



# GLBTA Pride Center

GLBTA Pride Center Spring 2009 Newsletter

Bridgewater State College

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## Some things to think and talk about:

- Are you an official GLBT Ally on campus? If not, ask about Safe Zone Training!
- What are ways we can make the campus more trans-friendly?
- Did you know over a dozen national health organizations support same-sex couple parenting?

## Transgender Awareness

Many people think that transgender people are individuals who are born one sex but identify as a member of another gender, such as a person born with a male body, genes, and physiology who sees herself as a woman.

However, this understanding of what it means to be transgender is only partial at best. In actuality, gender identity and expression, — indeed, the entire social construct of gender in and of itself— are complex ideas intertwined with subtle nuances.

Gender refers to the social construction of masculinity and femininity and/or what it means to be a man or woman in a specific culture and time period. It includes:

- Gender assignment: Gender designation of someone at birth
- Gender roles: Expectations placed on someone based on their assigned sex
- Gender attribution: How others perceive someone's gender
- Gender expression: How someone presents their gender
- Gender identity: How someone internalizes their gender

Let's look more in depth at both gender identity and gender expression.

### Gender Identity

Gender identity is an individual's internal sense of being a man, a woman, or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others and may or may not be congruent with biology/physiology.

Many transgender people do not perceive gender or their gender identity as part of a binary or on a continuum but rather as something that transcends the gender binary.

### Examples of Gender Identities

- Man
- Woman
- Transgender

### Gender Expression

Gender expression refers to the ways in which people externally communicate/express their gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, hair style, voice, and emphasizing, de-emphasizing or changing their bodily characteristics.

### Examples of Gender Expressions

- Masculine
- Feminine
- Transgender

### Transgender

The word "transgender" is actually an umbrella term that describes a person's gender identity and/or expression. As an umbrella term, it contains several subcategories such as:

**Transsexual** - A person who experiences a mismatch of the body and the brain and *sometimes* undergoes medical treatment, including hormone therapy and sexual reassignment surgery, to change physical sex to match gender identity.

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## GLBT Awareness for International Students by El Agossou, GLBTA Pride Center Ambassador International Student from Benin, Africa

The GLBTA Pride Center is dedicated to raising awareness about issues facing the GLBT community, and working toward achieving total respect and inclusion at Bridgewater State College. In order to do this, every group has to be reached and educated about ways that they can be GLBT allies. To this end, a special focus will be put on the international community on campus this Fall 2009, specifically an awareness program designed for international students.

Every year there is an

increasing number of international students admitted to the College who become very much a part of the BSC family. We all come from different countries and work hard at integrating ourselves into the United States culture. Often, it is a big adjustment to be made since in contrast to the US, many other cultures have a closed attitude toward sexuality and gender identity, amongst other things. This is why in the fall semester, a special program will be held in order to bring together the international

community and GLBT themes.

This new program strives to create an environment where students from all over the world can share their countries' beliefs and their own personal views on the GLBT topic while at the same time be open to hearing about their peers' life stories as LGBT students.

After I interviewed a few students on campus from Japan, China, Hong Kong, Tanzania, and Mali (Africa), I realized that we are all very inquisitive about GLBT issues and open to learning how to

be good allies in order to continue to provide our support where it is needed so dearly. This new program developed by the Ambassadors hopes to do just that. It will be an opportunity for both international students at Bridgewater State College and their U.S. GLBTA peers to learn about each other and develop new friendships.



## Demystifying the Pride Center Ambassadors by Kate Hayes-Huer, Pride Center Ambassador

The GLBTA Pride Center Ambassadors are a diverse group of students working to gain valuable leadership experience and to facilitate positive change for GLBTA students at BSC.

Though the Ambassador program is relatively new, we have already been successful in working with administrative officials to help secure single-occupancy, gender-neutral restrooms for gender variant students and employees. We

are also committed to educating the BSC community at large about GLBTA issues, and to sharing our own stories and experiences with others.

We are working on a few exciting projects to be implemented by Fall 2009. One such project is the creation of an online blog written by the the Ambassadors. This blog will serve as one way to communicate to the BSC community about our current projects and the progress we're

making on them. The blog will also include meeting minutes and an area where readers may post their questions or thoughts to the Ambassadors. We hope that the blog will increase our transparency and accessibility to others on campus.

For more information about the GLBTA Pride Center Ambassadors and what we do, please visit us online at <http://www.bridgew.edu/GLBTA/ambassador.cfm>.



## New RMV Name and Gender Designation Requirements

### Changing Your Name and Gender Designation on Your Driver License Just Got Easier

According to the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles, transgender or transsexual individuals are no longer required to have gender reassignment surgery to change their gender designation on their driver licenses. (See page 40 of the Drivers Manual at [www.mass.gov/rmv/dmanual/chapter1.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/rmv/dmanual/chapter1.pdf).)

It is sufficient for RMV purposes if the applicant identifies his/her current gender identity and signs the *Massachusetts Gender Designation Change* form and completes the Change of Information section on the *License and ID Update Application*.

Furthermore, Massachusetts law does not require an applicant amending his/her gender designation on a license or ID card to provide an amended birth certificate from the state or jurisdiction of birth, and the applicant is not required to have changed his or her gender designation on other forms of identification.

### Changing One's Name

Persons who wish to change their names do not need to go through a court process to do so.

David Tillinghast, J.D., and Chief of Police at Bridgewater State College, has researched the legal precedents regarding name changes in Massachusetts and found that individuals may change their name at will without undergoing a court process. In other words, the new name will be recognized as a legally binding name simply by declaring it to be so.

Although his research should be regarded only as general legal information and not as individualized legal advice, he found three cases that support his conclusions:

1) *Sec'y of the Comm. v. City Clerk of Lowell*, 366 N.E.2d 717, 721 (Mass. 1977) ("It is well settled that at common law a person may change his name at will, without recourse to legal proceedings, by merely adopting another name, providing that this is done for an honest purpose.") (*Quoting Merolevitz, petitioner*, 70 N.E.2d 249, 250 (Mass. 1946).);

2) *Comm. v. Clark*, 846 N.E.2d 765, 772 (Mass. 2006) ("[T]he common law does not restrict a person to one name....");

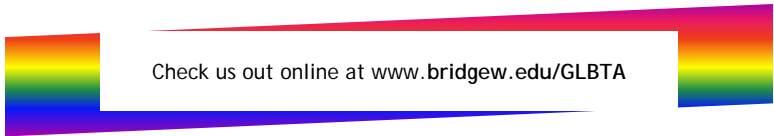
3) G.L. c. 151B, § 4 (15), "Unlawful Practices": "It shall be an unlawful discriminatory practice... For any person responsible for recording the name of or establishing the personal identification of an individual for any purpose... to require such individual to use, because of an individual's sex or marital status, any surname other than the one by which such individual is generally known."

### Legal Change of Name is Not Required for RMV Purposes

The Massachusetts RMV apparently has reached a similar conclusion because they state that Massachusetts law allows a person to use a name, other than the person's name as it appears on his/her birth certificate, so long as the adopted name is not being used for fraudulent purposes.

Practically speaking, what this means is that a court-approved ("legal") change of name is not required to amend a license or ID card in Massachusetts. Additionally, an applicant does not need to change his/her name on other forms of identification prior to changing it on the license or ID card. However, the RMV states that after changing his/her name on the license/ID card, the applicant will need to contact the Social Security Administration (SSA) to notify them of the name change.





Whether you're looking to hang out or come out, the GLBTA Pride Center is here for you.

We offer a variety of services and resources to the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community and their allies that promote student learning and development. The GLBTA Pride Center is also committed to supporting GLBTA faculty, staff, and administrators and fostering a safe and affirming environment in which to work and learn.

# Transgender Awareness

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**Genderqueer:** A term used by individuals, mostly transgender youth, who identify as neither female nor male, as both, or as somewhere in between. Genderqueers may transition partly, completely, or not all, and may dress and present exclusively as one gender, vary their presentation, or present androgynously. The one commonality between genderqueers is that they understand themselves in ways that challenge binary constructions of gender.

**Two Spirit:** A Native American/First Nation term for people who blend the masculine and the feminine. It is commonly used to describe biological women who took on the roles and/or dress of men and biological men who took on the roles and/or dress of women in the past. The term is also used by contemporary transgender LGBT Native American and First Nation people to describe themselves.

**Drag King and Drag Queen:** A female and male, respectively, who employ gender-marked clothing, makeup, and mannerisms for *entertainment* purposes and not necessarily because they identify as another gender.

**Crossdresser:** A person who wears clothes, makeup, etc. that are considered by the culture to be appropriate for another gender but not one's own. An example of a crossdresser is someone who is transsexual but does not intend to undergo hormones or surgery.



**Be an Official Safe Zone Ally!**

[www.bridgew.edu/GLBTA/SafeZone.cfm](http://www.bridgew.edu/GLBTA/SafeZone.cfm)

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