

I would have dropped out if not for Clatsop Community College. Born and raised in Astoria, when it came time to decide what I wanted to do “for the rest of my life” I had zero clue, so I started out at CCC in the fall of 1995.

Back then, you couldn’t help but hear some of the sneering nicknames like “Harvard on the Hill” from my classmates headed off to expensive schools out of state. Rather than enjoying my first year at CCC, I fixated on getting to Oregon State University as soon as possible. My family lineage was entwined with Oregon State—all my uncles, aunts, mom, dad, sister and others in my circle went there. So I did too, because in the words of Lewis Carroll, “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will take you there.”

I did some great things during my sophomore year at OSU, like a study abroad where I spent part of the year living with a host family in Quito, Ecuador. But as a rural Oregonian who was sheltered and shy—who spent most of my time riding my horse, with my dog or in the woods or playing sports—the college town of Corvallis may well have been New York City. In a college town there are parties every weekend and it turns out that I wasn’t emotionally ready for that.

Seeing my boat adrift in swells I was not equipped to navigate, my parents convinced me to leave OSU and return to Astoria. Although reticent to leave the bright lights of Corvallis, I knew they were right. My friend and I got an apartment at “The Elmore” just down the street from campus and resumed classes at CCC. Eventually, I transferred back to OSU, finished my Bachelors and by that time had matured some.

In 2023, I have my Masters from Pacific University, and a B.A. from OSU. I now work at CCC as the DEI Council Chair and the Coordinator for The Alliance for Equity in Education. In 1995 the campus looked a lot different than it does today. And even before the remodel, Clatsop CC had them all beat. You simply cannot compete with small class sizes, approachable folks on campus and having a casual conversation with your professor at the local pub or at a chance encounter at the grocery store. I would say that learning “takes a village” and CCC has that in spades. Can you really get that level of learning from a lecture hall? Oh, the irony.

Harvard on the Hill was a steadfast friend, a fog horn to guide my wayward ship to safety. It was a place where I could lick my wounds and heal. It was the place I learned the most about life and growth and looking back over my whole educational journey, Clatsop is simply the best, better than all the rest.