; I am unsure of whether or not a school should be made to spend extra time and resources on providing for such a small population.

Transgender people are not the only group standing to benefit from the installation of all-gender restrooms. Parents with differently gendered young children, disabled individuals in need of attendants who may be differently gendered than them, cis-gendered individuals who are androgynous or gender-nonconforming, and transgender or genderqueer individuals all stand to benefit, as do traditional students from a diversity aspect. In addition, while transgender people may be a small percentage of the population, they are still a part of the greater community and deserve to feel safe, secure and recognized like anyone else.

What is the difference between creating an all-gender restroom and allowing individuals to use the restroom that coordinates with their gender identity?

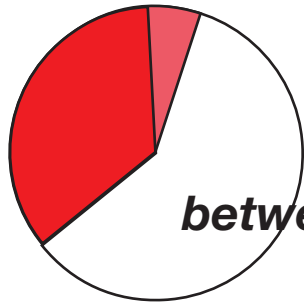
Harassment is ultimately more common in the latter situation. Allowing individuals to choose a gender-segregated restroom based on their identity still forces people to align themselves with one of the two binary genders in order to use the restroom. This is damaging to those who identify outside the binary, people who are transgender and do not “pass,” well as their preferred gender, and those who are gender nonconforming or androgynous in appearance. These individuals face a very high risk of harassment in traditional restrooms, even if they are granted the right to be there by state policy ¹³.

All-gender restrooms, on the other hand, are non-segregated. One does not have to identify as one gender or any gender in order to use these spaces; they provide a space which is accessible to everyone at all times regardless of their birth sex, gender presentation, or –in the case of transgender individuals– how far into their transition they may or may not be. It is overall more inclusive.

The presence of all-gender restrooms may also be particularly beneficial to those who have concerns about maintaining the segregated space in traditional restrooms; an all-gender restroom would offer an inclusive space for those who need it without forcing those who are uncomfortable with the idea to participate.

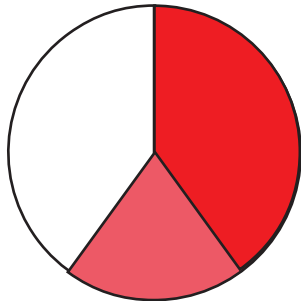
Facts & Statistics

*The estimated gender-nonconforming, genderqueer and transgender population of Shoreline Community College is around **4%** during any given quarter⁵.*

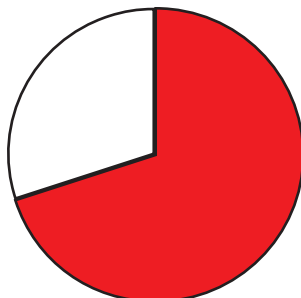


Survey respondents from multiple surveys, primarily conducted in California and Massachusetts, who are **transgender or gender nonconforming have reported markedly higher rates of suicide attempts: between 35 – 41%**, compared with 1.6% of the general population⁴.

The increased rate is linked to depression and anxiety induced by both the bodily dysphoria and rampant discrimination and assault experienced by transgender and gender nonconforming people, especially in public spaces.



Between 40 – 60% of gender nonconforming and transgender individuals face harassment or discrimination when using public restrooms³.



In one of the largest surveys conducted of transgender adults, up to 70% say they have faced harassment when using public facilities^{2,3,4}.

Facts & Statistics

Representatives from the Edmonds Community College Diversity Student Center, the University of Washington's Q Center, and Everett Community College have noted that many students feel the presence of only one or two single-stall all-gender restrooms on campus is ***not enough***.

Institutions with multiple stall all-gender or gender-neutral restrooms generally experience few, if any, complaints of harassment related to the restrooms^{12,14,16}. Complaints of harassment in traditional restrooms tend to be higher.

The University of Washington specifically has had two multiple-stall all-gender restrooms in place since 2011¹⁴ and ***has reported zero incidents of harassment or assault in these restrooms since their installation***.

Discrimination is real

Ivan E. Coyote, in speaking of cisgendered women:

*"They are afraid of men in a women's washroom, because of what might happen. I am afraid of women in a women's washroom, because of what happens to me all the time."*⁷

From transgender attorney Dean Spade:

*"I, myself, have been kicked out of both 'women's' and 'men's' bathrooms numerous times, and unlawfully arrested and held overnight for using the 'men's' bathroom. Most trans and gender variant people have experienced severe harassment and/or violence because of being understood to be in the 'wrong' bathroom."*¹⁹

A Shoreline student admits:

"The amount of anxiety using a public restroom can cause me is ridiculous. No matter which one I chose, I'm always in the wrong somehow, because of the way I look."

Policies & Legal Regulations

“Shoreline Community College provides equal opportunity in education and employment and does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, color, religion, national origin, marital status, gender, sexual orientation or disability.”

- Shoreline Community College Non-Discrimination Statement

“Additional support for the rights of transgender students in public schools to use restrooms consistent with their gender identity may be found in the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) guidelines to school districts. These guidelines, which relate to the elimination of discrimination in public schools, state that school districts should allow students to use the restrooms consistent with their gender identity consistently asserted at school. The guidelines also state that any student who has a need or desire for increased privacy should be provided access to an alternative restroom, such as a staff or health office restroom, but that no student should be required to use an alternative restroom just because they are transgender or gender nonconforming.”

- ACLU of Washington, The Rights of Transgender People in Washington State, p.3

“A covered entity shall not request or require an individual to use a gender-segregated facility that is inconsistent with that individual’s gender identity, or request or require an individual to use a separate or gender-neutral facility.

Any action taken against a person who is using a restroom, such as removing a person, should be taken due to that person’s actions or behavior while in the restroom, and must be unrelated to gender identity. The same standards of conduct and behavior must be consistently applied to all restroom users, regardless of gender identity.

School districts and other primary and secondary schools should allow students to use the restroom that is consistent with their gender identity consistently asserted at school.”

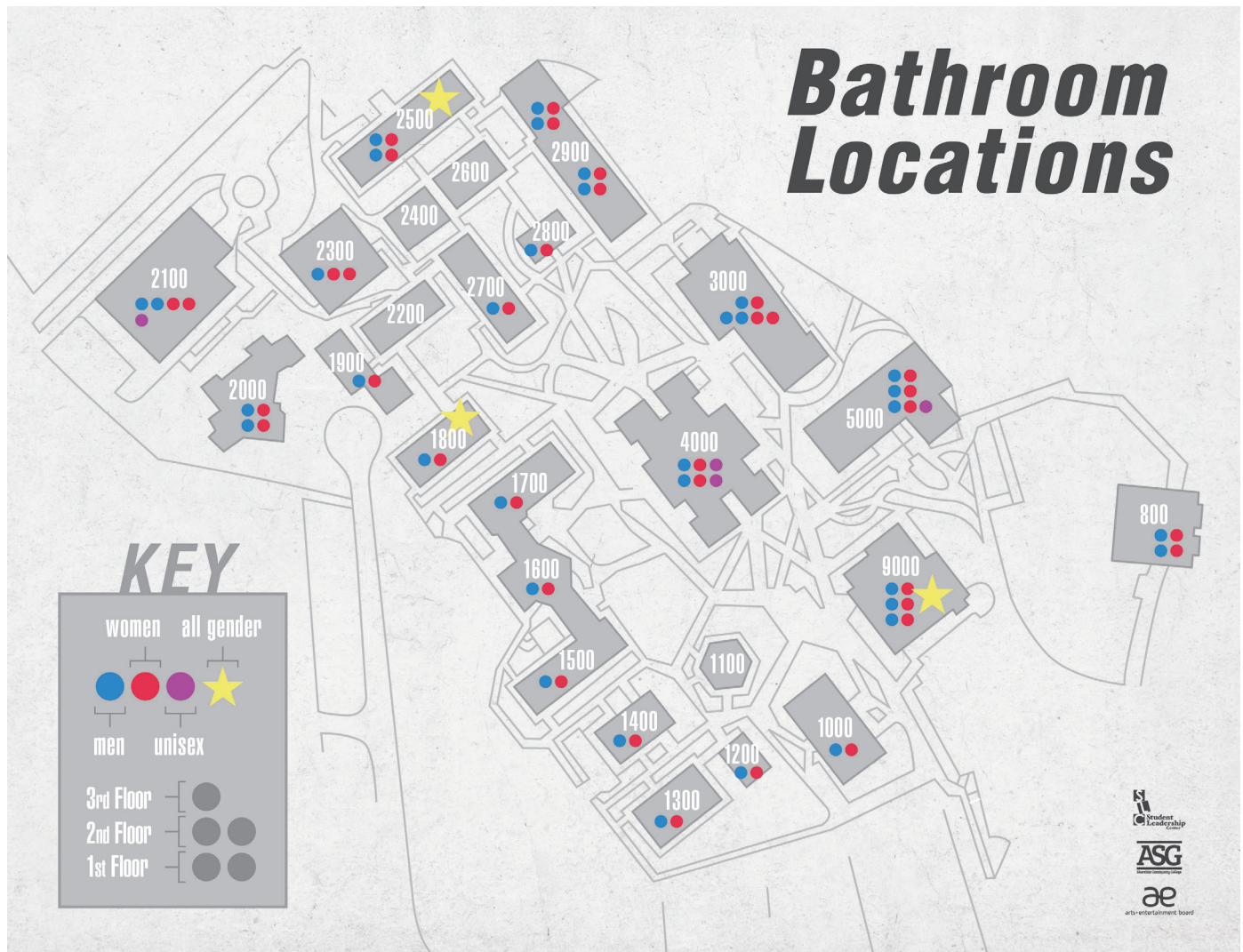
-Adopted rules of the Human Rights Commission, Section WAC 162-32-060 Gender Segregated Facilities¹³.

Proposed Locations & Map

The locations we are proposing for conversion are:

- Both restrooms on any floor of the PUB
- One restroom in the 1800 building
- One restroom in the 2900 building

Having three locations that are spread over the campus ensures that the all-gender restrooms are more accessible to those in need.



Budget and Construction Information

No cost or time needed to change a Women's restroom into All-Gender, only signage.

Changing a Men's restroom into All-Gender would include ordering new privacy stall dividers which have to be custom measured and ordered so they match the existing stalls and also allow for appropriate ADA compliance. This could take up to 8 weeks. Then the construction would be about 4 weeks and about \$10,000.

Recommended Signage



Communication & Education

Open Forum: A forum on gender identity and the importance of all-gender restrooms will be scheduled to take place in mid-April. All students and interested faculty or staff will be strongly encouraged to attend.

Signage/Maps: Provide clear signage on all converted restrooms and also widely distribute maps that highlight where the restrooms are available. All-gender restrooms will also include signs/maps that point the way to the nearest “traditional” restrooms and vice versa.

Posters, etc.: In addition to actual bathroom signage, the Student Leadership Center will create posters, flyers, sandwich board signs, etc. to announce the change, including brief information about why the restrooms are being added and where they can be found.

Web Presence: A webpage will be created on the Student Leadership Center website with information about the project including this proposal, links to sources and research, testimonials, pictures, frequently asked questions, and contact information.

Host Unveiling Ceremonies/Events

Social Media Campaign: Events and forum will be promoted with a social media hashtag, event pages on Facebook, etc.

Letter to Campus Community: An announcement/letter to the campus community will be sent out to campus email lists and lister serves, including information about all events and a link to the new webpage.

Proposed Timeline

April 4, 2016:

ASG Board Proposal and Vote

April 5, 2016:

College Council Proposal and Vote

April-May 2016:

Educational Open Forum
Create webpage
Create video, posters, etc.
Letter to campus community
Start social media campaign
Plan unveiling events

May 1, 2016:

Start Construction

Late May/June 2016:

Unveiling Events/Activities

Fall Quarter 2016:

Another forum/more education and publicity activities
for new students. Add info to survival guides.

End of Fall Quarter 2016:

Feedback Survey

Resources

1. The American Civil Liberties Union of Washington: The Rights of Transgender People in Washington State, pages 3-6. <https://aclu-wa.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Transgender%20Guide%202015.pdf>
2. "In All-Gender Restrooms, the Signs Reflect the Times." The New York Times. Article published by Aimee Lee Ball on November 7, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/08/style/transgender-restroom-all-gender.html?_r=0
3. The Williams Institute; UCLA School of Law: Gendered Restrooms and Minority Stress: The Public Regulation of Gender and its Impact on Transgender People's Lives. Written by Jody L. Herman. <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Herman-Gendered-Restrooms-and-Minority-Stress-June-2013.pdf>
4. The Williams Institute: Suicide Attempts among Transgender and Gender-nonconforming Adults. <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/AFSP-Williams-Suicide-Report-Final.pdf>
5. Shoreline Community College. Department of Institutional Research. "Breakdown of Gender Identity," data collection from 2014-2015 by Bayta L. Maring, Director of Institutional Assessment and Data Management.
6. Shoreline Community College. Community Standard Statement. <http://news.shoreline.edu/2015/11/19/community-standard-statement-affirms-college-values/>
7. "Fear and Loathing in Public Bathrooms, Or How I Learned to Hold My Pee." Gender Failure by Ivan E Coyote. Cited on Slate website in April of 2014. http://www.slate.com/blogs/outward/2014/04/11/transgender_in_public_bathrooms_why_does_our_safety_always_come_second.html
8. Shoreline Community College's non-discrimination policy. <https://www.shoreline.edu/about-shoreline/non-discrimination.aspx>
9. Vassar University's Gender Neutral Bathroom Initiative. 2013. <http://lgbtq.vassar.edu/projects-initiatives/gender-neutral-bathroom-initiative.html>
10. Debunking the 'bathroom predator,' myth: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/carlos-maza/we-cant-be-scared-of-the_b_8472698.html – <http://mic.com/articles/114066/statistics-show-exactly-how-many-times-trans-people-have-attacked-you-in-bathrooms#.PFvCtY9gL>
11. The Illogic of Separation: Examining Arguments About Gender-Neutral Public Bathrooms by University of Washington student Merritt Kopas. http://mkopas.net/files/KOPAS_UW-thesis-2012.pdf
12. Debunking the myths in several states on transgender bathroom usage: <http://mediamatters.org/research/2014/03/20/15-experts-debunk-right-wing-transgender-bathro/198533>
13. Proposed Rules of the Washington Human Rights Commission <http://lawfilesexet.leg.wa.gov/law/wsr/2015/11/15-11-104.htm>
14. The University of Washington – Q Center – Locations of 'Gender-neutral,' restrooms on campus <https://depts.washington.edu/qcenter/wordpress/frequently-used-resources/gender-neutral-bathrooms/>
15. "Day at a Glance," campus-wide message from PIO; "A Note about All-Gender Restrooms." <http://daag.shoreline.edu/2016/03/28/a-note-about-all-gender-restrooms/>
16. Transgender Law Center; Peeing in Peace. 2005 publication on restroom access. <http://transgenderlawcenter.org/issues/public-accomodations/peeing-in-peace>
17. Why are Gender-Neutral Restrooms Important? Informational guide by Portland Community College, Queer Resource Center, 2015. <http://www.pcc.edu/resources/qrc/documents/GNBQAQRCWebsite.pdf>
18. Who's Afraid of Same-sex Bathrooms? Article by Jeannie Suk, professor at Harvard school of Law. Published on January 25, 2016. <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/whos-afraid-of-same-sex-bathrooms>
19. "Letter to my coworkers about de-gendering bathrooms." Dean Spade, Seattle University School of Law. 2008. <http://makezine.enoughenough.org/ujcbathrooms.html>
20. Ladies and Gents: Public Toilets and Gender. Exploratory piece by sociologists Olga Gershenson and Barbara Penner.

Additional in person resources include the Associated Student Government, the Student Leadership Center, Rezina Habtemariam and Micaela Smith, Doctor Michelle Kleisath and Project Pride, Doctor Elena Esquibel, the University of Washington Q-Center, Edmonds Community College representatives, and several student volunteers.